**Guilford College**

**Faculty Meeting Minutes**

**October 1, 2014**

**Moon Room, Dana Auditorium**

1. Following a period of opening silence, Clerk Dave Dobson started the meeting with two brief reminders: 1) He had passed out pencils and cards for faculty to write comments. The comments could be put into the brown box in the back of the room. They might also appear on the <http://moonrm.com> website unless one specifies that his/her comments stay private. Any comments on the moonrm website come to Dave for approval. 2) The faculty is encouraged to share positive thoughts and experiences at the end of the meeting. This sharing time will be separate from the closing silence.
2. **Introduction to Revision of the General Education Curriculum**

Dave Dobson introduced the pros and cons of conducting a general education curriculum revision, and discussed some of the potholes in the revision process. The faculty has been talking about general education curriculum revision for a long time. The reasons for the revision are: 1) Concern among faculty that we are not meeting the General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs); 2) We have deferred a number of proposals that require changes in the curriculum; 3) Since only 36 out of 138 current faculty members participated in the last curriculum revision, the majority of our faculty are not familiar with the rationale behind the current curriculum and had no part in creating it; 4) Our curriculum is already 16 years old. It is time to review it to meet new needs.

Misgivings about conducting another revision come mainly from memories about the last curriculum revision in 1997. It was a long, laborious and painful process that caused a lot of tensions among faculty members and departments/programs. We had to cut 20% of our faculty while doing the revision. The faculty was revising the classes while being judged. The revision was reductive in that we cut programs and reduced requirements. With emphasis on Quaker decision-making and consensus, the revision process also ran long and many were worn out. This experience in our last curriculum revision made some faculty hesitate about conducting another revision. On the other hand, since the situation we face today is different from 1997, the revision this time might go more smoothly.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) has specific guidelines on the general education requirements. According to its principles for college accreditation, a general education component at the collegiate level should: 1) be a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, 2) ensure breadth of knowledge, 3) be based on a coherent rationale, 4) constitute a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent, 5) draw from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and national science/mathematics, and the courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. [SACSCOC, “The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement” 2.7.3]

Then Dave reviewed some of the potholes in the curriculum revision process based on Paul L. Gaston and Jerry G. Gaff’s book, *Revising General Education – And Avoiding the Potholes: A Guide for Curricular Change* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2009). Common conceptual potholes include: 1) Assume that everyone understands the value of general education and the need for improvement; 2) Find a program to import; 3) Expect a holistic change; 4) Tinker with distribution requirements. There are also some procedural potholes such as: 1) Work according to “business as usual” through the curriculum committee; 2) Work without any special support; 3) Plan for a short-term project; 4) Seek to continue the process of change by addition; 5) Assume that logic will prevail.

The main purpose of this meeting, as Dave explained, was to discuss whether we as faculty are ready to commit to conducting a general education curriculum revision, and if yes, what would be the best way to do this: through a Curriculum and Assessment joint team? An ad hoc committee? A curriculum “czar”? Or other models?

1. **For Information: Assessment of the General Education Learning Outcomes**

Caryl Schunk, former Chair of the Assessment Committee, shared assessment data information related to general education. Since we just implemented the new GELOs last year, we only have one year of data on GELO 1 (“Communicating effectively with others using listening, speaking and writing”). Rubrics were used in assessing students’ skills in collaboration, oral communication, and written communication. The Proficiency Profile assesses four core skills – critical thinking, reading, writing and mathematics – in a single test developed by ETS. The CAAP Writing Essay Test measures writing skills.

Preliminary results show that Guilford is facing some challenges in achieving the desired learning outcomes. Our average score on the GELO 1 assessment rubric is 3.1 out of 5. The Proficiency Profile test shows low scores in critical thinking and reading. The CAAP Writing Essay Test indicates some growth in writing, but overall our percentile score is between 61-68%. Quantitative Literacy was another area of concern.

