

GEOC Meeting February 6, 2009

In Attendance: Katharina von Hammerstein, Peter Gogarten, Mike Darre, Jane Goldman, Robert Cromley, Niloy Dutta, Kristina Paul, Bill Lot, Morty Ortega, Murphy Sewall, Tom Deans, Kayla Armando, Anke Finger, Xae Alicia Reyes, Brian Boecherer (SL subcommittee guest), Tom Roby, Peter Gogarten .
Not Present: John Troyer, Cora Lynn Deibler, Felicia Pratto, Dan Civco, Elizabeth Jockusch.

Meeting called to order at 12:03pm.

1. Minutes of the January 26, 2009 meeting will be edited as follows:

- Intensive session approval of HDFS 1060 has been withdrawn pending CA2 subcommittee clarification of whether they are recommending approval of the course for teaching by instructors other than the proposer.
- In Announcement “CLAS Proposes to Suspend...” clarify that *CLAS C&CC* made the proposal to suspend the Provost’s Competition.
- Rewording of sentence on page 2 to read, “This year’s Competition focuses on helping faculty enhance courses to become online offerings or large lectures; in addition...”

Motion to approve the minutes as revised. Motion approved.

2. Announcements

- *Provost’s Competition.* Workshop has been scheduled for February 24th 2-3pm in CUE 320. Katharina von Hammerstein and Anabel Perez will work on the composition of the Review Panel.
- *Honors General Education Courses.*
 - Lynne Goodstein has begun recruiting previous winners of the Provost’s Competition to convert their courses to Honors Core courses. Two previous winners have so far come forward. Katharina von Hammerstein has expressed to Lynne Goodstein the GEOC concerns about availability of grant-supported Gen Ed courses to the general student population, class size, and meeting general education criteria.
 - Honors’ responses to GEOC suggestions about possible solutions (as discussed at the January 26, 2009 GEOC meeting):
 - Prov Comp courses converted to Honors Core courses will be offered as Honors Core every other year they are offered.
 - Honors Program wants no mixing of Honors and non-Honors students in Honors Core courses.
 - Honors Program does not support paying faculty teaching Honors courses as an overload.
 - An Honors Course Development Competition will be developed.
- *Writing Competency.* At the December 8, 2008 Senate meeting, Robert Thorson made a motion to discuss the possibility of dropping the W requirement as a way of coping with the budget crisis. Senate discussion about this motion has been postponed until March 2, 2009. In the meantime, Robert Thorson has back-tracked on the full elimination of the Writing requirement and is now asking about the rationale for the “second W.” Currently, students must pass Freshman English and two Ws, one of which must be in the major. Because of the lack of W courses, students tend to take ANY second W for which they can register. [The discussion on this issue is included in **4. Reports and Discussions.**]

3. Subcommittee Reports

Computer Technology

The Computer Technology Competency subcommittee has proposed the creation of an online survey for faculty to express satisfaction/dissatisfaction with students’ computer literacy skills. The objective is to find out if there really is a widespread problem of students lacking the expected computer literacy skills. If this is not a widespread problem, it may be an expectation that can be removed from General Education. Currently, only the School of Nursing tests their students for this competency.

The problem with this competency is that, as soon as it is defined, students are moving on to the newest technology. It seems as though many of the problems that are identified as problem areas- computer security and ethical issues- are in the Information Literacy domain.

Eliminating the Computer Technology Competency:

Two areas have been identified as points of concern: ethical issues and security. Both are pre-professionalization issues that can be introduced to students in a variety of overlapping ways. Some include:

- Including the information in FYE courses, in a manner parallel to the plagiarism issue.
- The creation of a HuskyCT module that faculty could use in their individual courses.
- The expansion of the HuskyCT entry-modules that Kim Chambers, Instructional Resource Center, develops and inclusion, for example, ethical issues and questions of security.

