

- 1 The meeting was called to order at 1:10 PM, July 7, 2006. Members present were: Kay Johnson, Ray Kilduff co-chair, Christine Manville, Jack Owens co-chair, and Dean Philip Sisson.
2. Motion was made by Kay Johnson and seconded by Ray Kilduff to approve the minutes of the June 19, 2006 meeting as presented.
Vote: Motion passed unanimously
3. The Committee's Interim Report, as finalized by Allison Petro, was discussed. Dean Sisson informed the Committee that the President is making the making initial draft of the progress report that will be submitted to NEASC in October. The final draft will be completed by Jim Glickman of the English department, so the committee may expect queries from him at some point.

Motion to approve the Committee's interim report as submitted by Allison Petro was made by Christine Manville and seconded by Ray Kilduff.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

4. Excel spreadsheet of departmental requirements.

Ray Kilduff presented an Excel spread sheet analysis based on the new catalog depicting the general education components of the different programs. 37 out of 57 programs do not, on the face of it as presented in the catalog, meet the new NEASC standards. Of those 37, most can meet the standards with minor modifications. It will be necessary to meet individually with program directors/department chairs to discuss the more difficult cases.

At present, it appears that there is no program for which meeting the NEASC requirements would impose an impossible burden.

In reviewing the analysis and the catalog several issues emerged:

- Some program requirements are cognates: courses that are required for the program but are offered by a different department. These courses are not explicitly listed in the catalog as meeting Liberal Arts requirements. For example, nursing requires biology courses. When these courses fall within the Gen Ed categories, should they be counted as meeting the Gen Ed requirements? There was some discussion as to the impact of counting cognates as Gen Ed requirements on breadth: The Gen Ed requirements are meant to broaden the students' background by exposing them to content outside their narrow disciplines. If cognates are acceptable as Gen Ed requirements, are we not undermining this goal? After further discussion, the consensus of the Committee is that yes, they should be counted as meeting Gen Ed goals. Just because the program's requirements fall into one of the Gen Ed categories it should not mean that those courses do should not satisfy the requirements of the category.

With this in mind, it was suggested by Dean Sisson that, rather than listing the Gen Ed or Liberal Arts requirements separately, they could be denoted by some coding mechanism.

Jack Owens suggested using an asterisk and a footnote. [BUT, see the side comment below.]* In any case, some mechanism is needed to make the Gen Ed components of the programs more apparent.

- A second issue concerned computer science. Should it be considered to meet a science/math requirement, at least for some programs which are non-transfer such as Office Studies? Some other colleges do this. A different solution, again at some other colleges, is to offer a science course that specifically targets terminal degree programs that otherwise would not have any science. It might be a “Science in Everyday Life” course. Maybe “Chemistry of the Environment” already fulfills this goal.
- A third issue concerned the labeling of the degrees. Why should Office Studies and Paralegal Studies award an A.S. degrees? Why not an A.A.S. degree?
- Some programs function both as terminal programs and as transfer programs. This requires different courses of study which are not clearly spelled out in the catalog. A student, following the catalog, may not be adequately prepared for transfer.

There was further discussion of the question of having separate mathematics and science requirements or of not. One possibility is to be flexible: to require both for some programs and not for others. It might make it easier make a distinction if the degree designation for terminal programs were all the same, such as AAS. It might add value to the degree to have math and science courses tailored to the non-transfer programs.

5. The next step(s).

Individual committee members will meet with individual department chairs/program directors to help them understand the Gen Ed requirements in relation to their programs and to discuss with them the meeting of those requirements. The impact of outstanding issues, specifically the math/science separation and the possibility of counting Computer Science as a math/science requirement, will be discussed as appropriate. It is expected that this will pave the way for discussion of the Gen Ed requirements by the faculty of the different programs at departmental meetings following the general faculty meeting on opening day. The Committee would then receive departmental responses from perhaps 70% of the departments in time for its meeting on 15 September. The assignments for these meetings are as follows:

Social work - Ray

Computer Science - Kay

Allied Health - Jack

Law - Jack

Chem Tech - Ray

Secretarial Science - Kay

Technology - Jack

Music, Art & Theater - Phil

At some point the Committee will need to specify the courses that meet the Gen Ed requirements of the different categories. Criteria for inclusion on this list will need to be developed and a mechanism established for the inclusion or rejection of additional courses on the list going forward. Dean Sisson recommends a process entailing a joint review committee made up of perhaps two members from the Curriculum Committee and two from the Gen Ed committee to pass on the inclusion of a specific course on the list.

6. Other Business

Dean Sisson presented to the Committee a statement of the adopted definition of an educated person with an introductory paragraph submitted for editing. The Committee agreed to accept the following language:

The faculty and staff of the Community College of Rhode Island have established six critical abilities that define the learning outcomes of a CCRI graduate. These six abilities can be applied in many contexts and are critical skills that must be developed not only at CCRI, but over the course of a lifetime. These core abilities guide students, faculty and staff in establishing educational goals and assessing learning within and across the primary domains of knowledge: arts and humanities, science and mathematics, and the social sciences.

7. Next meeting date and its agenda.

It was decided to meet next on Friday, September 15, at 2 PM at the Lincoln campus in a room set up for video conferencing involving both Newport and Warwick (and Providence?). Dean Sisson said he would have set this up by Yvonne Kadelski..

Tentative Agenda:

1. Roll Call
2. Approval of minutes from the meeting of 17 July 2006.
3. Discussion of the input received from the departments and programs. Finalization, if possible, of the Gen Ed requirements.
4. Update of report to be forwarded to the NEASC visiting team.
5. Formulation of standards to including of courses in the list of those meeting Gen Ed requirements.
6. Adjournment

8. The meeting adjourned at 4:15 PM.

*Addendum by J. Owens

After ex-parte discussion, I have come to recognize that for some programs a purpose is served by having Liberal Arts courses (in the present language) listed separately in the catalog: it points students who are awaiting admission to a program toward courses they can take toward their degree while they are waiting. Since some of these courses may include cognates, maybe it would

be better to have a list labeled “Courses that can be taken prior to starting the program” rather than Liberal Arts [or General Education]. The courses meeting Gen Ed requirements could then be delineated as proposed while retaining the separate list.

In order to serve the purpose of an advisory tool for the students and of delineating Gen Ed and program requirements, I think it will be necessary for the catalog to revert to a more traditional format in which courses of study are listed semester-by-semester, rather than the obscure listing now provided. I know that the present format serves the purpose of making less obvious certain unpalatable truths about certain programs, but I favor being honest and above-board with students and the public, even if it is inconvenient and uncomfortable. I don't meant to suggest that these truths are indefensible. Not at all. We don't need to make them less visible as if they might be.

My cursory perusal of the new catalog suggests that it is replete with problems, both minor and major. There are manifold proof-reading errors, inconsistencies of style and formatting, and more seriously, significant omissions. It really needs to be reviewed thoroughly by someone who knows what should be in a catalog and how to present it in a manner that is most useful to students.