**General Education Committee**

**Meeting Agenda**

**October 1, 2019 at 4 p.m.**

**HSS 3035**

**Members present:** Lillie Fears, Kevin Humphrey, Gauri Guha, David Harding, Zahid Hossain, Bethany Seaton, Rebecca Oliver, Gary Edwards, Robert Schichler, Ferebee Tunno, Marc Williams, Sarah Davidson, Karen Yanowitz, Hong Zhou

**Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Members:** Joseph Loar, Summer DeProw, Karen Wheeler

**Staff Support:** Madeline Prestidge, Mary Elizabeth Spence

**Guest:** Katherine Baker

1. Meeting Minutes from September 17, 2019

Motion: Oliver

2nd: Seaton

All approved the meeting minutes.

1. WAGG Report

Harding has received comments about the WAGG Report from one person so far. His goal is to make it short, sweet, and simple in hopes that people will read it. Yanowitz said her comments were mainly to edit the length and verbiage. One of the changes she would like to see is to say that these points are outcomes, not recommendations. Yanowitz also thinks that recommendation four doesn’t reflect the work of what the group has been talking about; the group is going for the larger idea of digital literacy, with a focus on active learning, experiential learning, etc. This point seemed to be too specific for what the group needs at this point. The way Harding sees it is not as an outcome, but as a program and initiative, the content of which could be specified later. Yanowitz disagrees. She asked her students if a microbadge would be something they would be interested in, and about half said they would if they were able to get certain credentials with it. Would add more recommendation on specific ways that general education is taught; the goal is to improve, change, modernize, make it more relevant to students through problem-based, experiential learning.

The group has devoted a lot of time discussing teaching methods and facilitating people doing things. Professional development, learning community, etc. Something that focuses more specifically on improving the teaching of these courses. Williams said the subcommittee addressed the microcredentials. They called them “impact courses” in order to make them seem more relevant. An instructor would use this terminology to enhance the material in that version of the general education course. Baker agrees and notes that it shows that these are important courses when it’s phrased as an “impact course.” The goal of these courses is to incorporate both skill sets and content. Hossain says that hands-on learning, digital literacy, etc. may be learned if faculty attend a workshop and meet together. Baker says the idea of making sure that it’s encoded in the language that we are watching the impact courses and making sure there is a measurable, definite, assessable material that is clearly present in the course. Perhaps a digital portfolio or something tangible coming out of the impact courses. Williams says that this encourages it to be more like valued education, more intentional. They aren’t just general education “getting through” courses, but rather something students really take something away from it.

Oliver suggests that we be careful as an institution to not do something so trendy because eventually this may go to the wayside. Notes that many institutions do this but then it becomes less popular. Oliver says rather than say we are *changing* the image of general education, the group could rephrase this, more importantly *rebrand* it. Changing the image is ultimately what happens. Giving general education a rebranded name can create a sense of excitement for something new. Williams says their subcommittee discussed “branding.” They asked themselves what is the general education like on our campus, and what do we want the program to be like? Baker suggests a new online platform that speaks to new audiences: a student portal, teacher portal, and parent portal. “Recruitment, retention, reinvigorate.”

DeProw notes the way the intro is written is pretty historically accurate for where we started in May, but did Dr. Damphousse’s discussion change the tactic? Impact, rebrand, get into the professional development plan that was discussed. Yanowitz says this current report seems a bit confrontational and outdated. Harding reminds everyone that the strategic planning meeting for faculty is at 3:30 on Wednesday, October 23. Seaton says that a coordinator for general education is still pretty specific, so we would be in line to continue on with that specificity. Harding says this should be a product of a discussion that happens, rather than give every detail of the coordinator position. Suggests to not be overly specific, because once things are written they seem to become demands, and that’s not what we are going for. It’s much more agreeable to changing the general education’s image. The university needs to pay attention to “selling” it and rebranding. Baker wonders if we might not want to build to the coordinator position; rather the group should start with PLO, then move to rebranding, then to impact courses, then to the person who will coordinate it all. Guha says this is a good idea, but maybe start with the rebranding, and include the impact courses as part of the rebranding. A-State has recognized this is a strategic part of changing. Oliver says maybe we can just eliminate the first sentence of the report altogether; reminds everyone that we use A-State, not ASU. Harding asks what’s the deal with ASU? The group laughs and says let’s have Marketing yell at Harding about that one.

