

Minutes of the Carolina Core (General Education) Committee Meeting

August 11, 2009

12:30-2:00 p.m.

107 Osborne Conference Room

Members Present:

Cheryl Addy, Pam Bowers, Jim Burns, Mary Ann Byrnes, Helen Doerpinghaus (Ex-Officio), Kimberly Glenn, Mary Hjelm, Susanne Hicklin, Stuart Hunter, Miriam Johnson, Carolyn Jones, Gene Luna, Michael Matthews (Co-Chair), Joseph Rackers, Rick Stephens, David Tedeschi, Irma Van Scoy, Virginia Weathers

Members Absent:

Elise Ahyi (Ex-Officio), Bob Best (Ex-Officio), Robert Castleberry, Richard Clodfelter, David Miller (Co-Chair), Phil Moore (Ex-Officio), Susan Parlier

Helen Doerpinghaus called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for attending. Helen introduced Susanne Hicklin, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, whose responsibilities include coordinating institutional assessment efforts. At the October 12 meeting, Susanne will present information about current general education assessment methods and data collected to date. Helen noted that this will be a timely discussion, as institutional accreditation standards (SACS) require us to demonstrate how results of assessment are used to improve student achievement of learning goals.

The committee reviewed and approved, with no changes, minutes from the May 12 meeting.

Helen summarized the significant accomplishments of the committee over the past 18 months. The committee invited and incorporated input from a wide range of faculty to identify Core Components and Learning Outcomes for the revised Carolina Core general education curriculum; the Core was approved by Faculty Senate; and sub-committees have drafted documents – currently called appendices – to further explain the thinking that contributed to crafting of the learning outcome statements. The committee will include the information now contained in these appendices in Carolina Core documentation to provide a deeper understanding of the intent of the revised curriculum, as well as to document the collaborative and inclusive committee process of developing the learning outcome statements. Helen commented on the need to maintain the trust of faculty that the process of defining and implementing the new curriculum is open and fair; the importance of this was affirmed by another member of the committee.

Helen explained that the three sub-committees working on appendices this summer had taken slightly different approaches, so a discussion was needed to develop a uniform approach that would improve the coherence of the overall document.

To create this uniform approach, Mike Matthews facilitated a review of appendices drafts and led focused discussions on the component pieces of the documents. Mike explained

that the Context component of the document would ideally be one page or less, should reflect the collective thinking of the working group and the Carolina Core committee as a whole, and should provide a broad understanding of the learning outcome. The committee agreed that the context component should provide suggested statements to guide the development of foundation and integrative courses (“Foundational courses with this learning outcome will”).

The committee agreed that each Carolina Core course syllabus should have a component that addresses its general education connection. It was suggested that a common syllabus component be developed for inclusion in all Carolina Core course syllabi, and that additional wording would also be included for the specific Carolina Core learning outcome that is a focus of the course. This wording would help faculty and students understand expectations for Carolina Core outcomes, and the relationship of the Core to the class they are taking, by describing what students who achieve the learning outcome will know or be able to do. For example, a syllabus might state, “A student who achieves the scientific literacy learning outcome will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles, language, and terms (vocabulary) of the physical and life sciences necessary to make risk and benefit analysis of current issues.” It is expected that discipline-specific learning outcomes for a course will be closely aligned with the broader, corresponding Carolina Core learning outcome. Continuing the same example, a Chemistry course might have as a course-specific learning outcome that “students will be able to use the principles of chemistry to analyze current environmental issues.”

It was suggested that Carolina Core course syllabi be “branded” (with a Carolina logo) for easy identification; the idea met with some approval, but some expressed that this might prove confusing to students and advisors, as general education designated courses may be taken for other purposes.

Mike agreed to incorporate the changes discussed today into a revised draft of the appendices written by his sub-committee and send those to the full committee as a model/example of the preferred format. The committee seems to be on track to finish appendices by September.

The committee supported the idea of requesting review and discussion of next drafts by faculty and student focus groups.

Helen led a discussion on the timeframe of committee activities. The committee hopes to implement the new Carolina Core curriculum in Fall 2011. To accomplish that, the following tentative timeline of activities was suggested:

- September, 2009, finish appendices
- Fall 2009, identify course distribution plan (how many courses will be required in each component area?)
 - o Host Faculty Forum to discuss distribution, mid-semester
- Spring 2010, identify process for selecting Core courses
 - o Host Faculty Forum to discuss process, mid-semester

Co-chairs agreed to draft a calendar, working back from a target implementation date of Fall 2011, to identify a workable timeframe to meet that target start date.

Helen thanked the committee for their continued input and support. The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.