

General Studies Council

February 2, 2023

3:30 PM, Chancellors Dining Room

(Temporarily designated as the Warner Conference Room during remodeling in Warner Hall)

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

Guests: Dave Rozema, Tami Moore (on behalf of Toni Hill, non-voting), Kiphany Hof, Derek Boeckner, Suzanne Spencer, Sharon Campbell, Annette Moser-Lintz, John Gibbs, Emily Beaman

Absent: Toni Hill, Sri Seshadri, Amy Rundstrom

I.1. Approve agenda – Motion to approve the agenda was made by Unruh (McKelvey). Vote was unanimous. The motion carried.

I.2. Minutes – Minutes from the December 1, 2022 meeting were approved by email.

II.1. Special item – charge from Dr. Majocha to GS Council regarding Council composition and voting

Dr. Majocha gave background on the charge: The Council is one of the most important bodies on campus and critical for students. The Council is an advisory body to the SVCAA, so she is responsible for its health and functioning. From every level on campus, she has heard reports that the Council has problems functioning. The charge is intended to seek feedback on what the problems are and what solutions the Council recommends. She also plans to seek feedback from Faculty Senate.

The charge was provided in advance to the Council, and that document is attached in an Appendix.

In response to discussion and questions, Dr. Majocha modified the charge to extend the timeline for Council recommendations to the end of May 2023 (rather than the end of March). Dr. Majocha also expanded the ad hoc committee membership to five (from four) to include the Council member from the Library. She clarified that the ad hoc committee may identify different problems or causes than the Council composition and voting rules, and she is open to other recommendations that are limited to changes to the governance document (i.e., not changes to the LOPERs GS Program structure or courses). She also noted that the governance document does not state a vision or mission for General Studies, which may be a source of the Council's problems in reaching consensus. Broader campus feedback will be sought before changes are implemented but not before the Council makes its recommendations to her in response to the charge.

Dr. Majocha closed by expressing appreciation for the work the Council does. General Studies is a contentious committee on every campus, but it needs to be functional.

Action: At the conclusion of the meeting, Director Brown called for volunteers to serve on the ad hoc committee from the three colleges. The membership of the ad hoc committee is as follows: Tristan Larson (student); Rochelle Reeves (Library); Miechelle McKelvey (COE); Tim Obermier (CBT); Melissa Wuellner (CAS).

II.2. Special item – Health needs of UNK students for consideration as part of LOPR 126

Kiphany Hof from the Counseling Center presented information on the health needs of students. The need is so great that more focus should be put on wellness in courses. Referral to the Counseling Center is insufficient (there are wait lists). Emotional wellness (skills for coping with stress and anxiety) and social wellness (combating loneliness and social anxiety) are the greatest needs. Activities and workshops are offered but student attendance is a problem. She provided a link to a faculty guide from the JED Foundation that people can download: <https://jedfoundation.org/faculty-guide/>. She also indicated that she would provide a list of resources to Greg Brown to be subsequently shared with council members.

In response to questions, Hof indicated that she could see a full semester class devoted to wellness for first-year students. (LOPER 11 Wellness is currently optional in the GS Program). The Student Health Center currently sees more benefits to putting its resources into training and peer education than bringing speakers to campus. A mental health blurb for inclusion in course syllabi was also discussed.

III.1. Old Business – Course proposals from Philosophy: PHIL 125, 150, 205, 209, 214, and 261

Background: At the December 1, 2022 meeting the Council voted to table these course proposals as the CAS Educational Policy Committee had requested some revisions to the syllabi. The Council unanimously approved sending out the proposals for campus review at the November 3, 2022 meeting. No comments were posted on the General Studies for Faculty Canvas forum during the campus comment period.

Motion to give final approval to the six Philosophy classes for LOPER 6 (Humanities) was made by Blauwkamp (Berrier).

Obermier stated that Seshadri had expressed some concerns about PHIL 150. He preferred to delay approval of that course until Seshadri was present. Harms said she understood the concerns to be about the course contents perhaps disparaging departments or majors within CBT (such as Marketing). The course is entitled The Joy of Sales Resistance. Rozema (the course instructor) assured the Council that there is no such disparagement. The course is a philosophical examination of the distinction between human wants and needs.