The Computer Technology Competency subcommittee will return to GEOC with a draft recommendation on the items above. This may include the creation of a general module for HuskyCT that covers the two areas of concern. If and once approved by GEOC, it will be forwarded to Senate C&CC.

CA3 Science and Technology

The CA3 subcommittee recommends **approval of the following course for inclusion in the Science and Technology, Non-Lab, content area:**

ENGR 1101 Living in an Engineered World

Motion to approve the CA3 recommendation. Motion approved.

The CA3 subcommittee reports that they are awaiting more information from the NRE 1000 Environmental Science proposers before making a determination about its appropriateness for teaching in the intensive session. As of today, no formal Intensive Session CAR has been submitted to GEOC.

Second Language Competency

Brian Boecherer, Second Language subcommittee member, was present for this discussion.

The CT Education Committee reviewing the *Secondary School Reform- The Connecticut Plan* at the state level is meeting February 9, 2009. The letter GEOC intends to send to the Education Committee will not be finalized in time for this meeting. Xae Alicia Reyes and Brian Boecherer will find out when the Committee is scheduled to meet next. Anke Finger and Murphy Sewall recommend sending this letter to the Education Committee well in advance of their next meeting to get the topic on their agenda.

The following edits were recommended:

- First sentence is too long and needs to address clearly what the letter is about: the “absence” (rather than “omission”) of a second language requirement.
- Reform documentation and legislation should be followed by a date in parentheses.
- “Applied linguistics experts”, rather than simply “scholars.”
 - Include only the top three rather than all five, as currently included.
- In the third paragraph, replace the word “enable with “motivate,” to read, “...the financial disparities between high schools will motivate a system where urban and rural...”

With these revisions, the letter will be forwarded to Veronica Makowsky for signage by the upper administration.

CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

The CA4 subcommittee recommends **approval of the following existing CA4 International course for teaching in the intensive session:**

HRTS/ POLS 1007 Introduction to Human Rights

Motion to approve the CA4 recommendation. Motion approved.

PRLS/ SPAN 1009 Latino Literature, Culture, and Society

The CA4 subcommittee likes this course but is concerned about how they plan to cover all of the topics presented. They would like to see a syllabus before recommending approval.

Membership: the CA4 subcommittee chairs are requesting additional faculty members for their subcommittee. Anabel Perez will send Anke Finger and Morty Ortega the list of those who early in the academic year volunteered to serve on that subcommittee.

Dropped Courses

At the request of the department, the following course will be **dropped from the general education curriculum:**

MLS 3121W Immunology for the Medical Laboratory Science

This drop has already been reported in the Senate Minutes.

4. Reports and Discussions

CLAS Letter to Department Heads:

For the record, in attendance at this GEOC meeting are eight GEOC members from CLAS departments.

Last fall, Dean Teitlebaum asked CLAS C&CC to think of ways CLAS might better do college business in light of budget cuts. Specifically, Dean Teitlebaum wanted to know what could be changed.

A letter dated February 2, 2009, signed by Douglas Hamilton, CLAS Associate Dean and John Manning, CLAS C&CC Chair, on Dean's office stationary, has been distributed to CLAS department heads seeking feedback about the negative impact of the current general education curriculum on their departments. An accompanying survey asks department heads to respond by the end of February. This letter did not include a cc: to GEOC or to the Senate.

GEOC members raised the following points in response:

