

MEETING OF GENERAL STUDIES ROUNDTABLE – PHASE II

November 17, 2006

The General Studies roundtable met November 17, 2006, from 2:30-4:00.

The meeting began with the distribution of three documents:

1. A packet of comments from Mary Rittenhouse's students over General Studies

A revised model developed by Charles Peek ["More Thoughts..."]

A revised model developed by Rick Miller ["Proposed GS Program..."]

Opening Thoughts –

Students do not seem to understand why they're taking GS courses. As Drew Appleby (who was on campus 11/17) noted of advising, the why of the curriculum is as important as the what. Students don't perceive connections among their courses and faculty don't communicate these linkages very well.

Skills should be explicitly taught. Students and faculty should be working with the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation). Though students come to us with a wide variety of abilities, faculty should be focusing not upon remediation but on higher-order skills developed through work with primary texts.

The roundtable must consider the effects of the revised GS program on recruitment and enrollment. Will the revised program be navigable for transfer students? Members noted that the other NU campuses are also revising their General Education requirements and that the community colleges are likely adapt their curricula to more closely match those of the four-year institutions. Furthermore, specific courses could still transfer in.

While the group must remain mindful of administrative issues, this is the body responsible for coming up with the model. The student outcomes identified in Phase I should result in a creative, dynamic program.

Consideration of GS Content and Structure –

The group turned to a discussion of the model submitted by Charles Peek [see "More Thoughts..."]. We began discussing each item in Section A; none of the areas in this section are restricted to specific departments.

3 hours of Writing in the Disciplines:

This could be a "hopper" of courses, or it could consist of ENG 101 and/or 102.

Perhaps students would benefit from 6 hours of writing—ENG 101/02 + 3 hrs. of a disciplinary option.

Should students be allowed to test out of ENG 101, the introductory expository writing course?

Is a disciplinary writing course consistent with GS, given that first- and second-year students may not have decided on a major?

Students must perceive a distinction between high school and college-level work; perhaps a Thematic Writing course would meet their needs.

No definite decision reached on the issue of writing courses.

3 hours of PE or Personal Development

Let's call it Wellness.

If no existing course meets all the objectives listed in Phase I, the HPERLS department could create such a course, perhaps a 2-hr. seminar + 1 hr. of physical activity. This type of offering has its roots in the classical definition of an educated person.

3 hours of "Math for the Educated Person"

Alternate titles: Math Literacy or Math Communication

This course would involve the interpretation of graphs, charts, statistics as well as the computational skills demanded of an informed citizen, such as recognizing when an answer to a math problem is absurd. It would not be a repetition of a high school course. Individual departments/programs can decide if their majors need additional math courses.

Would such a course be sufficiently challenging for students who are gifted in math? Perhaps students could test out of this course by passing a comprehensive final exam.

3 hours of Speech and Rhetorical Analysis

This category includes oral presentation, logic, rhetorical awareness, and critical listening.

Alternative title: Communications

No definite decision reached regarding a Communications course.

After going through Part A of the Peek model, the roundtable identified 2 required courses: Wellness (2 + 1 cr. hrs) and Math Literacy, with some uncertainty still remaining over the Writing and Communications courses, which could perhaps be combined.

Another question: Should these courses be required in students' first year?

With this session, the roundtable began working toward a specific structure.

Next time (12/1), the group will continue its work on the Peek and Miller models, which are similar in several respects.