

# GEOC Meeting April 27, 2009

*In Attendance: Katharina von Hammerstein, Mike Darre, Bill Lott, Anabel Perez, Jane Goldman, Tom Deans, Morty Ortega, Xae Alicia Reyes, Anke Finger, Tom Roby, Cora Lynn Deibler, Elizabeth Jockusch, Felicia Pratto.*  
*Not Present: John Troyer, Robert Cromley, Dan Civco, Michael Young, Murphy Sewall, Niloy Dutta, Kayla Armando, and Kristina Paul.*

Meeting called to order at 11:35am.

**1. Minutes** of the previous meeting were presented and edited as follows:

- Correction of two typos on pages 3 and 4.
- Announcements, Provost's Competition: change "departments" to "areas" as BIOL is not a department.

**Motion to approve the minutes as edited. Motion passed.**

## **2. Announcements**

- *Party at Katharina's.* Katharina von Hammerstein invited GEOC members to an end of semester gathering at her home on Friday, May 1, 2009. Driving directions were distributed.
- *AY 08-09 Activities.* Katharina von Hammerstein provided summary of GEOC activities in this academic year in preparation for Annual Report.  
A few highlights were noted:
  - Cross Content Area Gen Ed courses proposal approved by Senate C&CC in April 2009 and will be presented to the Senate in September 2009.
  - CANR WebCAR Form. Early on in the semester, UITS informed Mike Darre, chair of CANR C&CC, that they needed approval from their supervisors before taking on any new projects. As a result, we still do not have a general idea of the anticipated cost of formatting our current webCAR form for seamless use by schools and colleges. Nancy Bull has recently agreed to allow UITS to setup an initial meeting. Mike Darre will meet with Haleh Ghaemolsabahi in the coming weeks, though it is not yet clear if a budget for this will be approved by the Provost's Office.
  - Global Citizenship Curriculum: Nearly 600 undergraduate courses across campus have been identified as "global," several hundred in the general education curriculum.
- *Senate C&CC W Requirement Discussion.* Katharina von Hammerstein has met with Senate C&CC to discuss next steps following the discussion in the Senate about the current W requirement. The decision was made to create a taskforce to take charge of the continued discussion.
  - Mike Darre, current SC&CC chair, and Eric Schultz, Senate C&CC chair in the 2009-2010 academic year, will set into motion a process to identify members. The first taskforce meeting will be scheduled in Fall 2009.
- *GEOC Membership.* With the close of this academic year, Felicia Pratto and John Troyer will rotate off the committee. A round of applause was given for their work on GEOC.
  - Senate Nominating Committee has sent Katharina von Hammerstein recommendations for new members.
    - Katharina von Hammerstein has contacted those people:
      - Doug Kaufman has accepted his nomination to GEOC and will serve as W co-chair.
- *Living Learning Communities (LLC).* Katharina von Hammerstein had a meeting with Veronica Makowsky, David Ouimette, and Melissa Foreman (both LLC) to discuss LLC and their relationship to general education.
  - They would like to see the creation of course clusters specifically geared toward these communities.

- Katharina von Hammerstein suggested that individual LLCs create suggested lists of courses from already-approved general education courses or create search functions according to a given LLC's theme.

### **3. Subcommittee reports**

#### Social Science

At the request of the department, the following course is being **withdrawn from inclusion in CA2 Social Science:**

SOCI 2XXX/W Sociology of Intolerance and Injustice

This course was provisionally approved for inclusion in CA2 at the April 13, 2009 meeting pending one slight revision. This revision was made on April 14, 2009 and CA2 approval for the course was forwarded to Senate C&CC on April 15, 2009.

Electronic vote:

The CA2 subcommittee **recommended provisional approval of the following courses for teaching in the intensive session:**

POLS 1402 Introduction to International Relations  
ECON 1000 Essentials of Economics

An e- vote on April 16, 2009 produced the following vote count:

POLS 1402 17 votes in favor  
ECON 1000 15 votes in favor, 2 opposed

#### **Motion to provisionally approve the two courses for intensive session teaching passed.**

Note: ECON 1000 and POLS 1402 were “provisionally approved” (as opposed to “fully approved”) because, in their review, the subcommittee did not discuss approval of the courses for teaching in the intensive session in perpetuity. The CA2 subcommittee will review the proposals again to determine if full approval should be given.

POLS 1402 was approved for intensive session teaching by CA4 in early April.

#### Catalog Copy and/or Editorial Changes:

The ANTH department would like to amend the following ANTH 1006 catalog copy:

*ANTH 1006. Introduction to Anthropology*

*(106) Either semester. Three credits. Two class periods and one 1-hour discussion.*

*The biological and cultural development of humans from their origin to the present. A brief survey of human evolution is followed by a comparative study of behavior and beliefs of our own and other societies. CA 2. CA 4-INT.*

The ANTH department would like to remove the reference to “Two class periods and one 1-hour discussion” in order to give faculty teaching the course more flexibility in delivery. The change in catalog copy would make the copy consistent with other ANTH course listings. They would like this change to be deemed editorial in nature and bypass review by relevant C&C committees.

