

General Studies Roundtable – Phase II
Notes –February 9, 2007

[Co-facilitator's preface] This meeting of the roundtable demonstrated convincingly that the process of program revision is recursive rather than linear. The notes that follow are, likewise, a compilation of observations and questions that came up during the discussion. Some are related to fundamental tenets of a liberal arts education; others point to very specific features of the model in progress. And no word, phrase, or sentence (not even ONTOLOGY) can suggest or impose a linear framework for a discussion that raised important questions about our work. Furthermore, the presence of a comment on this list does not suggest that this comment is the result of extensive discussion, much less consensus.

That said.....

Comment: Democracy should be one of the key components of Part B [the middle we are currently muddling through].

Vern Volpe distributed a general description of a core history course. This course takes advantage of instructor expertise and provides a range of student choice. The proposed course will consider ideas as well as discrete events.

Question: Are Rule 24 endorsement criteria applicable to descriptions of our core courses? [Rule 24 is that matrix that outlines curricular requirements for students seeking teacher certification.]

Question: Do we need fewer total hours, or more undesignated hours in the program? Flexibility in this area could be a plus, especially for those departments/programs that require certain GS courses in their program of study.

Question: Do we have a complete definition of wellness as it applies to the core course?

Comment: A disciplinary laboratory experience is important. [This comment did garner widespread approval.] [Co-facilitator's suggestion: The effects of short-term hyperthermia on the viability of brain cells]

Comment: Students learn best when they understand why they're being taught what they're being taught.

Question: Do we have an over-arching theme for General Studies? We need "a philosophy of all this."

Comment: The language characterizing this program should not so rarified as to be incomprehensible to our constituents. BUT we should not underestimate students' ability to grasp the terminology and accept the challenge of doing so.

The group then considered Daryl Kelley's "GS Principles," a handout that addressed such issues/questions as the definition of GS, the role of individual departments, advising, connection to UNK goals and mission, ownership of the curriculum, and assessment.

Comment: The content of this handout is so substantial and relevant to the roundtable's purpose that an entire session should be devoted to its discussion.

Comment: The proposal under construction lacks a strong globalization component.

Comment: We might consider a "portal" course tied to the Modes of Inquiry and capstone courses. This course "will explore challenges to individuals and society from the standpoint of how citizens, familiar with modes of problem solving/knowledge creation, might best address such challenges" (Charles Peek handout). [Apparent consensus that this course should be added to the core.]

Comment: GS courses should be staffed by our best teachers. Faculty aspiring to teach these courses might submit a portfolio or formal application similar to that required of graduate faculty.

Question: Is it a given that the new model will be a 45-hour program?

Answer: No, but any model that exceeds that number may not be favorably regarded.

Question: Are we facing articulation issues with the 2-year colleges?

Answer: The community colleges will probably follow our lead. We also need a strong P-16 conversation.

Comment: The capstone course must incorporate scientific methodology (both quantitative and qualitative), theory, ethics, a sense of justice, and critical thinking.

Assignment for Feb. 23: Continue to refine the middle part of the proposal.

Martha Kruse, co-facilitator