

MEETING OF GENERAL STUDIES ROUNDTABLE – PHASE II

December 1, 2006

Reports from the colleges / Opening thoughts—

Daryl Kelley provided feedback from the 11/20 meeting of an NSS focus group. The following is a summary (compiled by Martha, not quoted directly) of its comments:

- *Students would benefit from more options along with a greater core than provided by the model currently under consideration.*
- *GS needs to remain university-wide BUT one GS program does not fit everyone.*
- *Our students come to UNK widely scattered along a continuum of preparedness. Upfront assessment would help us identify their individual needs.*
- *Weaknesses of the current program include a lack of computer training; boring, unchallenging course work; prerequisites to GS course; and a lack of focus on pedagogy.*
- *Other comments: The GS program must be capable of adapting to current conditions and recognize the importance of globalization/ internationalization and the influences of culture.*
- *How does GS connect with the disciplines? The connection is unclear.*
- *College Algebra is not the best math class for all our students, who would benefit from more work with statistics.*
- *Integrate First Year and interdisciplinary courses into GS.*
- *UNK should make the teaching of GS courses an aspiration among faculty.*
- *GS courses should be given a 5-year license and then assessed for their continued appropriateness. The program needs to be more dynamic.*

Also from NSS: Is this GS revision just another assignment? A sense of urgency seems to be lacking. The focus groups also expressed concern over the feasibility and mechanics of a revised program.

The roundtable participants discussed how sequencing might be built into the new program. Participants also emphasized that the revised GS program should not “punish” students who change their majors.

Participants were also reminded that many departments recruit majors from their GS courses.

Director of General Studies Daren Snider distributed the AAC&U booklet *General Education: The Changing Agenda*. [Co-facilitator’s note: Jerry Gaff, author of this text, is one of the premier authorities in General Education reform. Note especially the bulleted items on pp. 1-2; several features of the revised program we are creating are aligned with the “promising, contemporary trends” cited here.]

Further work on the GS program:

Core Curriculum (12 hrs.)

Writing (3 hrs.)

3 hrs. required + 3 hours “remedial” as needed)

Prerequisite: Equivalent of ENG 101, proficiency to be determined by placement measure

Required: ENG 102 or a Thematic Writing course

Wellness (3 hrs.)

One 2-cr. hr. seminar plus 2 half-credit academic and/or physical education courses

Math Literacy/Math Communication (3 hrs.)

Understanding and interpretation of statistics and their applications, graphs and formal logic

Communication: Oral/Visual (3 hrs.)

Performance and “consumer use” of rhetoric
Focus on primary texts
Practice with group and individual presentations
Practice in listening
Instruction in logic

These four (4) courses would be required in students’ first 2 semesters at UNK.

The group then moved to a consideration of the Modes of Inquiry courses, which would share the following template:

Role of _____ in society

Modes of inquiry in _____

Case studies and current issues in _____

These courses could be team-taught, interdisciplinary, or assigned to a core instructor who will bring in guest lecturers. Any of these, or a combination thereof, is a possibility as long as the course meets GS requirements. Class size will likely vary by discipline. The use of primary texts is still important. The GS Council would establish protocols by going to the discipline and finding out what’s workable. It is also important for faculty to model the teacher/scholar role.

The four areas for these modes courses seem to be the following:

Natural Sciences
Social Sciences
Humanities
Arts

The next step is to assign departments and/or courses to each area. Some disciplines (e.g. History) may fall beneath more than one category.

Dr. Finnie Murray, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Student Life, attended the meeting and spoke to the group at its conclusion. His comments:

- Faculty have much in common; similarities among them are more prevalent than differences.
- This process requires courage.
- The group shouldn’t worry about things that could cause problems; instead, our task is to envision what our students should know and be able to do as citizens of the world. Contemporary students are entering a different world; the GS program must build connections and demonstrate relevance.

Martha Kruse, co-facilitator