

General Studies Council
May 4, 2023
3:30 PM, Warner Conference Room
****Formerly the Chancellor's Dining Room, second floor of NSU****
**** Approved via Email ****

Present: Joel Berrier, Noelle Bohaty, Joan Blauwkamp, Jeremy Dillon, Sherri Harms, Toni Hill, Miechelle McKelvey, Tim Obermier, Rochelle Reeves, Rebecca Umland, Nita Unruh, Melissa Wuellner, Greg Brown, Mark Ellis, Lisa Neal, Jessie Bialas, Joel Cardenas, John Gibbs, Tristan Larson

Guests: Nanette Hogg, Tim Jares, Derek Boeckner

Absent: Sri Seshadri, Beth Hinga

I. Call to order:

- **Approve Agenda:** Obermier/Wuellner moved to approve the agenda. **Motion carried unanimously.**
- Minutes from April 6, 2023 meeting (approved via email)

II. Old Business (Open Items):

- Course proposals (new):
 - LOPR 126 Phys Math Art Full STEAM Ahead: Bridging Analytical and Creative Problem Solving
 - No comments on General Studies for Faculty discussion on Canvas.
 - Blauwkamp/Obermier moved to approve LOPR 126 Phys Math Art Full STEAM Ahead: Bridging Analytical and Creative Problem Solving for inclusion in LOPER 1. **Motion carried (Yes-11/No-0 *one late arrival*)**
- Excellence in Teaching General Studies award update:
 - Brown stated there were 5 nominees and the nominations were forwarded to Tristan Larson and Jacob Howe for review and decisions on awards. Excellence in Teaching General Studies awards will most likely be presented during the Fall semester.
- Assessment - Council reviewing Reflective Comments from fall 2022 data:
 - Brown asked the Council members assigned to discern themes in the reflective comments from instructors in each LOPER category to send him their summaries of the themes before the end of the semester if possible.

- Discussion on Report from Ad Hoc Committee on Governance Document – The Council discussed the proposed governance document written by the Ad Hoc Committee and the letter of dissent submitted by five CAS members. A summary of the discussion follows.

Thoughts on Council composition/size/voting rules:

There was no consensus within the Council on the size and composition of the Council, but there was general agreement that the voting rules should not require ‘yea’ votes from each of the colleges to pass a motion.

Hill and Unruh spoke in favor of uniform distribution across the three colleges, which seemed to them more equitable: either 2x2x2 or 3x3x3 plus the Library member. Hill stated there is a lack of diversity on the UNK campus and expressed that although a majority of the GS courses originate for CAS, all students in all colleges use those courses and therefore equity in college representation on the Council is essential. Obermier also observed that a larger body has a more difficult time reaching agreement. Blauwkamp, Dillon, and Umland noted the workload would be difficult with a smaller Council, especially syllabus review, and the Council members would be under even greater external pressure with fewer of us. Blauwkamp reiterated the evidence from the letter of dissent that the faculty, lower-level student credit hours, and GS workload are not equally distributed across the three colleges. CAS members generally prefer the current size and composition but if smaller is mandated, then 4x2x2 plus the Library member.

Ellis noted that Grad Council has the same composition as the current GSC: 6 CAS x 3 COE x 3 CBT but with a simple majority voting rule. Larson noted that Student Senate likewise has more representatives from CAS since it is a bigger college but uses a simple majority voting rule. Both thought these were productive systems that cause little conflict or difficulty making decisions.

Brown framed the issue for Dr. Majocho as a question of whether the Council should be proportionally representative like the US House of Representatives or equal across all units like the US Senate.

Thoughts on alternate members:

Brown asked about the proposal in the Ad Hoc Committee’s version of the governance document to allow each college to designate an alternate Council member who could attend and vote when a regular member is absent. There was general agreement that this is a good idea.

Thoughts on election of Council members:

CAS members recommended election in the letter of dissent. If members are truly to represent their colleges’ faculty, they should be elected by those faculty. And if elected, the Council members could act with greater independence from their deans. Hill observed that junior faculty often are disadvantaged in favor of more

senior faculty in such elections. Obermier reiterated the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation to allow each college to decide their own process for selecting Council members. Unruh objected to the suggestion in the letter of dissent that faculty members from the Director's department should not be eligible. Dillon, Umland, and Blauwkamp noted that this was conceived as a rules-based way to avoid the problem of one department having in effect two members on the Council as well as the possibility of a conflict of interest for the Director. Others noted that it might be impossible to implement this rule in some colleges because of differences in how departments are structured.

Thoughts on other items in the letter of dissent:

The Ad Hoc Committee clarified that the section in the governance document entitled "**What is General Education at UNK**" was intended to explain the program to students, modeled on statements about general education from other universities. It was not intended to be prescriptive or to establish criteria for inclusion in the LOPERs Program.

Course revisions: There was general agreement that the Council needs to develop a policy on what changes to a General Studies course must be submitted to the Council for re-review. Reeves also recommended that the governance document include links to the course submission instructions and other relevant Council policy documents to improve clarity and access for faculty.

Program changes: Blauwkamp noted that the Ad Hoc Committee's proposal in the governance document for Changes to the GE Program (part V) did not distinguish between program implementation changes (like revising the language of a learning objective or altering the method of analyzing or reporting assessment data) and program changes (such as increasing or decreasing the number of hours, removing a category, or changing the instructional purposes of LOPER 1 (First-Year Seminar)). Program implementation changes should have a streamlined process such as the Ad Hoc Committee's governance document proposed, but program changes require greater buy-in and deliberation from faculty and so a different process is warranted.

Course removal: The Ad Hoc Committee indicated that a process to remove a course from General Studies was an accidental omission from the revised governance document. There was general agreement on the Council that such a process is needed.

Next steps: Brown stated that Dr. Majocha will decide what action to take on these governance matters after receiving feedback from Faculty Senate as well as the minutes of the Council's discussion at this meeting, the CAS members' letter of dissent, and the original proposal from the Ad Hoc Committee. Neal produced a letter for the Ad Hoc Committee with some corrections to the proposed governance document on when GS Council approved courses would go into effect or into the catalog, also to be forwarded to Dr. Majocha.

III. New Business:

- Ellis will not be the SVC's liaison to the Council next year. The Council thanked him for his service.
- Thanks to GSC Members – Brown thanked all the Council members for their service this academic year.

- The faculty members whose three-year term on GSC ends at the conclusion of this academic year are:
 - Sri Sheshadri (CBT)
 - Sherri Harms (CBT)
 - Michelle McKelvey (COE)
 - Rebecca Umland (CAS)
 - Joel Berrier (CAS)
 - Rochelle Reeves (Library)
 - Tristan Larson (student) – also graduating. Congratulations to Tristan on receiving one of the UNK Alumni Association Outstanding Senior Awards.

IV. Other: No other business.

- V. **Adjournment: McKelvey/Reeves moved to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned @ 4:25 pm.**

Next meeting: September 7, 2023 @ 3:30 pm- Warner Conference Room (formerly the Chancellor's Dining Room) or via Zoom