Core Undergraduate Learning Experiences (CULE) Minutes for
November 4, 2014, 8:30-9:30, Arikara

Present:  Noah Engels, Marion Harris, RaNelle Ingalls, Andrew Mara, Lisa Nordick, Larry Peterson, Seth Rasmussen, Susan Ray-Degges, Amy Rupiper Taggart, Kent Sandstrom, Carolyn Schnell, and Beth Twomey

Guests:  Michael Walmsley (Senator for College of Engineering), Breann Hogie (Senator for College of HDE), Jacee Engels (Senator for University Studies), Mackayla Headlee (Senator for College of Engineering), Caleb Dusek (ASA), Jenna Berg (Off-Campus Senator)

Recorder:  Kelly Hoyt

Unable to attend:  Cole Davidson, Rajesh Kavasseri, Cynthia Naughton, and Herbert Snyder

1. Members of the Academic and Student Affairs Commission joined us to provide feedback about new GE model.
   • Amy gave the PowerPoint presentation of the new model, showing things that will be staying the same and things that will be changing.
   • CULE members and student senators introduced themselves.
   • Larry asked if the students had any questions.
     o Michael – The capstone in Engineering is really packed. He asked if capstone could be a two semester capstone (both Electrical and Mechanical Engineering have a 2 semester capstone).
       ▪ Larry indicated that it is up to the major to design its capstone.
       ▪ Larry indicated that Respiratory Therapy has a 2 year (60 credits) capstone.
       ▪ Amy replied that even though we don’t have control over the majors, when we are talking about the model, we can suggest multiple options to them.
     o Mackayla asked how the new model affects credits. Are there more or fewer credits compared to the current model?
       ▪ Larry explained that the new model is one credit fewer than what we currently have. He explained that the state minimum for Gen Ed is 36 credits and our accreditor requires at least 30 credits. We currently require 40 and the new model would only require 39 credits.
       ▪ He also explained that some courses could be embedded in the major or could double count for Gen Ed and the requirements of the major.
     o Michael asked for clarification on the number of credits in areas such as Science and Technology and how they compare in the new model.
       ▪ Seth explained that it was previously 10 credits and it is now down to 6 if you count the Technology and Natural & Physical Worlds together.
       ▪ Larry explained that part of the rationale for this is that currently Fine Arts & Humanities has 6 credits and Social & Behavioral Sciences also have 6. This model cuts that in half. We are shifting credits from content areas to critical thinking because when students, employers, alums, faculty, and staff responded to surveys we conducted, they said students need critical thinking skills.
       ▪ Amy explained that from a disciplinary side, people can rebuild courses that have critical thinking as their focus and apply it to any class, so you might end
up taking a science class or a humanities class, but the focus will have to be on critical thinking.

- Michael asked if the courses would then have a CR by them so students know they would meet the critical thinking requirement.
  - Amy and Seth said that is basically how it would work.

- Larry asked if the students saw anything that excites them about the new model.
  - Breann explained that she likes how the categories integrate critical thinking throughout the four years of college. She feels like she may have missed out on some things because she earned dual credits in high school. She came in with so many credits that she didn’t have to take 189 and her advisor informed her that she missed some valuable information by not taking it.
  - Jenna explained that she’s a business student and has to be accepted into her program before taking certain courses. She is wondering if, under the new model, she would be able to take some of those courses earlier before being accepted into the program.
    - The committee didn’t think that is something that would change because most of the major classes are for junior level and above students.
  - Noah really likes the Personal and Social Responsibility, the outcomes, and the core questions, like how do we fit into the world?
  - Jenna loves the idea of being able to get a minor by taking focused Gen Ed courses and a few additional courses. She’s really excited about that option.
  - Michael said he likes the verticality of the classes. He decided as a junior that he wanted to study abroad, but he had already satisfied most of his GE requirements. Since most study abroad programs are for Gen Ed credits, his credits wouldn’t be to satisfy any requirements. He likes that Gen Ed is being spread throughout the 4 years because this way it allows students to be involved in their major earlier to see what it’s about rather than just taking freshman/GE courses and nothing related to their major.
  - Breann thinks this approach will also help with retention. Students are taking mostly GE courses their first couple of years at college and not studying what they came to study. If they were able to be more involved in their major earlier, they would be more apt to continue their education here.

- RaNelle asked the students what their understanding was or if they knew what Gen Ed was when they registered for their first year.
  - Mackayla said registration was a horrible experience for her. She said she transferred in a lot of credits from high school, but she didn’t know what had transferred or how it had transferred in so she had no idea what courses to register for. Her advisor wasn’t helping her and she ended up calling her sister who had graduated the previous semester to find out what to register for. She said she would like to see more information on General Education provided to incoming students before they arrive on campus.
    - Larry explained that one option that has been discussed would give students an already prepared schedule when they come to campus for orientation. They would have the option to opt out of this and register for other courses. He asked if the students thought this would be something they would like.
      - Breann said it would be helpful so you could review your schedule before registration. If you didn’t like a course that you were registered for you could research what else you would like to take
and change your schedule when you come for orientation or talk to the advisor if that would be a good idea to take something else. Students could be somewhat prepared prior to arriving on campus, rather than getting information of what courses they should be taking when they arrive at registration and then two hours later go register for classes.

✓ Mackayla said the curriculum guide would also be helpful to get earlier so they can review courses to have an idea of what they are about before having to register the day they arrive for orientation.

