

GEOC Meeting February 16, 2009

In attendance: Katharina von Hammerstein, Peter Gogarten, Mike Darre, Tom Deans, Jane Goldman, John Troyer, Felicia Pratto, Anke Finger, Morty Ortega, Murphy Sewall, Bill Lott, Kayla Armando, Cora Lynn Deibler.
Not present: Kristina Paul, Robert Cromley, Niloy Dutta, Elizabeth Jockusch, Xae Alicia Reyes, Tom Roby.

Meeting called to order at 11:33am.

1. Minutes from the February 6, 2009 meeting were edited as follows:

- Murphy Sewall clarified his point about School of Business enrollment caps. This point, on page 4 of the minutes, will now read: “The School of Business has had an enrollment cap on their courses for years, with average class size in the 40s. Very few classes have enrollments less than 30. For them, the W cap of 19 students has huge implications. Rather than the standard 3 credit W, the School of Business has created a 1 credit W taught by an In-Residence Management department faculty member hired specifically for this purpose. In the Fall semester, this one faculty member taught 8 sections of this 1 credit W, for a total of 152 students; in the Spring semester, 7 sections, for a total of 133 students. Further, while this 1 credit W fulfills the W in the major requirement, the course is taught as BADM and is only loosely related to the students’ major.”
- Clarification that the December 8, 2008 Senate motion regarding the W requirement was to discuss the possibility of dropping the W requirement as a way of coping with the budget crisis.
- On page 4, make clear that “directives to refrain from cutting seats and sections are coming out of the CLAS Dean’s Office or the Provost’s Office, not the Senate or GEOC.”

Motion to approve the minutes as revised. Motion passed with one abstention.

2. Announcements

- *Second Language Letter to the State Legislature’s Education Committee.* The final letter has been given to Veronica Makowsky. She will speak to the President or the Provost about signage. It is still somewhat unclear when the next Education Committee meeting will take place though the letter is due to go out as soon as it is signed.
- *CLAS Associate Deans Meeting.* Katharina von Hammerstein met with the CLAS Associate Deans on Wednesday, February 11, 2009. They talked briefly about GEOC’s proposed Cross Content Area General Education Courses and they were generally positive about the proposal so long as the integrity of the CAs was maintained, the Advising Center was given clear guidance, and a thorough guide was developed for students and advisors. In regard to the Hamilton/Manning letter sent to CLAS department heads February 2, 2009, the Dean and Associate Deans stated that there is no CLAS effort to eliminate general education at UConn despite the general tone of the letter. Also discussed was the availability of 2000-level general education courses at the regional campuses.

Dean Teitelbaum urged GEOC to bring more attention to the need for more resources to support the current general education requirements.

- GEOC has been at the forefront for years in trying to bring attention to this need. Because this has been such a longstanding issue for the University, there should be documentation that quality general education cannot exist as designed without this increase in funding.
- New administrators across the University are not necessarily aware that, historically, GEOC has been urging the Provost’s Office for more funding of general education while not decreasing funding for major and graduate studies. Therefore, it is important for GEOC to reiterate the resource issue on a regular basis. A second point that should be reiterated to

the University community is that all GEOC members care about graduate education and advise graduate students. They are not interested in a competition such as Gen Ed vs. majors or graduate studies.