The group agrees they are definitely going to redo the first paragraph. Loar says he’s heard a lot of ideas and verbiage that reminds him of military strategy overall. The first paragraph is the problem statement: general education has lost its value to the students and professors who teach it. The overall faculty feeling is “I’ve got what I research and teach, but I also have to teach these general education courses.” With rebranding, you have multiple targets and objectives. One is the student interest as well as the professor. This shows the student why it’s important to understand why these general education courses matter. Wheeler asks, “What is the problem” referring to the WAGG report. She doesn’t see a problem specifically stated. Is it that students find general education boring, they don’t want to take these courses, etc. We are addressing a problem, but we haven’t explicitly stated it. Wheeler says let’s make this first paragraph as eye-catching as humanly possible. The group is going for student value, apathy, and engagement, as well as faculty passion and engagement. Hossain asks if retention is a problem that can be associated with general education courses. Wheeler says if there’s a lack of engagement in general education, that’s where the university starts losing people. That’s the purpose of general education, to “hook” them on showing them the different schools of thought. Oliver says a lot of our students don’t get the “hook” anymore because they are taking a lot of general education courses in high school, so the average student coming in as a freshman has 18 hours or more. In that way, how are we “hooking” them, how are we assisting them in developing critically in those lower-division courses when they no longer have them anymore?

 DeProw says the discussion of where the general education courses are lacking in writing skills, speaking skills, critical thinking skills, but we have no tangible evidence of this. These courses aren’t grabbing students’ attention or giving them any way to discourage them for coming to college with so many hours. Baker asks if we can convince it’s worth paying extra money because it will prepare them for the future? We are in a hard place, however, because the university can’t take away the credit for classes. Guha says if you take that logic to the extreme, then it becomes an existential problem for general education in colleges. University systems used to be rated the best in the world because they’re able to analyze and think in different ways. Students can be a finance major, but they can’t be an effective professional if they only take 12 finance classes with no other experience. Yanowitz says there is a hope that these students will take these courses, talk to their siblings and younger friends, then maybe taking these impact courses will become more normalized.

DeProw says if we change our general education this drastically, then our concurrent would change. Harding says the existing paragraph shows some problems: the students don’t like the general education courses, the faculty who teach them are annoyed with them, and those who don’t have to teach it don’t see the value. Loar says with this change, we are looking at trying to get people interested in taking these courses again; what is the end product looking for? Guha notes that “reshape” is a good word; present a big idea, then give possible recommendations. Additionally, an online platform would be important. Oliver says we need more interdisciplinary courses that students can use to fulfill multiple things within general education, which ties into point four of the WAGG report. Guha said the problem in implementing that is if there are several professors teaching it, then how can you share that credit? Yanowitz wonders if we are getting too far ahead of ourselves, and Harding asks how much more detail do we need?

Baker suggests strengthening the argument and perhaps condensing the WAGG report to three points. Harding worries that calling these courses “impact courses” could degrade other courses. Perhaps there can be some kind of verbiage to show that these courses are special. Wheeler says not every course will contain every element, but what do we expect to see in these courses? You can establish a minimum...in order to graduate from this institution, you need to have “X” number of “high impact” courses. Harding asks if the group likes the direction they are going, and the consensus is yes. Harding asks if you have a recommendation of specific language, please send it to him. This needs to be in someone’s hands by October 23. Harding thinks this possible coordinator position is instead going to be a faculty member who may take on some extra responsibility.

Harding motions to adjourn, Williams approved, and Fears seconded.

**Future Business**

1. General Education Award
2. Assignments to subcommittees - DeProw handed these out as everyone left
3. Member for AAC
4. Membership proposal for SGOC and Book of Committees