

General Studies Council Minutes
March 3, 2022 @ 3:30 p.m.
Warner Conference Room, Warner Hall
**** Approved Via Email ****

Present: Jeong Hoon Choi, Nita Unruh, Doug Tillman, Rebecca Umland, Jeff Wells, Joan Blauwkamp, Jeremy Dillon, Joel Berrier, Michelle McKelvey, Noelle Bohaty, Rochelle Reeves, Sri Seshadri, Jessie Bialas, Mark Ellis, Amy Rundstrom, Greg Brown, Joel Cardenas, Beth Hinga, Lisa Neal

Guests: Tim Jares, Derek Boeckner, Kim Carlson, Joe Dolence, Suzanne Maughan, Amanda Sladek, Ralph Hanson, Sharon Campbell, Ryan Teten, Annette Moser

Absent: John Hastings

I. Call to order:

- By consensus, the Council agreed to discuss first item B on the agenda, as well as to consider proposed responses to the data regarding LOPER 1 as implied by item C. Seshadri/Berrier moved to approve the agenda. **Motion carried unanimously.**
- Minutes from February 3 meeting (approved via email)

II. Old Business (Open Items):

- None

III. New Business:

A. (Item B on the agenda): CSP-FAMS-ENG 126 revisions

- Sladek summarized the changes: a new team member from CSP and focus for that section of the seminar and a revised schedule based on experience with what would better benefit students.
- Tillman/Umland moved to approve the CSP/FAMS/ENG 126 revisions. **Yes-12/No-0 Motion carried**

B. (Item A on the agenda): Report on meeting with GSC Director, SVCASA Bicak, and College Deans

- Brown stated that LOPER 1 was the main topic of discussion and summarized the feedback. The Deans had divided views. Dean Reid thought that the First-Year Seminar is going fine apart from concerns about the grading policy; Dean Jares also expressed concerns about the grading policy and inconveniences in scheduling; and Dean Teten expressed the same concerns that were detailed in the CAS documents emailed to the Council this week.

C. First-Year Seminars / -188 classes: Reports from Registrar's office.

The Council had a lengthy discussion about the LOPER 1 design and pros and cons of making changes. The discussion focused on three dimensions: retaining the 1+1+1 individual sections versus changing to a single 3-credit hour generic LOPR 126 course; continuing to require seminars with team-teaching faculty from three different disciplines and at least two departments, or simplifying to two or more departments/disciplines; and whether to mandate a particular approach to team teaching (teach-observe) with all participating faculty present in class all the time instead of rotating. The summary of the discussion below is presented thematically rather than chronologically.

Summary of discussion on 1+1+1 versus generic 3-credit LOPR 126:

- Blauwkamp stated that the data the Registrar provided verifies the concern that many more students failed the First-Year Seminar compared to the Portal classes, which indicates that the 1+1+1 structure is a problem. Questions were raised about why the students failed (did they just not show up?) and the Fall focus group reports from the FYS students that less than minimal effort was necessary to fail. It was pointed out that the 1+1+1 structure gives students less time to adjust to college life. Non-attendance in a 5-week class is harder to recover from than in a 16-week class. Neal also pointed out that the Registrar's Office's correction rosters do not work with 1+1+1; most of the sections have not yet met when the instructor has to confirm the roster's accuracy. Ellis indicated that Dr. Bicak does not want to make this decision (to retain 1+1+1 or change to 3 credit LOPR 126) for the Council.
- Dillon noted that it is unfair to students that they have to pay to retake an entire seminar even if they passed one or two sections the first time around, and there was discussion of whether certain financial aid programs would cover those expenses. Brown reminded the Council that we approved the 1+1+1 with the requirement that students pass all three sections or retake the seminar after careful consideration of the pros and cons. Blauwkamp agreed that we should not keep the 1+1+1 structure with individual students enrolled in some sections but not in others. But changing the course to a 3-credit hour generic LOPR 126 solves student confusion and the grading problems while keeping what we like about the FYS (problem-focused, multidisciplinary, team taught). Students would pass or fail the entire seminar, and fewer would fail and need to retake. There would be one Canvas, one syllabus, and one grading scheme.
- Problems that would be created by changing the structure were also discussed. Faculty teaching evaluations might need to be done on paper forms or Qualtrics, so each college could continue to use their approved form for the relevant instructors. Students who failed the 1+1+1 would not be able to retake LOPR 126 for grade replacement. Berrier suggested that those students could be permitted into closed sections with the discipline prefixes where needed, while new enrollees would take the LOPR 126 version of the class.
- Dean Teten asked about the CAS proposal that a student be able to retake any LOPER 1 seminar for grade replacement. Neal reminded everyone that, across the

NU system, all “special topics” designated courses must be retaken with the same topic for grade replacement, so that is not an option. The topic is listed on the student’s transcript.