- It is important to reframe the economics of the situation to more than dollars, emphasizing both faculty and student needs. Cutting the Ws from general education would not necessarily save money and it could jeopardize faculty lines that departments have been given to support these courses.
- Has GEOC done a poor job in highlighting the funding needs for teaching a W when departments propose W courses?
 - By the time course proposals come to us, the courses have been approved by both departments and schools and the determinations have been made that the courses can be funded adequately.
 - GEOC's charge is curricular, not funding.
- *W and Freshmen English Assessment.* Scott Campbell asked if it would be acceptable to hire adjuncts for some of the five GA spots originally allocated for readers during the Summer 2009 assessment work. The general consensus on GEOC and amongst the Assessment subcommittee is that this would be fine as the majority of W courses at the regional campuses are taught by adjuncts. At Storrs, a large proportion of courses are taught by graduate students. The graduate students hired for the summer work will be drawn from the ENGL department, as it is overwhelmingly ENGL GAs who teach ENGL 1110/1111.
- *Unified Curricular Action Request Form.* Hedley Freake, Tammy Gifford, Mike Darre, Katharina von Hammerstein, and Anabel Perez met last week to discuss the future of the unified CAR. The original idea for the new CAR was to allow schools and colleges to modify the form for their needs once the form was working well for GEOC and the Senate to create a seamless process from department through to the Senate.
 - CANR will be the first school to attempt to implement the form for their use. Mike Darre, in his role as CANR C&CC chair, will meet with the UITS developers to discuss their workflow needs.
 - Once they are done with their modifications, GEOC and the Senate Office will have a better sense of the cost and technical needs needed for other schools and colleges to use the form for their internal needs.
 - Meetings on this issue with the other schools' C&CCs will follow.

3. Subcommittee Reports

CA2 Social Science

CA2 chair, Felicia Pratto, confirmed that HDFS 1060 Close Relationships Across the Lifespan is approved for teaching during intensive sessions.

Motion to approve the course as confirmed. Motion approved.

Information Literacy

Dan Civco, currently the sole subcommittee chair, has asked to step down from GEOC but has agreed to continue until a replacement is found. Katharina von Hammerstein has spoken to the Senate Nominating Committee about our needs for two new GEOC members to serve as chairs for this subcommittee. So far, they have not provided any recommendations.

4. Reports and Discussion

Online courses

The new CAR form asks proposers if the proposed course will be offered online. Does GEOC want to institute a new approval process similar to the intensive sessions?

Background:

In Spring 2007, GEOC had extensive discussions about online general education courses. Reasoning that significant changes to pedagogy were needed to offer an existing course online, GEOC sent to Senate C&CC a motion to require further justification for courses where more than 1/3 of the course was online.

Senate C&CC did not approve this motion, citing some of the following points. Additional points came up in GEOC discussions:

- What exactly is 1/3 of a course? 1/3 of evaluation, 1/3 of face-to-face time, etc.
- There is no scrutiny of pedagogy in transfer courses.
- If one section of a course is taught online, does the whole course need to be considered online?
- How does distance learning fit here?
- We have no online methodology criteria.
- Should every online course be checked by ITL?

GEOC determined at that time that it would not pursue this added level of review, but would include questions about online teaching in the recertification process.

Current discussion:

There is a new initiative to make UConn a leader in online education. (Online education is asynchronous; distance learning is synchronous.) The only model for online courses at UConn is the Masters in Accounting, where the whole program is online. Unlike many other online programs, notably the University of Phoenix, this program is well regarded.

Does GEOC want to renew its effort to scrutinize online courses? A discussion ensued:

- Important questions for evaluating the quality of online courses:
 - Is there a faculty person in charge? There is a need to ensure that online courses are not being used as a way to have non-faculty take over teaching.
 - Who is teaching these classes?
 - How are students evaluated?
- For some online courses, students took tests in person. There should be a certain number of face to face meetings to ensure that the people doing the work are those who are getting the credit.
- The issue of cheating has been raised as a reason for an increased scrutiny of online courses. However, cheating is also an issue in large lectures, not only online.
 - How a course is delivered should be determined by the needs of the students and how the faculty determines he/she can best teach the course.
- The Registrar's Office has informed GEOC that online summer courses are greatly sought after.
- W courses online are of particular concern for some on GEOC. How can we be sure who is actually writing a particular paper?
- Per the Senate charge to GEOC, GEOC must review delivery of the course, not only how or if it meets particular general education criteria.
- It makes more sense to do assessment of courses and then see how online courses measure up against those traditionally taught.
- There is no UConn model for undergraduate online courses and GEOC should not try to define a model for online education. The recently established university committee on online offerings should do that and then GEOC should use those guidelines when evaluating proposals.