After a brief discussion, GEOC concluded that changes to the catalog copy need to be reviewed by all relevant C&C committees, including GEOC. Katharina von Hammerstein will let the ANTH chair know.

#### 4. Reports and Discussion

##### Substitutions

Because the current Gen Ed Guidelines do not specify an appropriate substitutions procedure for undergraduate programs with no dean, GEOC will propose the following change:

PART A.3. Principles for the General Education Curriculum

3. Other Operating Principles:

##### Current text:

“f. All students entering the University or changing school or college within the University beginning with the Fall semester 2005 are expected to meet these General Education Requirements. Bearing in mind the principles outlined in this document, the Dean of the admitting School or College may make substitutions to the requirements for students who entered higher education prior to Fall 2005 and on a continuing basis for other students. Each Dean will submit an annual report summarizing this activity to GEOC by the end of the Spring semester each year.”

##### Proposed text [addition in boldface]

“f. All students entering the University or changing school or college within the University beginning with the Fall semester 2005 are expected to meet these General Education Requirements. Bearing in mind the principles outlined in this document, the Dean of the admitting School or College may make substitutions to the requirements for students who entered higher education prior to Fall 2005 and on a continuing basis for other students. Each Dean will submit an annual report summarizing this activity to GEOC by the end of the Spring semester each year. **For undergraduate programs that have no dean the cognizant office to make substitutions is the office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education.**”

**Motion to approve the above addition to the guidelines. Motion approved.**

#### 5. Monitoring and Assessment

##### Recertification

Currently, the Gen Ed Guidelines do not specify the application of “sunset laws” to gen ed courses. Hedley Freake, chair of Senate Executive Committee and former GEOC chair, suggested that GEOC create wording to include this provision and the procedure for recertification, and then forward this proposal to Senate C&CC.

Discussion:

- Because departments are overburdened this year as it is, GEOC must tread carefully so as to not add an unreasonable amount of work to faculty.
- With no sunset laws, there is no incentive for departments to respond to GEOC requests for information necessary for recertification of courses.
  - One alternative to sunset laws: if a department does not respond to a request, GEOC could recommend “decertification” of the course to Senate C&CC.
  - One potential strategy: set a deadline for returning recertification form and accompanying documents and then see if we encounter a problem. If we do, GEOC can go to the Senate and seek more authority (i.e. sunset laws) to move forward with recertification.
    - The “oversight” function of GEOC can be interpreted as either individual review of existing gen ed courses or review of the entire gen ed curriculum.

- Newly-formed W task force is going to review the gen ed curriculum as it pertains to the W requirement.

### Recertification Documents

Drafts of recertification documents were circulated to the GEOC. Veronica Makowsky is pressing GEOC for the following recertification timeline: create plan in Fall 2009, test plan in Spring 2009, fully implement plan in Fall 2010.

### Discussion:

- Tom Roby argued that recertification is an unwelcome burden at a time when departments are already understaffed and overworked.
  - Most of GEOC agreed with this assessment but Veronica Makowsky would still like to see this move forward on the timeline noted above.
  - To alleviate the burden for both departments and GEOC, a staggered approach must be taken.
    - Suggestion: One way to start is to ask the following of departments:
      - Are there any gen ed courses that you are no longer teaching?
      - Are there any gen ed courses that you wish to remove from the gen ed curriculum?
      - Are there any gen ed courses that have undergone substantial changes since they were approved for inclusion in the gen ed curriculum?
    - Suggestion: Recertify by content area or competency.
    - Suggestion: Let departments select one (or few) course(s) from their current slate of gen ed courses (that were approved 5 years ago or more; number of years to be determined) OR seek recertification of the department's gen ed course with the highest enrollment (also approved 5 or so years ago; number of years to be determined). This could be deemed a pilot project.
- Bill Lott noted that, rather than a paper form the department must complete, a form with database field pull-up to auto-populate as much of the forms as possible would save departments a lot of time.
  - Outside of those proposals submitted using the webCAR form implemented in Fall 2008, GEOC does not have a database that includes detailed information from the proposals.
    - The proposal database Anabel Perez maintains includes review data listing when courses were submitted, for what content area(s) and/or competencies they were proposed, if they were approved, etc.
  - GEOC maintains electronic copies of gen ed proposals. However, because of the incredibly high volume of course proposals submitted in the run up to the implementation of the new gen ed curriculum (no courses in the previous gen ed curriculum were "rolled over" into the new curriculum), GEOC proposals did not include nearly the level of detail proposals are required to include now.
- Recertification form: Peter Gogarten pointed out that it is important that GEOC make the recertification form as simple as can be. Ideally, the form would have ask two questions: 1, does this courses still meet gen ed criteria (Yes/No) and, 2, provide evidence: course syllabus and relevant exams. The GEOC subcommittees can then decide if the course meets content area criteria.
  - One GEOC member warned that some departments may be put off by the notion of having GEOC judge the quality of their exams.
  - Review of content area/competency criteria will be different for the different subcommittees.
    - For W and Q, competency criteria will be evident in the syllabi.
    - Some GEOC members argued that course syllabi may not always provide a lot of relevant gen ed information.
  - Should subcommittees have to spend time extracting gen ed and content area/ competency criteria from syllabi? It makes more sense for departments to make this information explicit.

