

GEOC Meeting November 12, 2008

In Attendance: Katharina von Hammerstein, Mike Darre, Bill Lott, Morty Ortega, John Troyer, Brian Boecherer (for Xae Alicia Reyes), Robert Cromley, Jane Goldman, Elizabeth Jockusch, Letitia Naigles, Kristina Paul, Anke Finger, Tom Roby, Kayla Armando, Murphy Sewall, Peter Gogarten, Anabel Perez.
Not Present: Cora Lynn Deibler, Felicia Pratto, Niloy Dutta, and Xae Alicia Reyes.

Meeting called to order at 1:32pm.

1. Minutes of the last GEOC meeting will be edited as follows:

- Strike sentence on page 2 starting with “Jane Goldman and Tom Deans will provide...”
- On page 4, MATH 106 should be MATH 1070 [105].

Motion to approve minutes as revised. Motion approved.

2. Announcements

- *Assessment Funding.* Veronica Makowsky has approved assessment funding as decided by GEOC, i.e. continued assessment of W and start of CA4 assessment.
- *CLAS Deans.* Katharina von Hammerstein will meet with CLAS Deans to discuss W courses and the proposed Cross-Content Area General Education Courses. Any other issues GEOC would like Katharina von Hammerstein to address with CLAS Deans should be brought forward at the December GEOC meeting.
 - GEOC suggestion for this meeting: keep in mind that CLAS gen ed requirements add several more courses in CA1, Q, and Second Language than do the university general education requirements.
- *CA4 Assessment Coordinators.* A short list has been established for possible coordinators. Katharina von Hammerstein has been contacting candidates.

3. Subcommittees

Courses Withdrawn from Curriculum

At the request of the departments, the following courses will be **deleted** from the General Education curriculum:

HORT 3660W	Nursery Management (This is a W course.)
ENGL 3409	The Modern Novel (This is a CA1 course. ENGL 2409 will replace this course.)

CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

The CA4 subcommittee recommends **approval** of the following course for inclusion in the Diversity and Multiculturalism content area:

International

ENGL 3320	Literature and Culture of India
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Motion to approve the CA4 report. Motion approved.

Second Language Competency

Brian Boecherer, representing the Second Language Subcommittee in Xae Alicia Reyes' absence, reported on the letter the subcommittee has drafted in response to the Board of

Education decision to not include the 2 year foreign language requirement to the high school curriculum. At present, there are no language requirements for high schools. The Board of Education is poised to turn down a proposed 2 year requirement.

The subcommittee discussed the inherent inequity in access to language courses for students in urban school districts where language instruction may be cut as a result of the Board of Education proposal. This inequity will continue in access to UConn. The subcommittee also reviewed the language requirements of identified Peer Institutions and found language requirements very similar to UConn's.

A draft of the letter was circulated to GEOC members. The subcommittee would like feedback from the committee:

- Board of Education arguments include:
 - Early Language Acquisition
 - Disparity in access to foreign language instruction
 - Shortage of foreign language teachers
- Counter arguments should include:
 - Not having a foreign language requirement in high school creates *greater* disparity in access to college.
 - An alternate route for teacher certification could be provided for foreign language teachers.
 - Importance of global citizenship in this increasingly global society. It would be a disservice to CT students to fail to prepare them for citizenship in the changing world community.
- Structure of Letter:
 - Note GEOC (or UConn) support of foreign language high school requirement.
 - Diffuse the main three arguments they present for turning down the proposal to add the foreign language requirement.
 - Argue the importance of preparing students for global citizenship in this changing society.
 - Note UConn's foreign language requirements.
 - Bookend with second note of support for foreign language high school requirement.

Allegedly, nationally, only 3 states have a foreign language requirement. This is hugely divergent from what other nations are doing re: foreign language.

Other points raised:

- Letter should not come from GEOC but from higher up in the university administration, ideally the President, Provost or, at very least, Vice Provost.
 - In attempting to gain President, Provost or Vice Provost support for this letter, it should be noted that if students do not come to UConn with the language requirement met (as many do currently), UConn will need to invest increased funds to offer more language courses.
 - Also note UConn's increasing interest in Global Citizenship.
 - Katharina von Hammerstein will speak with Veronica Makowsky about gaining support for the letter.
- Letter could come from the Senate, as a faculty body..

- Letter could also come from the Board of Trustees. Most of them are in business and see the clear need for more global knowledge and languages for those in the workforce.
- Letter could be cc:ed to other universities, local newspapers, etc.

The draft letter will go back to the Second Language subcommittee for editing and will be brought forward to GEOC once again.

4. Reports and Discussion

2000+ Level General Education Courses

There is lack of 2000+level gen ed courses, particularly at the regional campuses. This lack creates a problem for BGS students on those campuses.

Jane Goldman asked, who, specifically is having this problem.

- Any student who transfers to uconn, especially if they have more than 60 credits.
 - When students come in with a sizeable number of credits, they have to complete general education requirements, so many of them at the 1000 level, that it can hold them back from graduating in four years.
- This is particularly a problem with CA2 as many students have taken Social Science courses at their previous institutions but the courses do not transfer in for general education credit.