- The new Gen Ed system is much more integrated with the major and major interests and, in terms of the number of courses students must take, smaller.
- The 380 gen ed courses highlighted in the letter are overwhelmingly CLAS courses and were proposed by CLAS departments. This integration explains the increase in Gen Ed courses; the Gen Ed program is no longer a limited set of Gen-Ed-only courses.
 - Course inclusion in the new Gen Ed curriculum, with the exclusion of one W in the major course, is entirely voluntary.
 - Many departments use Gen Ed courses as a way to attract majors, safeguard budgets and faculty.
- When the new General Education curriculum was proposed, the University administration promised increased funding to cover the added expense to departments, particularly for the W requirement. However, this funding never materialized so the W requirement became an unfunded mandate.
 - The resource implications of the new Gen Ed requirements were not studied before their implementation.
 - A discussion of these implications is a positive step. GEOC should welcome these conversations with a reminder to all that it is the Provost's Office that controls the purse strings, not GEOC.
- GEOC is not an autonomous unit or a tool of the administration; it was the Senate who recommended the Gen Ed requirements and created the GEOC.
 - CLAS pushed for general education in the first place.
- The letter appears to be a distortion of the situation.
 - CLAS has added Gen Ed requirements to the University's Gen Ed requirements, for a total of five additional courses:
 - 1 more Q
 - 2nd year language course
 - 3 more Content Area 1 courses.
- Getting rid of Gen Ed will result in virtually zero savings to schools/colleges since students are still required to complete 120 credits for their undergraduate degree.
- As signed, there is the implication that the letter has the support of CLAS C&CC and the Deanship. However, this letter never went through CLAS C&CC.
- This is a highly political topic and the resulting information will no doubt be skewed as departments try to grapple with the effects of budget cuts.
- The questions included in the survey may ask the questions the CLAS Dean's Office has asked, but they are phrased in a very loaded way.

- Question 8: “What course offering(s) would you excise were it not for the centralized directives about which courses are to be taught and for what numbers of students?”
 - Taking W courses out of this, is this true? The 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.
- Questions 6 and 7:
 - “6. What percentage of your general education courses is taught by graduate students (GA’s)? Is their assignment to these courses a function of your perceived obligation to offer general education courses? Can you assess any relationship between such reliance upon GA’s and their time-to-degree in your department?
 - 7. To what extent has the need to staff Gen Ed sections driven (or enabled?) the maintenance (or expansion) of your graduate program? Would its reduction now affect the graduate program or its curriculum negatively?”
 - These questions are asked in ways that raise concerns about graduate students taking longer to graduate because they teach Gen Ed courses.

How should GEOC respond: Katharina von Hammerstein will be meeting with the CLAS Deans on Wednesday, February 11, 2009. GEOC consensus is to let this play out in CLAS and not contact department heads. Several GEOC members noted that many departments would not recommend changes to the current Gen Ed curriculum because it is not in their departments’ best interest to say they don’t need Gen Ed courses.

Writing: Freshman English and in the Major

[Note: discussion of this issue took place during the “Announcements” portion of the meeting.]

Currently, students must pass Freshman English and two Ws, one of which must be in the major to complete the Writing Competency requirement. Because of the lack of W courses, students tend to take ANY second W for which they can register. The course then may or may not find their interest or be relevant to their studies and career preparation.

The following points and questions were raised during the discussion:

- The argument has been made that taking two Ws instead of just the one has no impact on students’ ability to write.
- Is the way we have implemented the Writing requirement the most effective way? The distributive teaching of W is not recognized with the current W requirement.
- Were Writing left to departments’ discretion rather than included in the General Education curriculum, how do you ensure that departments are graduating students who can write?
- Some options:
 - Have a two W requirement, with BOTH Ws in the major
 - This would be very harmful to departments and schools already at capacity.
 - Have a two W requirement, with one W designated “Writing in the Sciences” or “Writing in the Humanities” and the other in the major.
 - This addresses some of the concerns raised about discipline-specific writing.
 - Split W teaching into more than 1 course with the creation of a cumulative point system of Writing credits.
- Several GEOC members have encouraged the GEOC to reframe these conversations about general education requirements and ensure that the conversations are fair and honest.
 - When is it the quality of courses, and when is it a conversation about funding?
 - If faculty members are arguing that UConn students can’t write, it is fair to ask, “what *else* can’t they do?” This may be an issue larger than the W requirement.
- 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 1credit W fulfills the W in the major requirement, the course is taught as BADM and is only loosely related to the students’ major.

Meeting adjourned at 2:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anabel Perez
GEOC Administrator