- Dillon/Blauwkamp moved to change LOPER 1 from 1+1+1 credit hour course to a 3-credit hour course. **Yes-10 (votes from all three colleges)/No-0/Abstain-2 Motion carried.**
- Neal stated the change to LOPER 1 probably cannot be implemented until Spring 2023. Boeckner offered the possibility of calling an emergency Faculty Senate meeting to try to fast-track the change for Fall 2022.

Summary of discussion on the number of participating departments/disciplines:

- Umland stated she would like to change LOPER 1 to a team-taught course with two faculty members from different departments. It would be easier to create seminars with teams of two faculty members rather than three.
- There was broad agreement that requiring three different disciplines made sense with the 1+1+1 structure but less so with the generic 3-credit LOPR 126. Logistics of scheduling and work load would be easier if we allowed teams of two. Most of the discussion focused on whether the two (or more) participating faculty must be from different departments, or could be in the same department if from different disciplines.
- Pros of requiring different departments: Clearer to students that the seminar analyzes the problem from the perspectives of multiple fields. More consistent with the currently approved design, which allows three disciplines but requires them to come from at least two participating departments. Fairer to departments that do not have multiple disciplinary prefixes.
- Pros of allowing different disciplines in the same department: Departments are administrative units (that change over time), and some colleges have more multidiscipline departments than others.
- Cons of allowing different disciplines in the same department: Some departments may try to “game the system” by creating new prefixes. But the opportunities to do that should be limited by the administrative hurdles – need to go through the Academic Affairs approval process.
- Ellis suggested there could be generic language about the seminar being “multidisciplinary” without specifying team taught. Unruh noted that the -388 GS capstone courses had that language but in practice were not multidisciplinary or team taught, with some notable exceptions (Berrier: Brewing Science).
- Blauwkamp/Umland moved that LOPER 1 seminars be team taught by at least two different departments. **Yes-7 (no votes from CBT)/No-4/Abstain-1 Motion failed from lack of support within all three colleges.**
- Blauwkamp/Wells moved that LOPER 1 seminars be team taught by at least two different academic disciplines designated by prefix. **Yes-12/No-0 Motion carried.**

Summary of discussion on what “team teaching” means:

- Brown observed that there are multiple models of team teaching. Teach-observe is one, but rotation is also team teaching, and it might be more feasible for faculty to rotate in teaching the LOPER 1 seminar.
- Ellis stated that Dr. Bicak’s idea of team teaching is two or more faculty in the classroom engaging with the students at the same time.
- Wells noted that the GS Program has been reduced from 45-hours to 30-hours, which should have bought departments some instructional capacity for team teaching. Unruh and Bohaty both noted the obstacles to teach-observe for busy faculty and small programs. Fewer faculty may be able to teach LOPER 1 if they all must attend all class meetings. The Council also does not want to become the “team teaching police.” Seshadri stated that the participating faculty or departments should decide. Blauwkamp prefers the model where all faculty are together with the students but does not think the Council should prescribe on this issue.

Summary of other topics discussed:

- Brown and Neal noted that there are still 800 students on older catalogs that need -388 Capstone courses to complete their GS program requirements.
- Dillon mentioned the CAS proposal that LOPER 1 seminars be approved by both the Council and the relevant college Educational Policy Committee(s). Apparently (according to Kim Carlson) the CNSS Ed Policy reviewed that college’s -188 and -388 new topics, even though that was not Council policy. Two reasons not to require the extra layer of review are efficiency in approving new seminars and not discouraging seminar collaborations across colleges, where no single educational policy committee would have jurisdiction. McKelvey noted that the Council includes faculty from all three colleges, so we are capable of evaluating whether the proposed new seminars are academically rigorous while being accessible to first-year students.

Informational items:

- D. Call for courses? The GS Council Canvas materials for the meeting provided a table of comparison of UNL ACES 1 & 2 to UNK LOPERs 2 and 3, which was information requested in the February 3 meeting when we discussed whether a call for courses was needed. Umland asked why this was listed under New Business since it was discussed at the February meeting, and where it originated. She also noted that UNK’s General Studies Program is structured differently than UNL’s ACE Program. Brown stated this was a response to a request for additional course proposals. Umland pointed out that since 2013 the writing requirement at UNK has been reduced from 12 to 3 hours and that English faculty should therefore teach the required 3 hours. There was strong general support expressed for this. We noted again the opportunities that ENG and COMM departments offered at our last meeting for special sections of ENG 102 or SPCH 100 to be

developed for departments that feel their students need more specialized options for LOPERs 2 or 3.

- E. CJUS 375 deactivation (thus removed from LOPER 7)
- F. Brown reminded the Council that the General Studies APR site visit is next week: March 9 and 10 and the specific meetings for Council members (all in NSU 310):
 - March 9 3:15-5:00 Review Team meets with General Studies Council
 - March 10 1:30-2:45 Oral report by Review Team to General Studies Council and Dr. Greg Brown, General Studies Director

IV. Other:

- V. **Adjournment: Blauwkamp/acclamation moved to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 5:02 pm.**

Next meeting: April 7, 2022 @ 3:30 pm-Warner Conference Room, Warner Hall or Zoom.