Jane Goldman and Nancy Steenburg (the Avery Point BGS coordinator) have made the following suggestion:

- Create a list of 2000+ level courses that meet gen ed requirements but are not in the general education curriculum. Taking one of these “shadow gen ed courses” upon entrance to UConn, a substitution could be given for that particular student to complete the relevant gen ed requirement. This waiver would be available only to students transferring in with a certain number of credits.

Discussion and questions about above suggestion:

- Are there enough 2000+ level courses at the branches to make this possible?
 - According to regional campus representatives, there are certain 2000+level courses that are offered regularly. These would be the only ones considered as alternative general education courses.
 - Some of these courses would likely be included in the gen ed curriculum if the departments proposed them for inclusion. However, concerns about adequate seat capacity for their majors prevent many from doing so.
- Creation of such a list of alternatives would create a shadow gen ed curriculum available only to a select group of students.
- Does our obligation to “finish in four” extend to transfer students who have spent years at other institutions? Why are we considering giving these transfer students more options for completing their requirements than we would give a student who matriculated to UConn from day one?
- Deans are already making gen ed substitutions, some more appropriate than others. Giving deans a list of courses they could substitute would make it more likely the deans would make substitutions with which GEOC would be happier.
- There is also the option of creating gen ed courses that may only be offered at the regional campuses. This would solve the issue of major seat capacity for some departments as the bulk of students are on the Storrs campus.

- The proposed “unofficial” list of gen ed courses would be a very short list including a small number of courses. Departments whose courses on this list would need to “propose” their course(s) to GEOC and GEOC would “approve” unofficially. They would not appear on any of our Approved Courses lists.

Discussion of proposed action:

- Are we considering GEOC action that is advisory in nature?
- Recommendation made to have the CA2 Social Science subcommittee discuss with regional campus representatives their proposed list of substitutions.

Motion to have CA2 review the Deans’ Substitutions Report and evaluate whether substitutions that have been made are acceptable or not. Motion approved with one abstention.

Anabel Perez will forward the Substitutions Report to the CA2 chairs.

W Course Staffing

Ranjeev Bansal sent Katharina von Hammerstein and GEOC a letter wherein he raises concerns about the staffing of W courses with graduate teaching assistants.

This is the language of the General Education Guidelines regarding W course staffing:

“W courses normally will be taught by University of Connecticut faculty. When that is not possible, then qualified graduate students may be used to assist faculty in 200-level W courses or, with faculty supervision, to teach a 100-level W course.

All new instructors of W courses will be provided with a W course orientation. This orientation will be required of all teaching assistants assigned to assist in a 200-level or to instruct a 100-level W course. The orientation will present the W course guidelines and the pedagogical strategies and learning outcomes of the Freshman English courses in order to provide the institutional context and rationale for the requirement. Detailed descriptions of the Freshman English courses and a copy of the writing handbook required of all students in Freshman English will be distributed at the workshop. All orientation materials will be made available to experienced W course faculty. Supplemental workshops will be offered throughout the academic year. All W course instructors will be invited to those voluntary workshops, which will be designed to support the teaching of writing.”

Often, W (and other gen ed courses) are taught by GAs or other non full time faculty. The W Center held orientations for GAs teaching W courses (as required by the General Education Guidelines) which have largely been successful. (GAs are identified as instructors when listed as Instructor of Record in PeopleSoft. Some GAs are not listed as Instructor of Record even when they are teaching the W course.)

Note: Despite Senate recommendation that general education courses be taught by faculty, less than half of all gen ed courses are faculty-taught.

“Faculty supervision,” as noted in the General Education Guidelines, is vague. A discussion ensued regarding possible alternatives for faculty supervision:

- Ongoing seminar for a group of GAs teaching 2000 level Ws with lead faculty meeting with GAs for more supervision.
- Recommend to all departments that GAs who will be teaching W courses attend the W Center orientation to ensure the GAs are better equipped to teach these courses.

Katharina von Hammerstein and Tom Deans will meet with department heads in February 2009 at the Department Heads meeting and will discuss this W staffing problem.

Katharina von Hammerstein will write back to Ranjeev Bansal to acknowledge the W staffing problem and inform him that she will be meeting with both Tom Deans and Veronica Makowsky to discuss this issue.

Veronica Makowsky response to GEOC Letter

In brief, Vice Provost Makowsky suggested that faculty attend workshops to learn how to more innovatively teach large lecture courses. In order to help faculty, should GEOC try to get Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) to offer more of these workshops?

Discussion and recommendations:

- What would be appreciated by faculty is a one page list of pedagogical approaches for teaching large courses.
 - This list would include a list of internal and external resources, web resources, etc.
- Ask ITL to a podcast, divided into 15 minute blocks that would focus on some of the following topics:
 - Exams (multiple choice, bubble sheets, etc.)
 - construction of questions for tests that would infuse critical thinking.
 - Peer assignments (matrices)
 - Ways to make a large course something other than a straight lecture course.

Our last meeting of the Fall semester is scheduled for December 3, 2008 1:30-3:30pm in CUE 420.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anabel Perez
GEOC Administrator