

**General Education Task Force
December 7, 2006
Open Forum
Linville Falls Room, Plemmons Student Union**

After the information portion of the forum, where the proposed cluster model was presented, the question and answer portion began.

Jill Ehnenn: English Dept: How are the foundations courses different from the current designators? Why is there a sophomore but not a junior seminar? Further, the proposed model does not preclude true interdisciplinarity. Different clusters are set up to invite interdisciplinarity across hard sciences and the humanities, correct? There could be a diversity cluster to include a biology, history, and literature course, for example?

Paul: The themes, not the cluster titles, will dictate interdisciplinarity. The atomic age, for example, would facilitate this. This theme may be applicable to more than one cluster. Yes, the clusters do look rigid in their raw form; but the value is in the creation of the themes by the faculty.

Dave: We are attempting to balance (1) doing justice to the disciplines and (2) creating a faculty driven process of creative signature themes. If need be, the clusters can be renamed.

Paulette: To address the foundations/designators question, they are not the same thing. We just don't know where the foundations go as of yet. They may go in the cluster at a later time.

Georgia: In regard to the junior seminar, we just haven't gotten there yet.

Michael Krenn: History Dept: There is no specific History requirement in the new general education?

Sue: We have not begun to focus on credit distribution as of yet. We will visit later, but we are concentrating on the model for now.

Paulette: If you consider the Historical and Social Perspectives cluster, history really is required in this model.

Michael: If the GETF is only talking about general education, then why does this model dictate a capstone course that would take place within the major?

Dave: Our goal is greater integration, not less. The whole point of this is to integrate general education within the major.

Mike: Also, the capstone is developed within the major, not by the general education administration.

Mark (Psychology Dept): "Method of inquiry" seems to be synonymous with "discipline" here. Methods of inquiry actually cross disciplines. What do you mean by this? I don't see interdisciplinarity in the same way I see multiple methods of inquiry.

Dave: We don't mean to use those terms synonymously, but they do overlap. We do acknowledge that the scientific method can be satisfied outside of the natural/physical sciences. (Psychology, for example.) We would like to include two methods of inquiry for the first year seminar. (History with an evolutionary perspective, possibly.)

Mark: So the first year seminar would include multiple disciplines or multiple methods of inquiry?

Dave: Both.

Johnny Waters: Geology Dept: I am concerned because if we design a theme, teach classes, sit on a committee to oversee the themes, facilitate an assessment structure, etc., this will require much more work than we have time for. Twenty-five percent of our time is to be devoted to research and scholarship activity. The average faculty member will see this increased workload as a step in the wrong direction.

Dave: First of all, we need to hold the administration accountable to support extra work. We are willing to do this. Second, the Faculty Evaluation Task Force is looking for things that the faculty values in order to calibrate with reward system. Also, "with great power, comes great responsibility." If we maintain a faculty-driven focus, yes, it will be a lot of work. The alternative is to stay with what we've got.

Johnny: In a team-taught class, does each faculty member get credit for all students? Must they attend all lectures even in a team-taught class?

Dave: Lecture series classes are cheaper, but this is something that has to be worked out.

Tom Rokoske: Science: We need practical experiments to drive science courses. How can quality science courses not include a lab? If we remove the lab, we remove the quality of the course.

Jim: It is possible, with this model, to include a lab. We can give students the option to take it or not.

Dave: We can have two labs for that matter. This model allows for that.

Sue: Labs can be offered in 3 c.h. classes too.

Doris Bazzini: Is there concern there is not enough faculty to develop courses? Has the GETF discussed this?

Dave: If there is no participation, we stay as is. A faculty driven general education allows a phase in period. One option may be to stay as is, then gradually work toward something more differentiated. Yes, we have discussed it.

Q: How many freshmen seminar courses are taught now? How many more would be required with the new first year seminar?

A: Dan: We will need 103 sections with 22 students in each class.

Marv Williamson: Why has the foreign language requirement been left out of the model? Are we going to graduate students who only speak one language?

Alexandra: There has been discussion of a foreign language requirement, but that turned into a discussion of degree requirements. The B.S. degree could require a foreign language. We have talked about ways to make foreign language more appealing. We need to create a well acculturated student.

Q: We have a first year seminar, sophomore seminar, capstone experience. Are we taking on a problem that is too big to be addressed within the general education curriculum? If everyone designed their courses well, from 1000 to 4000 levels, all of the goals and outcomes would be addressed.