- One GEOC member cautioned that we must be careful not to ask how the department is doing what they said they were going to do in their original proposal; rather, we should ask what they are doing *now* to meet the content area criteria.
- It is important for GEOC to ask itself: what does GEOC want to learn in this process?
- It is going to be critical that GEOC try to make this process as collaborative as possible so that faculty do not become defensive. Many faculty already think GEOC oversteps its bounds and, if handled badly, recertification can only make this perception worse.
  - Allowing departments to choose the one course they wish to recertify at the onset of this process lets departments know that we are all on the same side.

#### Summary of the discussion so far:

GEOC should do the following:

- Ask departments which of their gen ed courses are no longer offered.
- Ask departments if there are any gen ed courses they currently offer which they wish to remove from the general education curriculum.
- (Possibly) Ask department heads to identify gen ed courses where substantial changes have been made.
- Identify one or few course(s) per department (perhaps one in each content area/competency) that was/were approved 5+ years ago (number of years to be determined) for recertification. Possibly allow departments to choose this/these course(s).

Continued discussion:

- If we choose to review just one course per department, it may be a good idea to ask departments to complete the current webCAR form which includes a lot of detail they may not have submitted in the original proposal.
  - However, there is a lot of information requested on the webCAR form which GEOC does not need for recertification. Departments may just get annoyed by having to complete a lot of unnecessary information and it could create confusion about the recertification process.
- What is the rush on recertification? Several GEOC members asked if the Provost's Office was looking for a particular type of assessment.
- Forms: Because different content areas and competencies will require different information, we should be looking at the creation of separate forms.
  - There should be different recertification forms for each of the different content area/competency combinations. In this way, each content area/competency can decide what they wish to ask and then the form can be created by combining the different pieces. For example, there would be separate forms for CAs 1, 2, 3, 4 and Q/W, and then combinations of those forms.
  - One member noted that Q and W can most likely get all the information they need from syllabi and one Y/N question
  - Another member noted that there is no need for a staggered approach for Q courses.
    - However, asking departments for information regarding all of their Q courses at one time may be a very bad PR move.
  - If GEOC tries to create a recertification form to accommodate all content areas and competencies, the form will be very complex and intimidating.
  - Asking a Y/N question (What are you doing now to meet gen ed criteria?) is not effective. GEOC must balance the integrity of the recertification process with the overburdening of departments.
  - GEOC might want to ask departments to provide for one example of how what they do in their course meets each criterion per content area/competency.

- Optional part of the form may be to ask departments to describe if and how funding has changed their offering of a particular course.
- Funding: Veronica Makowsky should provide funding for the automatic pull-up of information from a database (and for the creation of database) so that departments have to complete as little of the forms as possible. (Automatic pull-up of information submitted in the original proposal)
  - Recertification, to be done effectively, needs funding.
    - Katharina von Hammerstein noted that some funds for student labor may not be that difficult to get.

Summary of the discussion so far:

GEOC should do the following:

- Start with one gen ed course per semester per department.
- Test use of the brief form in Spring 2010 with this small number of courses.
- Remove in-depth recertification form for now.

Continued discussion:

- GEOC should formally report to Veronica Makowsky that this is not the time to start recertification of general education courses.
- Starting one course per department or one course per department per content area may at least give GEOC an idea of what will and will not work.
  - It may be helpful to GEOC to initiate the process.
  - GEOC must clearly communicate that recertification is important and not just busywork.
- Monitoring: If during the course of a course's review a subcommittee determines that the course does not obviously meet the guidelines/criteria for a particular content area/competency, what can GEOC do?
  - Should there be a low-level monitoring approach at first and then move toward true recertification later?
- A pilot recertification process should be more than the review of one course. GEOC must create a schedule for cycles of recertification of courses in the curriculum.
- Oversight vs. Assessment: The faculty Senate is the body that has charged GEOC to oversee the undergraduate general education curriculum; Assessment is a project of the university administration.
  - By delaying recertification (an oversight function), GEOC is capitulating to the UConn administration's priorities.

Meeting adjourned at 1:33pm. This is the last meeting of the Spring 2009 semester.

Respectfully submitted,

Anabel Perez  
GEOC Administrator