# General Education Committee Minutes, 9/7/16

## Call to Order / Roll Call

Members present: L. Ametsbichler, S. Bradford, B. Clough, R. Fanning, C. Greenfield, P. Muench, J. Randall, T. Ravas, G. Weix, T. Wheeler  
Ex-officio members present: B. French, B. Holzworth  
Members Absent/ Excused: B. Durnell, N. Lindsay

The minutes from 4/27/16 were amended and approved.

## Communication

* Members introduced themselves and new members were welcomed.
* ASCRC approved the Committee’s request to suspend the rolling review this year. It will be voted on by the Faculty Senate tomorrow. If approved, the Committee will still consider courses applying for new general education designations and any submitted from the spring review of Expressive Arts, Ethics, and Social Science.
* Instructors of Ethics courses that were denied in the spring were informed of the decision over the summer. Professor Muench has heard from a few of them.
* At some point the Committee may want to hear from Professor Reiser, the WICHE Mapping Project Coordinator. Eight faculty members, including professor Weix, have volunteered to participate in the project. This fall they will identify assignments with which to assess the WICHE learning goals. Then student artifacts will be reviewed similar to UPWA. The faculty volunteers are meeting on September 26th.

## Business Items

* The Committee discussed the pending audit of UM’s and MC’s MUS Core Courses. All upper-division courses have been removed from the list because the [MUS Core transferrable gen ed curriculum](http://mus.edu/Transfer/MUScore.asp) (MUS Core) consists of 30 lower-division credits distributed across six categories. Director French submitted comments last spring in favor of allowing some upper division courses, especially those in Native American studies, but OCHE did not modify their policy. In the past, he has worked through some special cases with Deputy Commissioner Cech, it might be possible to appeal this if we had data on students transferring from UM to two-year schools with upper-division general education course. We could also ask the Interim Provost to take up the matter. The audit should be done by departments and faculty teaching the courses. A subcommittee consisting of Co-Chair Bradford, Professor Fanning, Director French and Chase Greenfield will work on drafting a communication to departments so we can review this at the next full meeting. The committee would like to complete the audit in the first couple of months this fall. The communication will need links to the OCHE categories and criteria. Many courses in the database are also missing learning objectives. The committee also discussed whether the communication should be sent to department and program chairs or directly to the teaching faculty. Several members felt that the chairs would be the best point of contact because individual instructors may vary and chairs will know how to manage this. Co-chair Bradford would like to build faculty email lists for each general education subgroup to facilitate communications that would engage more faculty in GE review and assessment activities.
* Co-Chair Bradford reviewed the tentative priorities for the Committee. Now that the group X (Cultural and International Diversity) has been revised, there is new overlap with “cultural” in group H (Historical and Cultural). The Committee will need to take a closer look at how to revise the learning objectives and also consider whether History should be a standalone group or possibly include a broader selection of courses that examine historical documents. A subcommittee consisting of Professors Ametsbichler, Clough, Randall, Shearer, and Chase Greenfield was formed to develop a proposal for updating the Group H language. They will also reach out to Matt Semanoff from ASCRC to see if he would like to participate.
* General Education Assessment is another area the committee needs to work on this year. Over the last two years, we have sponsored three pilot studies of assessment in Groups N, M, and E, most of which was coordinated by Associate Provost Lindsay. The results of these need analysis now to take this to the next level. We’ve also made changes to the general education form to facilitate this, which has led to some confusion and complaints from faculty. It’s time to develop a formal proposal for general education assessment that can be properly vetted through ASCRC and Faculty Senate. Associate Provost Lindsay has agreed to help draft out a description of the process followed in the pilot studies, which will be a good baseline to work from. Changes to the review cycle might also need to be considered as part of this. One option might be to adopt a 7-year rolling review cycle, where we assess two groups per year for five years and then use the remaining two years for analysis and reporting. We could also draw on the UPWA model, one of the strengths of which is getting faculty together to discuss how they assess different learning objectives. This could build in a professional development opportunity that makes the process more meaningful. We also need to develop better guidelines to assist the review subcommittees. Professor Fanning noted that this could be a big project and cut into our time for other work, including GE revitalization. We need to be mindful of these trade-offs. On the other hand, general education assessment is something that needs to be addressed in our accreditation process. It’s important for faculty to have a voice in this and to take responsibility for how to assess this curriculum.
* We need to develop a consistent policy on whether to allow upper-division general education courses. Approval of upper-division general education courses has varied from year to year depending on who is serving on the committee. This is very frustrating for faculty when courses are approved one year and then rejected when they come up for review. Chase is in favor of allowing upper-division general education courses. Students are at different levels, but college coursework should challenge them to grow. If a course meets the learning objectives, why should it be rejected just because it has an upper division number? In addition, many high schools are now offering more advanced courses, which might also lead to more students who prefer higher level GE courses. Exploring this issue may require a review of the preamble and the intent of “introductory and foundational.” Upper-division courses are often insular to the major.
* The policy on one-time-only general education designation status for experimental courses should also be revisited. This is an administrative headache and is being used to help faculty fill courses. The Committee will need to consider whether it benefits students. The catalog stipulates that general education courses must have the general education designation the semester it is offered.
* The rationale for including symbolic systems courses in general education and listing these in the catalog should be revisited. It’s clear from the catalog that the requirement varies by department. This also makes them hard to review, since many are highly technical and specific to a discipline. They already appear as major requirements in the catalog also, so why list them twice? Students in high credit majors would still be exempted from the language requirement, but this would be an easy way to clean up the catalog and make the current framework less confusing without actually changing any graduation requirements. This could also simplify GE advising and graduation review. We would need to make sure that Missoula College students are not affected adversely. General AA students are not in a high credit major, but often take symbolic systems because language courses are not available there. This can be a barrier for students with weaker math skills, as they may need 2-3 semesters of developmental math before they can begin the symbolic systems sequence. If we eliminate this however, they still have limited access to language courses. Maybe we should allow general AA students to have the option of using the MUS Core, similar to transfer students. This could benefit MC enrollment and retention as well. Students planning to transfer into 4-year programs could still be encouraged to complete the full UM general education requirements. This needs more analysis before we make any changes to symbolic systems.
* The Committee should consider hosting another event similar to the one held last March. It can be used to vet issues before they go to the Faculty Senate. The Liberal Arts discussion held at the end of spring was disappointing and the administration decided to cancel efforts to have another general education discussion in October. However, a discussion is needed regarding the value of general education in the professional schools.

## Good and Welfare

* Members were invited to the Faculty Senate reception on Thursday.

## Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:34 p.m.