

GEOC Meeting January 26, 2009

In Attendance: Katharina Von Hammerstein, Michael Darre, Tom Deans, Jane Goldman, Felicia Pratto, John Troyer, Morty Ortega, Peter Gogarten, Dan Civco, Xae Alicia Reyes, Bill Lott, Tom Roby, Cora Lynn Deibler, Robert Cromley.
Absent: Niloy Dutta, Anke Finger, Murphy Sewall, Elizabeth Jockusch, Kristina Paul, Kayla Armando.

1. Minutes

Accept minutes from 12/08: Peter Gogarten moves to accept. Cora Lynn Deibler seconds.

2. Announcements:

- **Assessment.**
 - **CA-3:** Annelie Skoog found some faculty who implement the self-efficacy instrument for Science and Technology Gen Ed courses.
 - **CA-4:** 20 courses have been chosen for assessment and 9 have agreed so far.
 - **W:** in Freshmen English is starting. Awaiting feedback from Scott Campbell.
- **Honors recruiting of Gen Ed Competition winners to teach Honors Core courses:** Gen Ed criteria *and* Honors criteria need to be served. We do not wish for the Gen Ed competition courses to be absorbed by Honors. Lynne Goodstein is the contact. CLAS has voiced that they are afraid the competition-awarded Gen Ed courses end up being “boutique” courses such as honors courses.

Peter Gogarten: Since honors courses have a small number of students, some younger faculty are interested in teaching them. Some depts. allow faculty to teach them only as overloads. GEOC needs to double-check our language on how winners of the Provost’s Gen Ed Competition must teach their courses (frequency, pedagogy). If GEOC language is not clear we should correct it. This should be communicated to L. Goodstein- the enrollment numbers in a course should be typical for the department in which the course originates.

The Provost’s Office funds this competition, so it’s the Provost’s Office’s call. We could propose that the courses could only be Honors every other year they are offered--or that they, even if small, be available to non-honors students (perhaps 50% non-Honors students).

If the course is offered as a GE honors course and part of a faculty member’s regular load, it would not be available to non-honors students. If Honors pays merely for a TA, while the faculty teaches the honors course, the general student population would not be well served as the TA is unlikely to teach the Competition grant winning course. However, Honors could ask faculty to teach both the regular and the honors core course, the latter as a paid overload

The old competition contract (budget form) has purposely loosely phrased language in terms of departmental commitment to the frequency of teaching the course so that Department Heads are able to sign.

- **Cross Content Area Gen Ed Courses:** It was proposed by Doug Hamilton that this kind of structure is too complicated. A copy of Katharina von Hammerstein’s color Venn diagram leaked in black and white and caused confusion. Providing the correct diagram has, essentially, placated those involved (Doug Hamilton, Katrina Higgins et al). The Senate C&CC has suggested that students make a decision for which CA a CCAGE course should count late to fit in their plans of study. GEOC suggests that students make a tentative decision early when they take the course and can still change it just before graduation, if need be.
- **CLAS Proposes To Suspend the Provost’s Gen Ed Course Enhancement Competition:** CLAS C&CC proposed to suspend the competition as courses are supposedly too small (boutique courses), the competition is too expensive and the money can be used elsewhere, no more Gen Ed courses are

necessary, and the approval sequence was not always respected, etc. CLAS has asked that the Competition *only* fund existing courses.

However, the competition helps to ensure innovative pedagogy, topics, and excitement as times change. It keeps the Gen Ed program vibrant. Today, faculty proposals are more interlinked with majors and requirements as they used to be. That's why we have more GE courses than we used to in the old system. The award winners must follow-through with the approval sequence from A to Z. This year's Competition focuses on helping faculty enhance courses to become online offerings or large lectures; in addition, it encourages courses that facilitate global learning or address environmental issues. The new budget form asks Department Heads to make every effort to offer the course every, or every other, year (a realistic amount).

