General Education “Stakeholder” Meeting  
November 30, 2013

Department Chairs, Program Leaders, and Course Coordinators who oversee curricula in the General Education Program gathered to review the fall 2012 semester activities in response to our General Education revision.

In attendance: 
Linda Rowland, Maria Roca, Richard Kenney, Eric Otto, Morgan Paine, Bette Jackson Greg Tolley, Roger Green, Tak Ueda, Mike MacDonald, Jan DeJarnette, Brad Busbee, Rebecca Totaro, Michelle Hayford, Doug Harrison, Anne-Marie Bouche, Billy Gunnels, Randy Cross, Kevin Aho, Jamie MacDonald, Shelton Weeks, Carrie Kerekes, Marty Bourgeois, Erik Carlson, Robert Humphries, Anna Goebel, Jim Wohlpart, and Kris De Welde.

The meeting began with a PowerPoint presentation that reviewed the activities over the fall 2012 term in response to the General Education revision being mandated by the state. Discussion then ensued regarding a variety of issues. The following transcript organizes the points made (loosely) by themes.

Concerns about Transfer Students

• We must consider transfer students who do not take our General Education courses, as well as those who satisfy the requirements via CLEP, AP, or dual enrollment.
• Model of General Education that is structured around themes (Appalachian State) seems to go against the state desire for ease of articulation (too idiosyncratic).
• An FGCU experience does not have to be just in General Education; it can be elsewhere (e.g., Colloquium). Do we want a distinctive experience in General Education?
• If a substantial portion of students take General Education outside of FGCU, then investment in a distinctive experience is wasted.
• Question about FTIC and transfer students’ participation in General Education.
  o (Note: after the meeting Dean Wohlpart inquired about this (to Bob Vines). About 48% of our juniors are native students and 42% of the seniors. This means that About half of our upper level students started with us as native FTICs (less than 10 hours). Probably another 25% transfer in at the lower level and complete some portion of our Gen Ed—which means that about 75% of our students are “touched” (either wholly or in part) by our General Education Program.)
• We do not want our students to be in trouble when they leave FGCU, taking courses that don’t count elsewhere.
  o Common course numbering system prevents this from happening.
Timeline

• What is the timeline for revising General Education? We should spend 1 - 1½ years working on this, and we should separate our timeline from the state’s.
  o The “aggressive” timeline from the state could provide an opportunity for us to have this conversation. The momentum is with us right now, but if the consensus is that we should slow down, then we can – it is up to us. Faculty need to weigh in on this issue. If we couple the changes, then we make one sweeping change to General Education Program rather than 2 big changes, back-to-back.

• The information being put out (by General Education Director) appears to lack currency. This shows that we are moving too fast. We are clearing up many misconceptions today, but there are still many. For example, the graphics on the slides being shared show 5 silos, but we don't have to abide by 5 silos.
  o The information may not be as clear as it can be, but the information is not outdated.
  o Visual images are important – we need to be able to understand them.

• Devil is in the details: for example, Marine Science program prerequisites (there are 31 hours).
  o An analysis of program prerequisites will be done in the spring, when the state courses are selected. More “messes” will appear when it is all in place. It does behoove us to slow down.

Themes, Silos & General Education structure

• It is unclear what “themes” are in the conversation. If program leaders and chairs are to initiate conversations with faculty about the feasibility of “themes” to structure the General Education Program, then this needs to be more concrete. We need more thoughtful consideration before going back to program faculty.
  o Examples from our mission, vision, and guiding principles: civic engagement, ecological perspective.

• How will themes work with the alignment of the “silos” mandated by the state? Can we be reassured that students will take 2 science classes?
  o Themes are something seen in “best practices” of General Education, they offer meaning and coherence to students. They would not alter (necessarily) the content of General Education Program.

• Once we see what the state has decided, we can decide what we want to do about General Education here (themes or not).

• We need to have a General Education Program that is simple so that it is easily marketable. We can't settle all the issues!

• We could explore the idea of an “Entering year FGCU Experience” – to introduce students to our mission and values.
• Language about “silos” is pejorative. We could organize courses in the 5 categories, and have courses in the categories that pursue interdisciplinary themes. (E.g. course in political science introduces civic engagement. This course wouldn’t fit into Social Science silo.)
• Creative energy should go into courses not the boxes the courses go into.
• Does the state expect us to maintain silos? Maybe we design some hypothetical models to see what would work? Just to give us something to think about?
  o We can’t accomplish everything we want in General Education reform; it is up to the faculty to design models (not just stakeholders gathered here).
• Waves of nostalgia…we recently jettisoned themes and reduced our competencies.
  o We did drop competencies, in part because they were difficult to assess in all programs. This doesn’t mean we can’t use them (or some of them) as themes, still assessing the agreed upon competencies (and those mandated by the state).
• We can have students do other things outside the 30 hours if we want (within limit of 120 hours).
• Science has 2 issues:
  1. State Natural Science list is not complete
  2. 4 credit classes in science are unaccounted for (lab courses)
• Yes. The state has not decided this or didn’t recognize this issue.
• Unclear what will happen with the “extra” 6 hours. State decides? We decide?
  o These hours will likely get taken up by program prerequisites that have been up to know completed in the General Education Program.

Mission and Statement of Purpose for FGCU General Education
• Have we come to a decision about the goal of General Education? Should it be connected to the mission of FGCU? We should focus on this question as the first step – clearly stating our assumptions and understandings.
• 15 hours from the state leaves us with 15 hours and freedom on those 15 hours. We could create a General Education Program for Business, for Arts & Sciences, for Hospitality.
• We should think about what we want students to get out of General Education, then figure out the format. A theme could govern content of courses, encouraging students to have different kinds of courses.
• Focus should be on the General Education mission now, and its purpose or intent. General Education Council should work on reviewing current mission, updating or revising it, and reaffirming.
• General Education mission is currently written for 36 hours (not 30). Legislation says students can carry concealed weapons, but we are not in compliance with that. Suggestion made to not comply with General Education requirements being mandated. Only faculty own the curriculum.
• Next steps should be a more specific articulation of General Education mission, drafted by General Education Council.
  o The mission would guide the selection of courses.
  o Draft mission must be circulated university-wide.
  o Process could involve General Education Council drafting mission, taking it to “stakeholders”, then to all of the faculty.
  o Anyone should be able to draft a mission statement
• Integration is good – we should be integrating. This is good for students, and it would be easy to do this.
• We have one mandate from the forums: more dialogue about General Education!

Conclusion
• Stakeholders agreed that we should review our current General Education mission statement and develop a statement of purpose before moving forward with revising our General Education Program.
• Agreement that this task is one for the General Education Council.
• Once the General Education Council is able to review (and revise if appropriate) the mission statement and generate a clear, guiding statement of purpose, revision of General Education should be resumed.