**FHSU Liberal Education Committee**

**Minutes**

Meeting Called by

Shala Mills, Chair

Date: Thursday 3/9/2017

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 (FYE)

Chapman Rackaway (Grad Sch)

3:02 (10 minutes) All were present except for Garcia, Heronemus, Rackaway, Russell, Schafer, Scheck, Splichal, and Weber. McNeil was serving as proxy for Scheck, and Will as proxy for Russell. Established that a quorum was met. Chair shared with the committee that she attended a three-day workshop in San Diego organized by the Foundation for Critical Thinking. She found their approach to critical thinking and its role in higher education inspiring and highly relevant to the reasoning-and-writing courses the committee was speculating about in discussion last week. Chair also mentioned that she will soon meet with the new interim provost, Jeff Briggs, to provide him with an update on our work and to talk with him about a timetable for setting up the new liberal education program. She reconfirmed that the committee wants to move ahead as quickly as can prudently be managed, and will be bringing that message to the provost.

3:12 (16 minutes) Chair proposed that the committee focus this week on what the current general education program calls “liberal arts – distribution” courses and what in the new liberal education program would fall under “objective 2.1—knowledge of the liberal arts: *students will possess a broad understanding of the world, having studied the humanities, mathematics, the natural sciences, and the social and behavioral sciences, and the ways of knowing characteristic of these disciplines*.” She reviewed how this is currently being handled in (1) the 55-hour general education program, in (2) the BGS general education program, and in (3) the transfer and articulation agreement general education program, and how it would be handled in (4) the proposal McNeil offered at the beginning of the semester, and in (5) the proposal Drabkin offered last week. She also reminded the committee of the materials she has shared by email on different approaches from other campuses (see appendix below).

3:28 (38 minutes) The remainder of the meeting was given over to exploring, challenging, defending, and, in the end, acknowledging the merits of the modes of inquiry approach sketched out in Drabkin’s proposal. It was a lively and wide-ranging discussion. Smith suggested that nursing students would benefit from exposure to modes of inquiry outside of the natural sciences. McNeil suggested that we want to set our graduates up with the sorts of skills that would enable them to read an in-depth news report and actually understand what it is about and why it matters, regardless of the subject matter of the report. Chair observed, holding up her cell phone, that this is where people get their facts nowadays; what students need from a college education is skill in thinking about these readily available facts. Gimon expressed concern that we not lose track of the importance of imagination and problem-solving as we plan for the kind of thinking we want our students to do. Drabkin agreed and insisted that these modes of inquiry courses would have to be courses primarily in *thinking*—not courses primarily about what historians have arrived at, what sculptors have produced, what mathematicians have discovered, and so on—and where there is no imagination and problem-solving there is no real thinking. The question arose whether students would be better served by a single, generic course that would touch upon each mode of inquiry (historical, social scientific, natural scientific, mathematical, philosophical, and aesthetic) or whether any courses would do, provided that they trained the student to think like an historian, like a social scientist, etc. Will observed that, in the end, questions like this will all come down to measurable learning outcomes, and there will no doubt be many ways to achieve the same outcomes. Woods observed that courses like her science methods course in the college of education would in all likelihood be a natural science mode of inquiry under this proposal. The committee agreed that, if it achieved the learning objectives of a natural science mode of inquiry course, then it would indeed be a natural science mode of inquiry course according to this proposal. The upshot of the discussion was that those present decided it would be valuable to further explore this modes of inquiry approach to what we’ve called “the branches” of our new liberal education program. There was talk of formulating a motion and putting something to a vote, but the committee decided by consensus that it would be good to have better attendance before deciding anything potentially so consequential.

4:06 Meeting ended. The next meeting will be Monday March 13 at 3:00 PM in Rarick 329. Chair would have committee members think more about the modes of inquiry approach, and in particular, whether the six modes of inquiry in the current proposal can be more adequately described, and whether they “cover the bases.”

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

***Festina lente.***

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***Appendix – the modes of inquiry approach at other universities:***

1. *New Jersey City University:*

* *their webpage:* [*http://www.njcu.edu/department/general-education*](http://www.njcu.edu/department/general-education)

1. *Truman State University:*

* *their webpage:* [*http://www.truman.edu/majors-programs/liberal-studies-core-curriculum/modes-of-inquiry/*](http://www.truman.edu/majors-programs/liberal-studies-core-curriculum/modes-of-inquiry/)
* *their liberal studies core, which includes the modes of inquiry:* [*http://www.truman.edu/majors-programs/liberal-studies-core-curriculum/*](http://www.truman.edu/majors-programs/liberal-studies-core-curriculum/)
* *their online catalog where you can see the breadth of courses that count toward each of the modes of inquiry:* [*http://catalog.truman.edu/preview\_program.php?catoid=12&poid=1571*](http://catalog.truman.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=12&poid=1571)

1. *SUNY Potsdam:*

* *their webpage:*[*https://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general\_education/GEF*](https://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general_education/GEF)
* *their program outline:* [*https://www.potsdam.edu/sites/default/files/documents/academics/general\_education/Matriculated-2012-or-after.pdf*](https://www.potsdam.edu/sites/default/files/documents/academics/general_education/Matriculated-2012-or-after.pdf)
* *their transfer process:*

[*https://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general\_education/forstudents/transfercredits*](https://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general_education/forstudents/transfercredits)

1. *Frostburg State:*

* *their general education program: (*[*http://www.frostburg.edu/fsu/assets/File/ungrad/catalog/gep.pdf*](http://www.frostburg.edu/fsu/assets/File/ungrad/catalog/gep.pdf)

1. *Barnard:*

* *nine divisions here; note the wide array of disciplines that might contribute to any one:* [*http://snowbird.barnard.edu/pls/bcapp/mybc\_courses\_reqmts.courses\_reqmts*](http://snowbird.barnard.edu/pls/bcapp/mybc_courses_reqmts.courses_reqmts)