The Competition has been cut by 50% (over-proportional cutting). The new amount is \$60k. This may or may not be the new "starting point" for next year's cut. The max. award has gone from \$10k to \$8k. The Provost's Office wants to continue the Competition, CLAS initially opposed and its Department Heads discussed not signing any proposals. If they followed through, this would result in blocking 95% of the applications. After a conversation with Veronica Makowsky, Jeremy Teitelbaum, Dough Hamilton and Katharina von Hammerstein, CLAS feels that all their concerns have been addressed by GEOC. Truth is, that GEOC had already discussed this year's competition focuses (addressing challenges faculty face due to the budget cuts) prior to the confrontation.

Jane Goldman: The two-page proposal limit should be changed to three to accommodate the assessment piece. This is already common and may not need a formal change. GEOC might want to put the word out on the new language up front, with supportive prose later on in the materials.

- **Senate Motion to Abandon the "W" Requirement:** There is a motion (by Robert Thorson) to *discuss the possibility* of dropping the "W" requirement.

At the last Senate meeting of the fall semester, this motion was made. In response, a small committee of Tom Deans, Jane Goldman, Tom Recchio, Katharina von Hammerstein met over the break to collect material and discuss the pros and cons of the "W" requirement. This Senate discussion will probably be postponed until the March Senate meeting.

The writing requirement is not GEOC'S pet, but a Senate-approved requirement. Concerns floating around are that students don't learn enough about writing and the program is too expensive.

Writing used to be part of the normal class culture. Now, writing takes place practically only in "W" courses. Does this ghettoize writing? However, there are pockets of writing outside W courses. Furthermore, if our "W" courses did not have a cap of 19, faculty would have difficulties facilitating 15 pp of writing.

The proposal to possibly eliminate the writing requirement was initially made in the context of other university dilemmas. It may not necessarily be a slam against pedagogy- it may be more a question of resources and asking the University to look into that. The contents and delivery are part of the discussion at the Senate level, but there may be more. Bob Thorson's follow-up letter outlines more of his intent.

When the new Gen Ed requirements were developed, GEOC was asked to focus on the quality of the programs and not on questions of funding. If this motion is about money then the issue must be presented as such. The quality of the program is a different issue. Collegiate ranking is yet a third issue. We are also in the middle of W assessment and should wait for its results. We must clearly discuss all facets of this issue.

Currently, however, the quality of instruction at UConn is being driven by the budget. Some faculty are concerned that the "W" program is being protected while some other programs are not and that it is too expensive. We cannot escape the economics but it is also difficult to figure out how much the program costs. 1 or 2 million has been bandied about but cannot be confirmed since so many aspects play into this. On the other hand the cost of giving up a good writing program in small courses would be very high: what if our students cannot write after graduation? Are there innovations in delivering the "W" courses that would be more efficient? Some faculty members see teaching a W course as additional work that is not rewarded. The model of one-credit W sections of 19 students linked to larger lectures may cut costs while allowing the "W" program to continue (an attached, one-credit W section).

Should people from Economics meet with the "W" subcommittee to go over possibilities? Would a symposium be informative?

A "W" component is more than grammar and punctuation editing. It includes building an argument, citing resources, and demonstrating other more complex thinking built upon writing. Do students show writing across the curriculum? An open discussion could be useful. A panic decision to do away with the writing program would be shortsighted. What would the loss be, if our students cannot write?!

Ideally, writing would be normative and the Writing Center would supervise it in some way. The current "W" system is not a pet of either GEOC or the Writing Center. The goal is to graduate well qualified students that can write. Realistically, would there be sufficient writing in the curriculum if we didn't have an institutionalized "W" program?

Times, and culture, have changed. Past generations wrote term papers in nearly every class. Now students write two, total, in their college career. Is there evidence that the "W" program makes up for this shift? If we would not have the "W" program anymore, the "cost" may shift to faculty office time-assisting students with grant applications, SURF applications, and so on.

Writing is important for clarity of thought and we are responsible for providing opportunities to learn writing as part of college education. Can we also teach clarity of thought by other means, e.g., through oral presentations?

