

## General Education Council

### Minutes

January 7, 2015

**Members present:** Mark Smith, Jeremy Tost, Byron Brown, Catherine Schaeffer, Lai Orenduff

**Members absent:** Jane Kinney, Gayle Taylor

**New Business:** Discussion of the Action-Steps from the Comprehensive Program Review:

From the 12 submitted action steps, the discussion centered mainly on the following 4 suggestions as possible starting points for further discussion.

1. **Look at withdrawal rates:** In an effort to lower course withdrawal rates, identify those courses with high rates, include identified courses in Freshman Learning Communities, and coordinate with the Student Success Center to specifically focus on these courses. Use data to track success.

Improve the chances of student success by intervening more quickly in students' selection of a major and by formally evaluating their progress toward their majors early in their academic careers. (This initiative might involve looking into the possibility of administering career aptitude tests as part of the admissions/orientation process for new and transfer students; of requiring an assessment of each student's academic progress, conducted through the Advising Center, at the end of the freshman year; as well as finding other ways to help guide students into compatible majors.)

- Identify at-risk students through data, especially in the 1<sup>st</sup> year to help retention rates.
- Use of 1<sup>st</sup> year aptitude tests.
- Work with Admissions office.
- Work closer with Freshman Welcome Week.
- Work with Career Center to help students identify what they want to study at an earlier date.
- Better advising.

2. **AREA B:** Area B appears to lack the level of organization, consistency, & rigor that other areas have. The lack of consistency, in particular, makes meaningful assessment difficult. Given the broad array of topics and subjects that are discussed, perhaps an overseeing committee (or subcommittee) is needed.

Revise, re-design, and simplify the Area B curriculum. (This revised curriculum should include new categories, new/revised courses, and fewer courses. It may or may not keep the current focus on regional/global perspectives. It could begin with the appointment of a committee to consult with various degree programs as well as departments offering courses to gather initial feedback to jump-start the process. It should involve an examination of Area B models implemented in other USG institutions.)

- Area B Advisory Committee is working on this.

3. **CORE Classes:** Develop early interventions to improve student retention in essential core curriculum courses.

Establish a process of continuous improvement of general education courses by faculty. (This initiative should include course development and teacher development grants specifically focused on developing and testing new pedagogies. This work would be coordinated with the Idea Center, for course, but would signal an institutional commitment to enhancing and calibrating core curriculum courses to background, preparation, and needs of the students VSU serves.)

Develop ways to increase and enhance the relevance and importance of general education courses. (This initiative might involve a move to real-life applications of knowledge, including developing and incorporating a problem-solution pedagogies, etc. See above.)

- This effort might include increased use of placement tests in selected courses with mandatory recitations or tutoring for at-risk students. It could include enhanced tutoring, technology, labs, etc.
- General Education Council and General Education curriculum: opportunity to solve problems, to be creative, to think, to see the world differently, to be a leader in problem-solving.
- Is the content the problem?
- Do we need to develop new courses to be more relevant and viable?

4. **Good advising:** Action Steps 1-3 can be alleviated with good advising.

- Centralized advising
- Professional advisors
- Guided Pathways

**Next meeting: Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup> @ 3:30 at Nevins 1060**