

GEOC Meeting September 4, 2009

In Attendance: Katharina von Hammerstein, Anabel Perez, John Ayers, Kate Capshaw Smith, Tom Deans, Anke Finger, Jane Goldman, Bill Lott, Eric Schultz, Murphy Sewall, Xae Alicia Reyes, Cora Lynn Deibler, and Niloy Dutta. Not Present: Robert Cromley, Douglas Kaufman, Tom Roby, Sarah Winter, Rosa Helena Chinchilla, and Michael Young.

1. Minutes of the April 27, 2009 meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes as written. Motion passed.

2. Announcements

- *Welcome to new and returning GEOC members.* New GEOC members and those returning from a year away include John Ayers, Eric Schultz, Rosa Helena Chinchilla, Douglas Kaufman, Sarah Winter, and Kate Capshaw Smith. Jane Goldman and Bill Lott have taken retirement but have agreed to continue serving on the GEOC. Elizabeth Jockusch has received a grant for this coming academic year and will step down from GEOC for the duration of her grant. Morty Ortega has resigned from the GEOC. Undergraduate and graduate student members to GEOC have not yet been appointed.
- *Meetings dates and times.* Once again, there was no one time when everyone could make a meeting. As a result, we have scheduled meetings for two different days/times: Mondays 12-2 and Fridays 9-11.
- *Cross-Content Area Gen Ed (CCAGE) Courses.* The Senate C&CC- and GEOC-approved CCAGE proposal will be presented to the Senate at the September 14, 2009 meeting. Because the proposal involves changes to the bylaws, voting on the motion will occur at the October 12, 2009 meeting.
 - Eric Schultz noted that the only change Senate C&CC made to the GEOC proposal is that students decide how a course should be counted for at the final plan stage, not at registration.
 - Murphy Sewall stressed that the diagrams used last year to better describe how CCAGE courses would work must be clarified for presentation to the Senate.
 - Jane Goldman expressed concern that students *must* be advised of CCAGE courses and implications for distribution of gen ed credit right from the beginning.
 - Katrina Higgins, CLAS Academic Services Center, has assured Katharina von Hammerstein that the advising part of this change should be straightforward.
 - Eric Schultz also pointed out that it will be important to have some indication about what a student's Degree Advisement Report might look like. Katharina von Hammerstein will propose to Senate Executive Committee that she meet with Jeff von Munkwitz-Smith to discuss how the Degree Progress Report might look.
 - Tom Deans suggested that the unofficial education of students should happen in the Library Learning Commons, with lots of publicity about the change.
 - Jane Goldman suggested a Daily Campus front page article to announce the change, should it be approved.
- *GEOC Annual Report.* The Annual Report was circulated to the GEOC and will be presented to the Senate at the September meeting.
 - Highlights of the report:
 - Over 400 courses have been approved for the gen ed curriculum.
 - Over 5000 sections of gen ed courses offered in 0809.
 - Over 115,000 enrolled seats in 0809.

- Most students did not feel like they knew more about science after a lab course.
 - Does this mean that UConn lab courses are not successful? That students have been somewhat disabused of the notion that they knew about science prior to the lab course?
- Interest in science also did not increase after taking a CA3 course.
 - How much of this has to do with the large size of classes?
 - If students are already very interested in the subject when they start the course, then there is a finite amount they can increase in interest.
- Recommendations:
 - Skoog recommended the questions on the self-efficacy instrument related to lab courses be reworked to give us more precise results. She noted that the next stage of assessment is important.
 - Tom Deans noted that this report gives GEOC an area for further research and focuses future assessment.
 - For next stage of assessment, go beyond what students think they learned and assess actual student learning.
 - A CA3 Assessment workshop in May 09 that Skoog hosted was very well attended and shows that many faculty are interested in this topic.
 - Jane Goldman suggested limited student interviews or short answer evaluations, or focus groups to get at more salient CA3 assessment information as the OIR evaluation forms are not valuable for this purpose.
 - Niloy Dutta pointed out that the lab issue is not an easy problem to solve as it raises questions about resources in funding. To improve lab courses, an investment would have to be made.
- *W Assessment in Freshman English (FE)*. Scott Campbell. This was not an assessment of FE but an assessment of writing in FE.
 - Findings.
 - 84% of students reach minimal proficiency at the level of FE.
 - There is a “plateau” effect between first and last paper. This is consistent with writing between the first W course and the second W course.
 - Is “plateauing” a good thing because they don’t lose their skills or a bad thing because they don’t get better?
 - Good assignments generally resulted in better writing. The final report will include examples of “good” assignments.
 - A small number of students, 4% of the 84%, reached outstanding proficiency.
 - There is not much difference in writing proficiency between ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1011.
 - Murphy Sewall asked about what passed as minimally proficient in this assessment. He noted that his experience in teaching undergraduate students is that writing now is the same as it was before the W requirement was introduced.
 - Very few students reach moderate or higher proficiency in writing.

