2011 General Education Committee Report to the Academic Senate
Submitted by Tatiana Nazarenko
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2010-2011 General Education Committee: Thomas Jayawardene, Tatiana Nazarenko (Chair), Frank Percival, and Greg Spencer
Committee Secretary: Bob Kuntz,
Contributing Visitor: Debra Quast

The Committee had 14 scheduled meetings in 2010-2011; seven in fall and seven in spring.

Major tasks accomplished:

• The Committee reviewed and approved 11 proposals for GE courses (seven in fall and four in spring).

• In order to reduce the number of assessable GE SLOs, the Committee converted the previously developed area outcomes into Certification Criteria. Additionally, the Committee members facilitated the development of Certification Criteria for Understanding Society and Research GE. These criteria were vetted with the faculty and received provisional approval. The Committee also provisionally approved Certification Criteria for the following GE areas: Biblical and Theological Canons; World History in Christian Perspectives; Exploring the Life Sciences; Reasoning Abstractly; Performing and Interpreting the Arts; Thinking Globally; Thinking Historically; Physical Education, Communicating Cross-Culturally.

• In spring 2010, the Committee began refining and modifying the Certification Criteria. As a result of this process, new Certification Criteria for Writing/Speech Intensive were modified and approved at the April 19, 2011 GE Committee meeting.

• The Committee streamlined the GE assessment and aligned it with the institutional level of assessment. The new set of the GE SLOs for 2011-2017 posted at the Educational Effectiveness website was developed in collaboration with faculty members from various departments, including Lisa DeBoer, Dinora Cardoso, Chandra Mallampalli, Laura Montgomery, Maurice Lee, Mark Nelson, Lisa Stern, Marianne Robins, Glenn Town, and David Vander Laan. This set of GE Student Learning was included in the Assessment Package provisionally approved at the faculty meeting on April 15, 2011.

• In preparation for assessment of the 2011-2012 Writing for the Liberal Arts and Writing/ Speech Intensive GE courses, the Committee completed the syllabus review for this GE area with the intention to verify that the course syllabi included the expected GE-related information and that the courses are still conformed to the area expectations. The syllabus review findings were instrumental in developing the Minimum Requirement for GE Syllabi document, as well as planning the 2011-2012 assessment work.
The GE Committee reviewed and provided comments on the 2010 General Education Six-Year Program Review Report submitted by Ray Rosentrater, the former Associate Dean for Curriculum and Chair of the GE Committee. For these comments, please see the Addendum.

The GE Committee reviewed and provided feedback to the Draft #2 of the WASC Special Visit Report prepared by Bill Wright along with the Steering Committee members.

**Addendum**

**2010 General Education Six-Year Program Review Report**

- Upon reviewing the General Education Six-Year Program Review Report, the Committee agreed that the GE assessment data and the 2010 [GE Senior Survey](#) substantiate the claim that the GE program provides a solid foundation and support for the various major disciplines while providing students with their first academic exposure to the contents and structure of a Christian Arts education. 80% of the Survey respondents indicated that GE Education Program did an Excellent or Good job in achieving its stated mission. Fewer than 10% of the Survey respondents had a Problematic or Disastrous experience with the GE Program (2010 GE Six-Year PR Report: 22).

- In response to concerns raised in the GE report, the Committee would like to further investigate why students cannot complete all Common Context GE courses during the first two years and, more specifically, delay taking a PHI-006: Philosophical Perspectives course, which meets the GE Philosophical Reflections requirement, until their junior or senior year.

- Transfer students responded somewhat less positively to the 2010 GE Senior Survey than other respondents. In particular, fewer transfer students had an Excellent experience and reported a Problematic experience at more than double rate of the general population (2010 GE Six-Year PR Report: 22). The Committee will be monitoring transfer students’ progress in GE program and collecting additional data in order to make an informed decision concerning changes required for enhancing transfer students academic experience and their level of satisfaction with the GE curriculum.

- The Committee members require more data to decide whether they should consider a more restrictive stance toward approving additional courses from the Departments of History and Religious Studies as these departments are offering the greatest number of generally available Common Context courses (2010 GE Six-Year PR Report: 8).

- The Committee disagreed with the statement (2010 GE Six-Year PR Report: 11) that “writing-intensive within the major is most appropriately fulfilled with an upper division course.” The GE Committee believes that writing courses should be taken as early as possible because these courses will help students develop the writing skills they need to succeed in all of their college courses. The issue will be investigated in depth during the 2011-2012 assessment work.
The Committee believes that the Academic Senate and the entire college community should be engaged in the discussion regarding the possibility of adding a First-Year seminar and strengthening our interdisciplinary offering and foreign language requirements. The Committee thinks that decision-making on these curricular issues is not part of the Committee’s mandate.

With regards to the [2010 GE Senior Survey](2010 GE Senior Survey) (2010 GE Six-Year PR Review Report: 12-60) the Committee identified the following recurrent themes in student responses:

- Most students appreciate the holistic nature of the GE curriculum and express their satisfaction with the GE Program structure and content;
- Students request more GE diversity courses and the possibilities for intercultural learning;
- Students request extended opportunities for experiential learning;
- Students strongly support the opportunities for interdisciplinary learning within the GE curriculum;
- Several students commented that they would appreciate better integration of faith and learning;
- Some students expressed concerns about the number of GE requirements believing that they are sacrificing in-depth studies by fulfilling them all; in particular, several students asked about the possibility of having only two writing-intensive courses rather than three;
- A number of students indicated that it would be beneficial to have something like a freshman course where they could learn how to navigate effectively through the GE curriculum;
- Concerns were expressed about GE advising.

The Committee recommends that the Senators should read the 2010 [GE Program Review Report](2010 GE Program Review Report) and especially the [GE Senior Survey](GE Senior Survey) as these documents may inform their decisions concerning Westmont General Education curriculum and assessment. Both documents are posted on the Educational Effectiveness website.