Caryl also cautioned us about interpreting the data. She pointed out that our data is still very limited. There are tremendous variations in the scores in the Proficiency Profile and CAAP, and different commitment levels of students to take the tests seriously. The GELO rubrics were administered in some departments for entry level courses and in others for exit level courses. In addition, the ratings are also subjective depending on the rater’s professional judgment. Therefore, a question remains as to whether the assessment tools we have selected actually measure what we want to assess.

The faculty asked some questions about the data and its interpretations. A few commented that the data is very limited and even a bit confusing. It was suggested that we rate the same students for the tests, first in their freshman year and again in their senior year, to get more consistent data. Caryl mentioned that some schools required students to do the tests. She hoped that the faculty could press more students to participate in the tests.

1. **For Information: History of Proposals for Curriculum Changes**

Drew Hayes, Chair of Curriculum Committee, shared the history of the proposals that are related to general education. Since 2012, it has been proposed that Experiential Learning and PPS be included in the general education requirements. The Curriculum Committee reviewed the proposals and recommended these to be housed in General Education. But the Committee also felt that a broader discussion was needed on these issues. Meetings were held between the Clerk’s Committee, the Assessment Committee, the Curriculum Committee, as well as the Dean’s Office in Spring 2013.

In addition to Experiential Learning and PPS, there were other proposals related to Foreign Language and Quantitative Literacy. It was also pointed out that the Campus Life also had a proposal requiring all students to attend a certain number of events on campus. All of the above proposals require some changes in the general education curriculum. On September 10, 2013, the Curriculum Committee recommended a halt to all proposals that involve general education until another curriculum revision.

1. **General Discussion: Revising the General Education Curriculum**

After a short period of small group discussion, the faculty reconvened to share their thoughts and comments on the proposal to revise the general education curriculum.

A number of concerns were raised about the proposal: 1) The assessment data is small and preliminary, it suggests certain problems but that is not conclusive; 2) Despite the assessment concerns, there does not seem to be any curricular reason for a curriculum revision; 3) We need to revisit our identity before revising the curriculum. We need to know what we already do well in educating students before revising the classes; 4) There needs to be a commitment of support for people who are involved in the revision; 5) We have not figured out the mechanisms for the revision. Making a commitment to revising the curriculum without knowing the mechanisms is risky; 6) There needs to be an end date for the revision.

Some advocated for a revision and were ready to commit to it. Their main arguments are: 1) Times have changed, and our curriculum is old, we need to improve our students’ education by reexamining our curriculum and accommodating new trends; 2) The demography of our student body has shifted: the percentage of our students coming from North Carolina increased from ¼ to 54%. This suggests a need to review our curriculum. 3) We developed new GELOs based on the college’s mission statement. Achieving the new GELOs does not mean simply teaching to the tests. The curriculum revision provides us with an opportunity to build community and to have conversations on who we are and how we can do our job better; 4) A number of proposals have been deferred for a long time. For example, the Foreign Language proposal has been held for 6 years; 5) Curriculum *is* our identity, and revising the curriculum is rethinking our identity. Certain things need to be included in the curriculum, such as the anti-racism workshops. We also need to rethink the human-centric nature of our curriculum given the emergence of other pressing issues such as globalization and global warming; 5) Curriculum revision does not have to be an overhaul. It could be small or as needed. The main point is that we are giving ourselves the opportunity to start reviewing our curriculum. Members of the joint Curriculum and Assessment Committee are committed to making this process as open and transparent as it can be.

The Clerk concluded the discussion by suggesting that we have not reached consensus on this issue, thus we will take more time thinking about it, and we will come back to this issue at the November faculty meeting. He also emphasized that doing nothing is a bad idea as we have frozen our curriculum for a long time.

1. **Collective Self-Affirmation and Production of Good Vibes**

Nancy Daukas shared an interesting story about her students. Drew Hayes invited the faculty to join his students’ performance on Friday. Suzanne Bartels announced that we had received a grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation to support digital directives in the Arts and Humanities.

1. The meeting closed with a moment of silence.

Submitted by Zhihong Chen, Recording Clerk.