**FHSU Liberal Education Committee**

**Minutes**

Meeting Called by

Shala Mills, Chair

Date: Thursday 3/30/2017

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)

3:04 (1 minute) All were present except for Duffy, Garcia, Gimon, Heronemus, Rackaway, Scheck, Smith, Splichal, Weber, and Woods. Drabkin served as proxy for Duffy and Woods, Hartman served as proxy for Heronemus, and Will served as proxy for Rackaway. Established that a quorum was met.

3:05 (2 minutes) Chair announced that Andree Brisson has decided to wait until Spring 2018 to offer the Science for Citizens course, thus alleviating some of the urgency in settling the question of whether it can be accepted for general education credit under the current 55-hour program. Brisson is in discussions with Kenny Rigler, co-chair of the academic affairs committee, about the advisability of re-submitting it as an upper-level integrative course, rather than as an exception to the current program.

3:07 (25 minutes) Chair drew attention to a list of courses that Miles had submitted for the committee’s consideration that are “generally required” as prerequisites for physical therapy, occupational therapy, chiropractic, and physician assistant programs: English Composition I and II, Oral Communication, College Algebra, Diversity in the United States, Biology with lab, Chemistry with lab, Physics with lab, Statistics, Pre-Calculus or Calculus, General Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Introduction to Sociology, and Bioethics. Miles said that these are not local requirements, but are required by programs outside of FHSU. Much of the discussion that followed went to establishing that the modes of inquiry approach discussed over the past couple of meetings would not burden these highly prescriptive programs with requirements any more than they are currently burdened. If anything, it would burden them less. This is because (1) at least three of the six modes of inquiry courses could be drawn from this list, and (2) the proposal being considered requires 18 hours of modes of inquiry coursework, 10 hours less than the liberal arts distribution portion of the current general education program. So the proposal under consideration would result in open hours to assign as needed. It was generally agreed that whatever we do in setting up new general education requirements, we will need to take into account the requirements of students in highly prescriptive programs. Will recommended that, as a new program starts to come into focus, the committee should consult the college deans about other highly prescriptive programs that may similarly rely on current general education offerings to meet program requirements. An important outcome of this part of the discussion was that it revealed the value of offering some illustrations of how particular proposals might play out. In the absence of example courses, it can be challenging to understand what a proposal is actually asking students to do. But with some illustrative courses, even if they are not exactly the courses that will ultimately end up in the program, this is easier to comprehend.

3:32 (4 minutes) Drabkin presented the “sequenced, integrative reasoning-and-writing courses” portion of his proposal for an new general education program. He added to the proposal the following five clarifications and comments: (1) “It is misleading to think of these as five ‘writing courses’ or ‘comp’ courses. One would be a dedicated reasoning course. One would be a dedicated writing course. Two would be integrative courses which would integrate, among other things, reasoning and writing. And one would a capstone course, ideally in the student’s major, which would involve, among other things, reasoning and writing. These five courses would certainly involve most of our proposed objectives, and could conceivably involve all eleven.” (2) “These five courses should be thought of as part of the larger proposal including the six modes of inquiry courses we discussed last time. The entry-level reasoning course, for instance, would involve comparing and contrasting examples of argumentation (the giving of reasons in support of conclusions) from all six of the modes of inquiry. And the intermediate-level integrative course would require taking up questions that would involve bringing together reasoning in two or more of these modes of inquiry.” (3) “The upper-level integrative course is not some throwaway course. It is dedicated to giving students the opportunity to encounter questions that are, by their very nature, tough to think through – questions that would benefit from having a variety of people with different backgrounds at the table to help think them through, the ‘wicked problems’ that we are trying to prepare our students to handle.” (4) “In response to [Duffy’s] concern that the writing being proposed here is too focused on ‘academic argument,’ we are just talking about giving reasons in support of opinions here, critiquing bad reasons, and getting better at giving good reasons. There is nothing more important that we teach at the university and it deserves to be focused upon. There are of course others sorts of writing that people around here do, but are there any that we should require a fair degree of proficiency in for all of our students? This is something we might ask the writing advisory group to look into.” (5) “In response to [Heronemus’] concern that it may be unreasonable to expect all of our students to succeed at writing and reasoning in the way suggested by this proposal: Is it too much to ask that students be able to recognize when reasons are being given to support positions, and to be able to set out, in writing, what those reasons are? Is it too much to ask them to be able to raise, and formulate in writing, the strongest objections that occur to them? Is it too much to ask them to deal with complex questions involving thinking in ways outside the narrow focus of their major? Is it too much to ask them to be able to frame questions that draw on their chosen discipline, to answer these questions to the best of their ability, and to subject their reasoning to criticism? No one can reasonably expect that every student who comes to us will succeed and graduate, but we can set reasonably high standards and teach them in such a way that students will succeed if they try reasonably hard.”

3:36 (35 minutes) The discussion of these proposed reasoning-and-writing courses is hard to summarize. Will observed that Heronemus’ concern about reasonable expectations should be addressed, in part, by consulting the DQP chart for proficiencies appropriate for graduates of four-year institutions. In other words, the reasoning-and-writing courses would not set “aspirational” levels that would be inaccessible for some students, but rather, would set “minimal” levels of achievement can be reasonably expected of anyone who obtains a bachelor’s degree. Hartman saw value in spreading this sort of education out over the course of the student’s time at FHSU. Will noted that our current English Composition I and II aim to achieve writing proficiency only at the associate degree level. McNeil suggested that intermediate and advanced reasoning-and-writing proficiencies might be achievable through some of the modes of inquiry courses. Will insisted that, given our agreements to accept transfer credit and to provide transferable credit, whatever we do, we need to keep Composition I, Composition II, and General Logic in our new program; he encouraged us to accept these constraints and be creative. There was some further discussion as well about the difference between a “mode of inquiry course” and an “integrative course.” ***Committee members are advised to review the materials located under the “Integrative Learning” tab in the committee handbook*** (“Distinguishing Interdisciplinarity and Integration,” “Some Examples of Integrative Curricular Models,” etc.).

4:16 Chair reiterated her conviction that if we were to come up with a new program that is smaller in hours than the current program, and that significantly improved student writing and reasoning, we would have done something good. Meeting ended. The next meeting will be Monday April 3 at 3:00 PM in Rarick 329.

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