- The reality of teaching online courses is that, while there are positive services implications, it is generally more costly as, contrary to general opinion, faculty members can deliver content to more students in person than online.
- GEOC should go forward with the belief that those modifying courses for online teaching are doing so with integrity.
- It might be worth considering what proportion of an undergraduate degree could be taught online. This, however, would not be for GEOC to determine.
- Recommendation to not do anything until the University's Online Education Committee decides on the matter. GEOC should focus on learning outcomes.
- We need assessment data, some evidentiary basis for believing that delivery methods affect learning outcomes.
- Online courses are one key focus of this year's Provost's Competition. For winning proposals including aspects of online teaching, the review panel will highly encourage proposers to work with ITL's Instructional Design and Development department. For online courses to be successful, course design is key.

For now, the GEOC decision is to not require additional review of online teaching of general education courses.

Substitutions and 2000+level General Education Courses

BGS students are in need of 2000+level general education courses at the regional campuses. Ernie Zirakzadeh, CLAS Associate Dean, has recommended the creation of parallel courses, with one a gen ed and another not, with the gen ed version offered only at the regional campuses. Ernie Zirakzadeh would like to join GEOC for a conversation about this matter.

One way in which the problem could be dealt with is through Substitutions. In 2006, GEOC reviewed an internal BGS general education course substitution list. GEOC subcommittees made recommendations to BGS about the appropriateness of courses on the list.

Nancy Steenburg, Assistant Director for BGS and Non-Degree Programs at the Avery Point campus, has recommended identifying 5 or 6 non gen ed social science courses that are regularly taught at the regional campuses (and which have not been proposed for gen ed due to enrollment constraints on the Storrs campus) and which could get automatic substitution approval for CA2. This would mostly solve the problem for the affected students. Robert Cromley volunteered in December to work with Nancy Steenburg on identifying particular courses to see if this idea would work. Katharina von Hammerstein will follow up with Robert Cromley about his progress on this front.

Ernie Zirakzadeh will be invited to our March 2, 2009 GEOC meeting.

CLAS Approved Study Abroad General Education Courses

The Study Abroad website includes a list of CLAS Approved Study Abroad General Education Courses. This is the first time GEOC has seen this list.

Pre-Approved Substitutions:

Currently, the process for Study Abroad courses is that a student chooses what they want to take at their study abroad institution, the Study Abroad office gets syllabi information about the course and asks the department with expertise in that area to okay the course as an acceptable substitution. This is similar to the transfer process where departments approve how a course in their department will transfer in.

Anabel Perez will re-sort the course list by CA for subcommittees to review. She will distribute this resorted list to the GEOC.

Concerns:

- INTDs are a particular concern. Some courses on the CLAS Approved list have been rejected by particular departments for a direct substitution for one of their courses and have been made INTDs with general education credit.
- Many courses are pre-approved for areas that do not make sense.
- Some programs do not have 2000+ level general education courses so, for these departments, gen eds above the introductory 1000-level should not be approved.
- The only courses that students should be able to take abroad as a gen ed course are those that transfer back as specific UConn courses that ARE approved gen eds.

Katharina von Hammerstein will follow up with Katrina Higgins to find out how this list was created.

Themed General Education Pathways

These pathways would be clusters of gen ed courses with particular themes across the general education curriculum, e.g., gender, environmental sustainability, human rights, or the like. The goal is to make student choices for general education courses more intentional. This would be an option, not a requirement.

Discussion:

- One of the advantages of the current gen ed system is that students are forced to take courses outside of their areas of interest.
- Many students find it easier to follow paths already established (a gen ed theme, for instance) than explore the wide range of course options on their own. The creation of these pathways could inhibit students from branching out to areas they would not have otherwise explored.
- Sum bigger than its parts. One positive aspect of the pathways is that it would in effect make the scope of courses in a particular theme, when taken together, more valuable than the individual courses themselves.
- GEOC should explore using the Learning Commons to educate students about general education.
- Pathways could be a valuable tool for advising.
- Pathways would offer continuity and interdisciplinarity.
- Is it GEOC's task to come up with these pathways?

There seem to be two opposing sets of opinions on GEOC regarding themed pathways. Katharina von Hammerstein asked GEOC members to take a look at current gen ed titles and see what sorts of pathways would be possible. Discussion on this topic will continue at upcoming meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 1:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anabel Perez
GEOC Administrator