

**General Education Task Force
Open Forum-Linville Falls Room
February 23, 2007**

Sue announced the faculty grant recipients and attempted to dispel rumors about Math, Science, team teaching, and the approval process. The new visual for the proposed model was presented along with clarification of terms such as “perspectives” and “themes.” Greg then presented the proposed Quantitative Literacy requirement and the rationale behind it. Alexandra, Jim, Sue, Paulette, and Ray presented hypothetical theme examples. The power point presentation is on the website.

A question and answer session followed:

Q: The proposed themes sound very exciting, but traditionally, a student leaves college with a certain set of facts. These themes are very specialized. Are we going to graduate students without the core set of facts they need to know?

A: You are assuming that the system we have now works and students learn a specific set of facts. You may also assume that in all disciplines there are “facts” without interpretation. We want to promote integrative thinking, not just a set of facts to take away. We are working under the premise that there is not finite set of knowledge that is important for students to learn, but more importantly they need to be able to think and analyze and interpret information. Content is certainly necessary, but we would like to see it presented in a creative way.

Q: But if students are not forced to take Western Civilization, for example, will they know what they need to know?

A: It is the faculty’s responsibility to present necessary content in an integrative way. Perhaps more important that being force-fed facts (that might be forgotten in a year), it is important to have the ability to think creatively and critically about things.

Q: Can the Quantitative Literacy requirement be achieved with multiple courses?

A: Yes, that can be done. The faculty oversight committee will decide which courses might achieve the outcomes. All the proposed goals may not necessarily be achieved in one course. The focus is on skills rather than content.

Q: To achieve all of these things, won’t you need more than four hours?

A: It may be that we require the student to meet three of the four goals.

Statement: This faculty member resents that the basic assumption is that we do not do gened well. Also, he stated that many things in the current GETF documents are already being done. He proposed that there be a fundamental base of general knowledge that every student receives. Further, he disagrees with the process, not the facts.

Q: What about transfer students?

A: We do understand transfer student issues need to be addressed. The GETF will not handle this, but some other committee in the future.

Statement: We are assuming our students are coming here to receive facts. But we need to teach them to *process* the facts they come in contact with on a daily basis. The world has changes and we need to acknowledge that.

Statement: But we cannot discount the facts. They are not trivial.

Statement: This faculty member had no opinion yet on the model, but thanked the GETF for giving people a chance to re-inspect themselves in regard to general education. We need to look at gened holistically. We also need to incorporate facts with different pedagogical methods.

Q: What will the Sophomore Writing course entail?

A: Because we are looking at a vertical model, it is proposed that the second writing class be moved to the sophomore year and possibly be changed to “Writing in the Disciplines.” In this case, we can possibly tailor it to the major. We are also looking at a Writing Across the Curriculum program.

Q: There are many unintended consequences to this model. There are prerequisite issues to be addressed. Also, will we have an explosion of introductory courses? Will students be penalized for backing out of themes and changing their minds?

A: Each department must think of gened as a priority. They must think of the feasibility and constraints and then come up with a plan. Obviously, this will require rethinking on everyone’s part. We need to think in terms of what will benefit the general student.

Q: But the current gened provides undecided students an opportunity to shop around and find a major. What if a student decides to go into a certain field and is forced to take additional classes?

A: Yes, currently students shop around. But the first year seminar should facilitate this as well. Also, unintended consequences are there now. As far as the faculty work load, a multi-year faculty commitment will enable students to finish the theme. There is also double-dipping allowed, which will help the situation.

Q: Media literacy has not been addressed. How are our students going to become educated enough to vote? If they cannot deconstruct all of the information they are inundated with on a daily basis, we are not doing our job.

A: Information Literacy and Communication Technology and Information Literacy will both be addressed. This will be addressed in our next forum. Because it will run through so many aspects of the new model, it has not been displayed prominently. It is a part of the Goals and Outcomes, though.

Q: How are faculty committees chosen? Who chooses them? How many people will sit on the committees? Will there be subcommittees? How long will they serve?

A: We have not addressed all of the details quite yet. We hope to have committee guidelines by the April 12th forum.

Q: If a faculty member teaches three courses which are linked with another course, there will be no time for research/writing. How do you expect junior faculty to handle this?

A: All classes may not be linked. This is up to the faculty member and departments to decide. Of course, faculty teaching linked courses will need to coordinate. We have to give attention to integration. Service is required of all faculty and this would be part of service opportunities. General education has not been the focus of much service up 'til now, so maybe it's time it received some.

Q: Psychology does well with their introductory course. Of course, higher level courses are fun because students have the basis of knowledge with which to form arguments. Will freshmen be able to do this? Is this gened focused on the first two years, or all four?

A: There should not be a problem with upper-division courses given the verticality of the model. Advising will play a big part. There are some 3000-4000 level courses which do not require pre-requisites. The point is that gened should not have to be taken solely in the first two years.

Q: Last year, you looked at the current gened and critiqued it. Then you established what general education should be in the twenty-first century. The Goals and Outcomes were established and everyone got excited. Are there other institutions we can look at to see solid evidence of the benefit of this type of model?

A: All schools we have consulted implement this type of model in slightly different ways. Therefore, there is not a school with this specific model. We have tailored it to fit our needs at our institution. Portland State, James Madison, and Grand Valley State are all institutions we have consulted. (See the GETF website for more examples.)

Q: The general philosophy of the new model is great. But are we taking a good idea too far?

A: We are more organized than any other school we have looked at. Faculty members at these schools have told us we are dodging mistakes they made in the beginning. We do have to think of this as an experiment, but that is not a reason not to do it.

Q: Writing is everywhere. Why not Quantitative Literacy?

A: We hope this model encourages the integrative of Quantitative Literacy in many areas. We are trying to produce a supportive structure.

Q: If we are to produce a well rounded student, what is our method of assessment? If they need a tool-box to go away with, what will be in it? How do we make sure?

A: Both programs and courses will be assessed. In the current curriculum, we don't have a set of outcomes, so we have no idea what our students are going away with. By having goals and being willing to assess them, we are moving in the right direction.

Q: Are there 41 hours on the proposed model?

A: No, we are working within a 44 hour model.

Q: How did we end up with Portland State as a model? They are neither a peer institution nor an aspirational institution.

A: They have the longest record in dealing with this type of model. Innovative gened is not a requirement for our peer/aspirational institutions. JMU is an aspirational school who is working with this type of model.