• Caleb made a suggestion regarding oral communication. He said it would be a class that freshman or sophomores take as a Gen Ed that would be a listening skills class. They would listen to various other people give speeches, but not actually give speeches. Each one would only be 5-10 minutes long to keep students engaged. They wouldn’t get bored listening to the same topic being discussed by 15 different people, and they could write an essay on what was their favorite talk and what they learned. He suggested that they could apply critical thinking such as how could you solve something or apply it to your life. He recommended the way to get speakers to come to this class is to get other students on campus who are required to give speeches as a requirement so those students could come to the listening skills class and give their presentations. It could also help undeclared students by providing information about certain areas to give them more insight of what that major entails.
  o Amy said this sounds like an Applied Communication module that you could add on to almost anything.
  o Andy said he thinks this is a great idea and something he’s thought about suggesting before, but didn’t know if it was something students would be in agreement with.

• Breann asked if there would be any collaboration between upper and lower division courses. Such as the Upper Division Oral Communication classes could present to a lower level class. Students would be learning about their major from older students and peers.
  o Seth explained that in chemistry they do this.
  o Amy said in English first year students attend senior presentations. But she said it is often complicated to get this to work and that’s why students aren’t seeing it as often as they might like.

• Jacee said she is excited about critical thinking, because this is not stressed in high school. She is also excited about the Gen Ed credits being tailored to majors. She has not declared a major yet and is wondering how this model will benefit students like her.
  o Amy explained that taking some of the Gen Ed courses and possibly minoring in something that it would hopefully spark an interest in students and they might decide to make that their major.
  o Amy also said that if we have college based critical thinking courses in the first year, rather than just one discipline, it would give students the opportunity to explore the thinking of multiple disciplines in the college a student is most interested in, which might help them decide what to declare as a major.
  o Seth also explained that the critical thinking would be transferrable, so if a student changes major during their education experience, the core of their critical thinking will transfer. They won’t have to start over and take another critical thinking course to meet the Gen Ed requirements.

• Larry asked if there are any issues the students might have that we have not discussed yet.
- Noah mentioned that students may not like the idea of the Applied Communication because if they already took Comm 110, they won’t necessarily want to have to give any more speeches.
  - Amy explained that’s where other options come in, like designing a website, learning how to use an image editor (although that is a little small to meet the requirement), video production or editing software. It wouldn’t just be a repeat of doing presentations in front of live audiences. She asked if Noah thought that would help the students.
    - Noah said he thinks that would alleviate their anxiety.
  - Kent, Seth and Marion all shared that they never realized that their jobs after college would involve so much “public speaking.” But they feel they are better communicators because they needed to make so many presentations.
- Jenna had to go to class, but told committee she appreciated all their hard work in creating this model and she thinks it’s wonderful for the students.
- Michael asked about the 189 class, what was going to be taught or if the format of it was going to be changed, because in his opinion, it’s “bad” for some students.
  - Amy explained that the critical thinking is 2 credits and study skills is 1 credit and that one of the things discussed was having a first year course that pulled those two things together. Students would have a topic and content, but would also have very deliberate instruction about study skills, what does it mean to think critically, etc. So both goals would be integrated. Currently the committee has discussed letting the colleges decide so each discipline would have control if they want to keep it a 1+2 or make it a 3 credit course. She explained that we are trying to build enough flexibility so the colleges can deal with their numbers of students and spaces and that’s a little bit of a challenge that the committee has.
- Marion suggested students voice their opinions about the 189 courses. The curriculum should be responding to what the students think about it. 189 was created to be taken in a student’s first semester and it is a very important class and it’s important that it doesn’t alienate students. Students need to express what they like about it and what they didn’t like. If they have suggestions of what would make it better they should share them.
  - Caleb explained that his 189 class had speakers come in for their major and talk about their careers. His friends said that for their 189 class, they went to the library and toured it, and learned about other things on campus. They are the ones that don’t like 189. He suggested that all the 189 courses could have speakers and hear about careers within a student’s major.
- Kent said this model has motivated him to speak with the departments in his college about their administration of 189 to see if they should tweak it, modify, or mildly overhaul 189 to make it less painful and more rewarding.
- Michael suggested that some of the information that is crammed into orientation could be incorporated into 189 instead—things like what resources are available to students, what opportunities are available to students, getting to know your teachers and getting to know other students, what makes NDSU, NDSU.
  - Amy suggested that it wouldn’t all have to happen in 189, it could be in some of the Communication classes. The first year courses could incorporate more of this information.
- Michael said with the Gen Ed courses he was pretty much given a list and told he needed so many credits for his major and had to take certain courses for that, and then to just pick some.
His decisions on courses to take were based on looking at the list and seeing a course title that interested him. He loves this model because it is a lot clearer on how it’s broken down and showing what it is you are trying to get by taking Gen Ed courses.

• Marion asked the students in attendance to help explain to students that they aren’t just taking Gen Ed because it’s something the state requires them to do, but it’s something that employers have expressed is important and that’s why we are working to make a better model for students, incorporating the feedback employers have provided to us.

• Amy pointed out that the reason we are trying not to put everything in the first year for students, is because students are learning how to live in a new environment and adapt to their new surroundings and the culture they are exposed to (like where to get food, where do I do laundry, basic life skills).

• Mackayla thinks that if advisors and faculty understand more about Gen Ed and how they can help students with what courses to take, they will be able to help students better. She thinks in general, advisors are not very aware of things that are not related to their department or the student’s major. Giving more information about the new model and other opportunities for students to the advisors would help also.
  
  o Marion suggested that if we can get more faculty interested in Gen Ed and they realize that they can incorporate more things from their majors into these courses, they will be more knowledgeable in advising students.

• Larry encouraged students to share additional ideas with our committee and/or Noah.

*****Next meeting is Tuesday, November 18th at 8:30 am in Arikara*****