Employers are complaining that recent graduates can't write long or short reports with clarity nor can they make oral presentations or conduct public speaking effectively.

- **CLAS Deans Meeting:** Anything else to add to the agenda for Katharina von Hammerstein's meeting the CLAS Deans on 1/28?
- **The rescission-** Katharina von Hammerstein and Anabel Perez have been asked to come up with a budget cut for GEOC of 3, 5, or 10%. Lunch may be cut in the future. Anabel Perez's position needs to be maintained at all costs!

3. Subcommittee Reports

Information Literacy

Revised SAILS report: Letty Naigles has resigned from GEOC for personal reasons. Dan Civco takes her place. He is a Co-chair, but there is not another Co-chair. Due to his absence he was not involved in putting together the SAILS report. We are looking for a dedicated Co-chair to be involved (ideally a veteran member) who can provide some history and context.

1. Replacement of Letty Naigles- someone from on the subcommittee: Andrea Hubbard? Carolyn Lin. Also, Michael Young from Education may be good? The candidate must be a GEOC and faculty member. Felicia Pratto will suggest some colleagues from Cognitive Science.
2. IL revised the SAILS report by listing the questions that show students' weaknesses in IL. The report must eventually go on the website. However, there are not yet recommendations which might be helpful to faculty. The subcommittee will work on this list be sent out to faculty in order to assist them

with addressing the IL weaknesses. Is it worth doing SAILS again? In broad terms the upshot is that our students are not better or worse than students at other institutions in these rudiments. More finely defined data could be more helpful to us. For now the SAILS costs \$2k. The subcommittee will find out, if, for an additional fee, we may get raw data that may be useful for us to draw our own conclusions.

3. There are a good number of Information Literacy reports submitted by each major program that need to be processed. Some departments have refused to do this.

Francine de Franco from the IL subcommittee is wondering whether someone from English could become a member in the IL subcommittee. Recruitment is the subcommittee's call. Sarah Winter will be the Director of Freshman English going forward and Tom Recchio will resign from co-directing Freshman English.

Second Language

High School Second Language Graduation Requirement: In 2007 a second language high school graduation requirement was proposed in the state. This was recently rescinded from the proposal. UConn is commenting and registering an opinion on this issue, not collaborating with the State. Language in the letter has to reflect that. There are some areas of confusion in the letter as it exists now and it needs further editing. The most recent version of the letter to legislators is of last night (1/25/09). Two addenda are supposed to be included in the version that will be sent forward to the higher administration to sign, but the addenda have not been presented to GEOC, yet. Therefore GEOC cannot comment on them. The letter will go from GEOC to the higher Administration to see who will support it: the President, Provost or Vice Provost. Ideally, the letter would come from the institution, and not just GEOC.

Citing that one of the benefits of a second language is that it assists individuals with understanding their own native language (i.e. learning to write) can be added. This fits in with goals and objectives of the current University Academic Plan.

Would a second language high school graduation requirement compound the high school dropout rate? Not preparing our students for life and careers in the global world and market would also be a loss. Fewer students will be admitted to universities and colleges (many of which have an entry second language requirement), if there is no second language high school graduation requirement. The Connecticut Board of Ed will decide. This letter will be UConn's recommendation, but it will stop at that.

Social Science

ECON-1179 Economic Growth and the Environment. CA2's Felicia Pratto moves for approval but asks that the language errors in the proposal be corrected. J. Troyer seconds. All approved.

HDFS-1060 Close Relationships Across the Lifespan for the Intensive Session. CA-2's Felicia Pratto moves for approval based upon the record of the instructor going into this course. P. Gogarten seconds. All approved. However, full GEOC approval of this course for intensive session teaching has been temporarily withdrawn pending clarification by the CA2 subcommittee that the course may be offered by instructors other than the proposer.

Adjournment: The meeting is adjourned at 1:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cora Lynn Deibler
1/27/2009