**FHSU Liberal Education Committee**

**Minutes**

Meeting Called by

Shala Mills, Chair

Date: Tuesday 1/17/2017

Time: 3:00-4:00

Location: Rarick 312

Members

Douglas Drabkin (AHSS)

Bradley Will (AHSS)

Dmitry Gimon (BE)

Jessica Heronemus (BE)

Kevin Splichal (Ed)

Teresa Woods (Ed)

Glen McNeil (HBS)

Tanya Smith (HBS)

William Weber (STM)

Tom Schafer (STM)

Robyn Hartman (Lib)

Helen Miles (Senate)

Megan Garcia (SGA)

Cody Scheck (SGA)

Cheryl Duffy (Goss Engl)

Kenton Russell (Provost)

Chapman Rackaway (Grad Sch)

3:04 (4 minutes) Meeting began. All members present (eventually) except for Garcia, Heronemus, Splichal, and Woods. Chair announced that Garcia will be doing an internship this semester, and may attend from time to time. Chair drew the committee’s attention to improvements to the Liberal Education [website](http://www.fhsu.edu/liberaleducation/). Chair invited committee members to share ideas for general education program models.

3:08 (1 minute) Rackaway noted that there is real value in coming up with a program that is clear and simple, both to understand and to implement.

3:09 (18 minutes) McNeil offered an idea for a program, to get us started in our thinking. See the PowerPoint file below. It would be similar to our current General Education Program in many respects (requiring two dedicated writing courses, a speech course, a math course, something like a personal wellness course, a globalism/intercultural course, a technology course, a selection of distribution courses in the liberal arts, and something like our current upper-level integrative courses), and it would come to about 48 hours of coursework. It would differ from our current General Education Program by inviting technical writing at the level of the second writing course, in adding an information literacy course, in cutting the internationalization courses from 6 hours to 3 hours, in cutting the liberal arts distribution courses down from 28 hours to 18 hours, and in encouraging the development of a “synthesis with the major” course which would be “tie the major to the entire program.” The proposed idea would also open the liberal education program to accepting departmental offerings to meet some of the requirements.  The 48 hours would have between 9 and 12 hours that departments could use specific departmental courses to meet both major program and general education requirements. Critical thinking would be “represented throughout the program.” Ethical judgment would be “represented throughout the program, or in specific liberal arts course offerings.”

3:27 (15 minutes) Gimon observed, not about McNeil’s sketch in particular, but in general as we go forward, that it is important for us (1) to keep track of all our program objectives, (2) to keep in mind the value of involving all departments in developing or modifying courses to help achieve our program objectives, and (3) to guard against a kind of self-congratulatory complacency that might arise from adopting a student-centered approach to assessment and successfully raising woefully underprepared students up to the lower levels of mediocrity. Drabkin observed, specifically about McNeil’s sketch, two things: (1) that it is very similar to our current general education program, a “tweaking” of what we’ve got, and (2) that, in striking contrast to the highly integrated Portland State model that we were looking at in December, for instance, it breaks the liberal education project into discrete pieces (writing happens here, math happens here, integration with the major happens here, etc.) and doesn’t focus on the progressive building of skills and insight over time. Shafer observed that it is important for the committee to consider just how much change to our current program is desirable. (What is working well? What isn’t?) Rackaway observed that we really need to get our assessment plans clear at the same time as we work up our curricular recommendations.

3:42 (8 minutes) Chair announced that she would like to send some committee members to a critical thinking workshop this semester; three or four committee members volunteered. Chair announced that she will be inviting Sangki Min, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Improvement, to attend one or more of the committee’s meetings; he is likely to have good advice on how to assess learning outcomes.

3:50 (10 minutes) Duffy offered seven thoughts on the teaching of writing in our future program: (1) that we would do well to consider rethinking what we want to achieve in Comp 1 and Comp 2, assuming these courses continue to exist, (2) that we would do well to form a university writing advisory committee to make recommendations to the liberal education committee, (3) that she is concerned that something important may be lost if a dedicated (standalone) writing course were not part of the revised program, (4) that we need to keep in mind the importance of transfer and articulation agreements as we consider modifying our current requirements, (5) that we really need to think about bolstering the teaching and practice writing at the university beyond the freshman year, (6) that it is desirable to have writing intensive courses in all disciplines, and (7) that as we plan for the future, it would be valuable to survey what writing is going on in the various major programs on campus.

4:00 (3 minutes) Will observed that the liberal education committee is not authorized to say what should or should not be happening in the various major programs on campus. Chair observed that, regardless of what is going on in the various major programs, the committee is authorized to propose standards to be met by all students, regardless of major, and courses to achieve these standards, whether the major programs deliver them or not.

4:03 (3 minutes) Chair charged (1) herself to invite Min to next week’s meeting, (2) Duffy to make a proposal for setting up a liberal education writing advisory committee, (3) all committee members to consider bringing additional proposals to the committee for consideration and discussion, and (4) all committee members to review both the quantitative and qualitative results of the 2015 faculty survey (see the link at the bottom of <http://www.fhsu.edu/liberaleducation/Learning-Objectives/>). Chair noted that while previous assessment of the current general education program may be limited, we have many insights from this survey as to what faculty believe is and is not working. She noted that weaknesses in student writing and critical thinking were a common concern among faculty, and therefore efforts to improve in these two areas in particular would seem to be a needed improvement in the program. Scheck agreed that these were indeed areas of weakness for our students.

4:06 Meeting ended. The next meeting will be Thursday, January 26.

**Submitted by D. Drabkin, Recording Secretary**

**----------------------------------------------**