Georgia: In regard to writing, we want to keep students engaged in the process. These different levels are to allow students to develop further.

Tim: We will be doing the same in oral communication, information literacy, etc. We just haven't gotten to the developmental stages of those yet.

Ann: Students need to start somewhere, then they need reiteration throughout the levels.

Alexandra: The foreign language requirement means nothing unless it is embedded in other things. One of the essential outcomes is cultural understanding.

Q: In regard to the capstone experience, would student teaching qualify for this?

Mike: Some would have to be addressed within the department. Student teaching may be one, but there are many options. We would like to link research and practice.

Greg: At some point, we need to address an ending point and establish that students have reached an advanced level of proficiency.

Georgia: A teaching portfolio can be used in conjunction with student teaching.

Mike: The capstone is developed within the discipline. They know what is adequate for the student. We, as the task force, don't know. We just want to make sure the student is being held accountable for proficiency.

Tim: We cannot implement the structure for each capstone.

Greg: Student teaching may not be adequate without self reflection.

Q: How many hours will students be required to take each semester? The computer science major requires a certain amount of hours per semester.

Paulette: Clusters are the most difficult challenge. Concurrent requirements would be a problem, but we do want to promote integration within the major courses. We are aware of this and are trying to address.

Q: What about transfer students?

Jeni: We do need to fit into the articulation agreement, but we wanted to think about our native students first.

Carter: We have looked at a number of institutions that honor other institution's general education curriculum.

Q: The first year seminar seems to answer the question, "Why am I here?" This is the only class where self reflection is a focus. The capstone project melds academic with self reflexivity. Do we need something like this sooner than the senior year?

Georgia: Every level of writing includes reflection. Portfolios promote this.

Q: You all have stated that the faculty has to buy into the thematic approach. But how can any model address an entire body of knowledge? Does this ignore the purpose of disciplines? We should focus on the best way to teach. Themes are not applicable to all disciplines. Can we admit that?

Jim: Everyone can make that case for every discipline. This may not be the correct model, but we are trying. If you can convince us of a better model, please do.

Q: We have obviously done a bad job of teaching science, but this model does not address that.

Paulette: Students do not see the relevance of their courses to their lives. Therefore, the themes demonstrate relevance to real world experience. We have focused on faculty development so you all can teach the way you want to, as long as you speak to specific problems within the

themes. We don't want a prescriptive general education. That is one of the reasons that math is in the foundations portion of the model. Maybe it isn't best taught within a theme.

Q: If we have to redo classes and create more structure, more money will be required. Financially, this is not going to work.

Carter: We cannot think creatively without addressing the resource issue. These conversations are running parallel. We are not creating this model in a vacuum.

Sue: Yes, communication is happening between us and the Provost's office.

Q: Is it conceivable to back off if there is not money?

Sue: We will need a director, but the cluster administration will be taken care of by faculty.

Q: Do we expect too much out of the general education curriculum? Can we achieve all of these goals?

Paulette: That is an assessment issue. If it doesn't work, we can change it.

Carter: We have researched programs that have done this same thing for 20-25 years. They have tweaked their programs over the years, but have found them quite effective.

Q: What schools have you looked at? Are they comparable to us? How do themes work within strict majors?

Carter: We have looked at our peer institutions as well as our peer aspiration institutions.

Paulette: We have also talked to other general education administrators and tried to implement things on their advice in order to avoid roadblocks.

Joan Woodworth: Thanks to the GETF! These ideas are quite valuable. We should improve upon what we currently have. (spontaneous applause)

Q: Concerning the process of this development, there have been vague responses about content. Is the specific content decided by faculty in that area?

Paulette: The faculty develops the theme.

Sue: There will be a committee of faculty members appointed to oversee each cluster.

Carter: There may be a non-science faculty member to sit on the committee to hear about science ideas. They would not, however, dictate pedagogical methods. Further, students would be able to look at a theme and choose which one they are interested in.

Q: Will there be an option of a two science sequence?

Jim: Yes, if the science department proposes it, it may be an option.

Paulette: We are trying to stress interdisciplinarity, but sciences may be exempt.

Tom McLaughlin: English Dept: There has been discussion of technical and information literacy. What about just plain literacy?

Alexandra: We all saw the English department's proposal for a literature requirement. We are trying to implement traditional and unconventional methods.

Tim: Some students don't read enough to merit our "ASU stamp of approval."

Paulette: The goals and outcomes address this requirement (Goal 2, Outcome E).