Core Undergraduate Learning Experiences (CULE) Minutes for January 14, 2014, 9:00-10:00, Peace Garden

Present: Cole Davidson, Marion Harris, RaNelle Ingalls, Rajesh Kavasseri, Andrew Mara, Cynthia Naughton, Lisa Nordick, Larry Peterson, Seth Rasmussen, Susan Ray-Degges, Amy Rupiper Taggart, Kent Sandstrom, Carolyn Schnell, and Beth Twomey.

Recorder: Kelly Hoyt

Unable to attend: Herbert Snyder and Kevin Walsh.

Larry noted that Kevin has a class conflict at this time and will not be able to attend meetings this spring. Kevin and Larry are trying to figure out a plan to keep in touch so Kevin can provide feedback on topics discussed at the meetings.

1. The minutes from 12/17/13 emailed on 12/17/13 were approved, with corrected date and meeting room.

2. Seth has tried several times to contact Rhonda Magel about math-based critical reasoning without success. He will continue trying to connect with her.

1. Larry and Kent reported on the open-ended discussion with the deans on CULE’s work and on promoting systematic curricular change.
   - Larry said they had a very positive and engaging discussion with the deans.
   - The Provost urged CULE to set dates for open forums in the future.
   - The deans seemed open to changes and suggested designing a model which could be implemented in stages.
   - The deans were excited about the communication center model with one-credit, non-class based modules.
   - The Provost discussed trying to get commitments from the President and incoming Provost that colleges should be held harmless with a new GE model. They would receive written assurances that they will not lose positions because of any GE changes.
   - The Provost noted that the NSSE data shows we have made progress in areas where we have invested additional resources (first-year advising, capstones, and service learning.)
   - Deans Wood and Sandstrom stressed that faculty need to be aware that FTEs generated have nothing to do with department budgets.
   - Dean Wittrock, in particular, urged CULE to keep focused on the outcomes, not on credits and courses. Credits and courses will be markers for student learning for some time to come, but our focus should be on student learning.
     - RaNelle asked what the marker would be for transfer students if it wouldn’t be the number of credits. Kent said Virginia Clark-Johnson also asked this at the Dean’s Council meeting.
   - Dean Smith suggested mapping the newly proposed and approved learning outcomes against the existing GE curriculum to determine where we’re meeting these goals and where we’re falling short. Larry and Kent thought this was an interesting suggestion, but it would mean contacting almost all of the instructors for existing GE courses to get this information.
- The deans encouraged CULE to be bold and innovative in their work and revamping of the GE model.
- CULE will be a standing item on the Dean’s Council meetings for the next several months so they can be informed of CULE’s progress, offer their suggestions, and become committed to supporting our recommendations.
- The Provost asked the deans to remind their heads and chairs of the learning outcomes, to inform them of the possible “hold harmless” policy, to discuss how their students meet the broad GE learning outcomes both inside and outside their majors, and to ask if there a better way to do this.

2. We took some time to reflect on our present status, our timeline, and our goals.
   - Marion suggested, based on the deans’ input, that we focus on creating the whole model and then decide how it could be introduced in stages. Others agreed.
   - Lisa suggested thinking about how we could use technology to track students’ mastery of the learning outcomes to determine if the model is meeting its objectives.

3. We continued our work on the components for our collective model, checking them against the findings from the surveys and meetings.
   - Breadth of Knowledge – Larry reviewed Cynthia, Herb, Rajesh, and Seth’s model and asked if the committee had any thoughts on it.
     - It appears this model limits the choices students have in selecting what courses to take at the forefront, but on the back end it opens their options up more.
   - We discussed the recommendations that too many choices actually interfere with student success.
     - Lisa asked how we can (or if we should) ensure that students have the educational/learning experiences that we think are essential. Do we need to be more prescriptive in terms of the courses students take or the types of learning activities that are in those courses?
   - RaNelle reminded us that many majors have specific (embedded) GE requirements and wondered how that would work with this model. What are the positive and negative aspects of having departments specify particular GE courses? Larry noted that some departments would probably be opposed to a policy that did not allow them to require certain GE courses.
   - Amy and others asked if courses could meet more than one learning outcome so we might have linked courses in which faculty co-teach with someone from a different department to embed critical thinking, etc. into two different courses with the same students. An example was chemistry and art or genetics and art.
     - Marion thought this would promote faculty creativity in how we thought about our own disciplines.

4. Questions, concerns, issues, or brainstorms about our journey
   - Carolyn noted that we need a clear diagram/handout/flowchart for first year students, showing how all of their courses fit into their degree and major and where they overlap so they know what the final picture is they are trying to achieve and how it applies to them.
     - Larry noted that Andy’s graphic of the four outcome phases (foundations, explorations, focus, and launch) was an excellent way to visualize the educational experience as purposeful, structured, flowing, and even transformative.
• Cole suggested that part of a critical thinking course could explore the meaning and purpose of a college education. Larry thought that was an excellent idea.
• RaNelle asked if when decisions are made regarding the model if we can check it against the outcomes to make sure they are cohesive. The Bison Core Outcomes: Progress Toward a Model chart does this.

5. Next meeting
• Larry will send out the three models that committee members created previously for everyone to review and we will begin the next meeting with discussion on how to proceed. Our focus will be on the breadth of knowledge component in the last four learning outcomes (Understanding and Applying Technology, Understanding Natural and Physical Worlds, Understanding Human Societies, and Personal and Social Responsibility).
• We will discuss goals and a deadline for completing the model so have a timeline to follow to stay on track and get this done in a timely manner.

Next meeting Tuesday, January 28, 2014 at 9 am in Peace Garden