- Tom Deans stated that, in terms of formal errors, students now are writing with the same number of errors as they had in 1910 (nationally).
- Niloy Dutta pointed to the difference in writing between the US and other English-speaking part of the world and noted that US English lacks elegance and style.
- Jane Goldman noted that many people do not want to focus on the quality of instruction as a factor in student writing.
- Cora Lynn Deibler asked if there a way to determine of the writing level at which students come to Uconn.
 - Tom Deans noted that students' first writing samples in FE were collected as part of this assessment.
- W NURS. Continuation of the 0708 W assessment. Thomas Long.
 - Findings.
 - Outcome in NURS assessment is in line with W assessment in HDF5, ARTH, and POLS in 0708.
 - Where HDF5, ARTH, and POLS had over 90% minimal proficiency, NURS had a slightly lower level in the 80s%.
 - As in the previous W in the major assessments, an instructor's grades were much higher than what the rubrics would suggest.
 - An important outcome is the start of a disciplinary conversation about how writing should be assessed and what rubrics should be used.
 - Murphy Sewall argued that it is important for students to know that writing may differ based on the discipline and that there are different kinds of writing.
 - Comparison between writing in W courses and in FE. Report still to come.
- *AY 0910 Approved Assessment Proposal.*
 - In this academic year, CA1 assessment will start by identifying learning outcomes.
- *Vice Provost Veronica Makowsky.* Vice Provost Makowsky has stepped down from her regional campus administration oversight and will step down from her remaining duties in undergraduate education in December 2009. Vice Provost Makowsky has been very responsive to GEOC's needs and very supportive of its work. Doug Cooper has been appointed on an interim basis to oversee regional campus administration.
- *Plans for AY 0910.*
 - Usual course proposal review.
 - Continue assessment pieces and, importantly, dissemination of assessment findings to the university community to improve teaching and gen ed at UConn.
 - CA1 learning objectives.
 - Decide if there should be learning outcomes for the gen ed competencies.
 - Implement the pilot Recertification project.
 - Follow up on CCAGE courses as the Senate discussion progresses.

3. Subcommittee Reports

There are no subcommittees to present at this time.

Second Language Competency

Second language exit requirements for top 25 public institutions are similar to UConn (list distributed). Discussion about high school language requirements at the Board of Education are back to square one.

4. General Reports and Discussion

- Membership on GEOC subcommittees. It is up to subcommittee chairs to determine if their subcommittees are in need of members, and to recruit as needed. Membership to GEOC must be done through appointment by Senate Nominating Committee, though we can make recommendations.
 - CA4. With Morty Ortega's resignation, GEOC needs a new member to co-chair CA4.
 - One possible member was suggested and that name will be forwarded to SNC.
 - Cora Lynn Deibler will look at the Diversity Committee roster to identify any potential members to GEOC or the subcommittee.
 - Subcommittees who have NOT identified a need for more members:
 - W. One key member is on sabbatical in Fall 2009 but will be welcomed upon his return in Spring.
 - Second Language.
 - CA3.
 - Subcommittees who HAVE identified a need for more members:
 - CA2
 - CA1
 - CA4
 - Subcommittee chairs should review their list of members before the next meeting.
- Large Gen Ed Courses
 - For the information of the GEOC, Catherine Ross, ITL, offered a workshop in May 2009 about called public speaking and, specifically, how to present oneself in large lecture courses. The workshop was well-attended and informative. Ross discussed speech patterns in large lectures and how to "work" the room to increase student engagement.

The workshop was offered again in August and will be offered in January 2010. ITL also offers a faculty learning community in Fall about how to teach gen ed courses in large lectures.

Meeting adjourned at 10:58am.

Respectfully submitted,

Anabel Perez
GEOC Administrator