FHSU General Education Committee

Minutes

3:33   (1 minute) All members were present with the exception of Broman, Chretien, Duffy, Marez, McNeil, and Schibi. Hill served as proxy for Duffy. Miles served as proxy for Broman and McNeil. And Splichal served as proxy for Marez, until he left, whereupon Heronemus served as proxy for Marez, and Schafer served as proxy for Splichal. Determined that a quorum was met.

3:34   (26 minutes) Work continued on revising the document "Draft of Course Approval Policies and Procedures for the FHSU CORE Program." Splichal started things off asking about how the committee proposed justifying the requirement that all students take the seven courses ENG 101, ENG 102, COMM 100, INF 101, PHIL 100, HHP 200, and FIN 205. One version of the draft offers the following justification:

> *Some outcome sets serve as the basis for the content of a course, such that were two or more courses to fulfill one of those outcome sets, those courses would effectively duplicate one another. Since the University does not allow duplicate courses, the following outcome sets are each to be satisfied by only the specific designated course.*

Another version of the draft proposes that this language be dropped. Splichal's concern was that if no justification were given for requiring these seven courses, either this or something else, then the restriction would be an anomaly in a program that is organized around *outcomes*, not *courses*, and is otherwise open to considering multiple ways to achieving the same ends. Schmidt suggested that the content of INF 101 is so focused on the computing literacy

outcomes that any other course achieving those outcomes would just be the same course by a different name. Drabkin said that the same is true for the course that is being tailored to achieve the first two critical thinking outcomes; it would just be the same course by a different name. By contrast, Chair mentioned a proposal being developed by the department of communication studies and disorders to satisfy the outcomes for objective 3.2, intercultural competence. The focus of this course would be American Sign Language and deaf culture. His point was that this course could indeed satisfy the 3.2 outcomes, but would be remarkably different from courses like World Geography or Diversity in the United States, both of which could also fully satisfy 3.2, but in very different ways. It seemed to many on the committee that some of our outcome sets determine the content of whole courses, effectively defining them, while other outcomes only partially determine a course's content, as the justification in the passage above suggests. But there was not consensus on this theoretical point. The committee chose to continue thinking about how to understand this and how to put what we eventually understand into policy.

4:08   (20 minutes) The next question turned on the use of the word "satisfied" in the draft language quoted above. Duffy had indicated by email that she didn't think the first outcome for objective 1.1.A can correctly be said to be "satisfied" in the two courses ENG 101 and 102:

> Write a persuasive essay that includes the following: a clear and debatable thesis, fully developed and supported ideas, clear organizational structure, effective consideration of opposing arguments, use of credible sources, appropriate documentation of sources, consideration of a target audience, and conventional grammar and mechanics.

Her view is that students cannot be expected to achieve the "Proficient" level of achievement by the end of Comp II, but that this could be achieved over their four years at the university, and that this is part of our reason for moving to a "writing across the curriculum" approach and requiring upper-level writing in the student's major. It was acknowledged that this makes sense, but that there may be practical problems (and political problems) to requiring that all departments conduct the 1.1.A.1 assessment in their major programs in addition to what is being required of them for 1.1.A.2,

> Produce a discipline-specific document judged proficient according to a department-approved rubric in the student's major.

and 1.5.3,

> Produce a written document on a difficult question involving the disciplinary content of the student's major that subjects the student's reasoning to sustained, intelligent criticism according to the standards of that discipline.

(not to mention 1.4,

> Design a research plan that incorporates a clear research question and identifies appropriate information resources.

> Produce a research log that clearly demonstrates the application of appropriate keyword search criteria, such as Boolean operators, source types, and filters.

> Write an annotated bibliography that critically analyzes the context, relevance, and authority of an information sources, particularly in light of new perspectives, additional voices, and changes in schools of thought; and applies appropriate disciplinary conventions of citation.)

If the discipline-specific document for 1.1.A.2 also happens to be a 1.5.3 critical thinking project, that also happens to fall neatly into target zone for the 1.1.A.1 rubric, then all this could conceivably be handled successfully and without too much work in a single project in a single course in the student's major. But if the 1.1.A.1 rubric is not a good fit for the 1.1.A.2 discipline-specific project, then our requiring that 1.1.A.1 be assessed in the departments may come across as inappropriately burdensome. In part because the writing across the curriculum committee has yet to meet with the designated departmental liaisons, it is not clear yet what is and what isn't in the realm of the doable regarding the various major programs. Drabkin noted that there is a question similar to Duffy's having to do with the first two outcomes of 1.5; the plan at present is to assess these outcomes for practical reasons at the freshman level, even though critical thinking is supposed to be the work of the student's entire four-year program, and would ideally be assessed at the senior level. The committee came to no decision about the matter beyond deciding, once again, to continuing thinking about this problem.

4:28   (28 minutes) Heronemus raised the next concern about this proposed policy:

> *A department is limited to offering courses that satisfy outcomes sets from no more than 2 Modes of Inquiry.*

Is it not possible, she asked, that an arbitrarily combined department such as economics, finance, and accounting would find this policy inappropriately restrictive? She suggested that this department could conceivably propose an *historical* economics course, a *social scientific* economics course, and a *philosophical* business ethics course. While there were some doubts among committee members that all these would pass review, there was general agreement that they might. So do we want to say this department cannot propose all three of these courses? One possible solution would be to allow arbitrarily combined departments special permission to circumvent the rule. Schafer suggested that, were this exception to be made, we may need to add a rule limiting *students* to no more than two mode of inquiry courses from a single *department*. Again, the committee came to no decision about the matter, and again, the Chair asked that we continue thinking about how to handle this.

Chair asked that committee members send him recommendations regarding how to resolve the problems identified in this meeting. Our aim is to get the course approval policies and procedures to senate by the end of the month in time for their April meeting.

4:56   (1 minute) In the spirit of setting priorities, the committee decided by unanimous vote to rescind the proposal to work out a revised timeline for making the CORE program operational. This proposal was last considered, and tabled, on February 14.

4:57   Meeting ended. The committee's next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 21 at 3:30 in the Smoky Hill Room.

Submitted by D. Drabkin, Recording Secretary