Motion to consider PHIL 150 separately was made by Obermier (Harms).

Discussants noted that Seshadri voted to approve sending the course to campus at the earlier meeting, no concerns from CBT faculty were posted during the campus comment period, Seshadri had not communicated such concerns to the Director nor indicated that he would not be able to attend the meeting, and PHIL 150 had previously been offered as a General Studies course in the Portal category of the old program. Since Portals are being phased out, the request is to move it to the Humanities category instead. Harms and Obermier reiterated that, out of deference to their colleague, they would not vote to approve the course until Seshadri could be heard.

Vote on the motion to consider PHIL 150 separately was Yea (2), Nay (9). Motion failed.

Vote on the motion to give final approval to all six Philosophy courses was Yea (8), Nay (0), Abstain (3). Since the Yea vote majority did not include any votes from CBT, the motion also failed.

Motion to approve the other five Philosophy courses (125, 205, 209, 214, and 261) was made by Dillon (Berrier). Vote on the motion was Yea (10), Nay (0), Abstain (1). The motion carried.

Motion to table PHIL 150 until the March meeting was made by Harms (Obermier), but this motion was subsequently withdrawn.

Motion to give final approval to PHIL 150 for LOPER 6 was made by Berrier (Reeves). Vote on the motion was Yea (9), Nay (2), Abstain (0). Since the Yea vote majority did not include any votes from CBT, the motion failed.

Action: Dean Ellis stated that he would take the final disposition of PHIL 150 directly to Dr. Majocha for a decision, and the Council should move on to other business.

With the scheduled meeting time elapsed, the rest of the Council agenda was postponed until the March meeting. Discussion of the assessment plan and work on a process for students to nominate faculty for excellence in teaching General Studies awards were the postponed agenda items.

Adjournment: Obermier/Berrier moved to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned @ 4:58 pm. Next meeting: March 2, 2023 @ 3:30 pm- Chancellors Dining Room (Temporarily designated as the Warner Conference Room during remodeling in Warner Hall) or via Zoom

****On Friday, February 3, 2023, Brown emailed the Council to let them know Dr. Majocha made the decision to approve PHIL 125, 150, 205, 209, 214, and 261 for inclusion in the LOPERs General Studies program as LOPER 6 (Humanities) classes.****

Charge to the General Studies Council (GSC)

The current composition of the GSC states the following (1):

- A. Composition of the GSC
 - 1. Voting Members
 - Terms begin at the end of spring semester (after the last spring semester meeting of the GSC).
 - Nominees should make provisions in their schedules to be able to attend Council meetings, which are typically scheduled for 3:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of the months during the academic year.
 - Three tenured faculty members each (from different departments) from the College of Education and the College of Business and Technology; six tenured faculty members (from different departments) with a minimum of one faculty member and a maximum of two faculty members from each of the four divisions of the College of Arts and Sciences (the four divisions are: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Communication and Fine and Performing Arts)
 - Nomination process determined by the individual Colleges; two nominees from each College, selection made by the Chief Academic Officer in consultation with the Director of General Studies
 - Three-year staggered terms
 - Faculty members finishing a complete three year term may succeed themselves only once
 - One faculty member holding the rank of senior lecturer, tenure track, or tenured from the Library
 - Nomination process determined by the Library; two nominees from the Library, selection made by the Chief Academic Officer in consultation with the Director of General Studies
 - Three-year term
 - Faculty members may succeed themselves only once
 - 2. Non-voting Members
 - One junior or senior undergraduate student
 - Nominated by Student Senate
 - Rotated among the three Colleges
 - One-year term
 - Terms begin at the end of spring semester (after the last spring semester meeting of the GSC).

- Nominees should make provisions in their schedules to be able to attend Council meetings, which are typically scheduled for 3:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of the months during the academic year.
- The student representative to the General Studies Council will
 - I. Provide a monthly update to the student senate on actions of the General Studies Council
 - II. Convey any concerns regarding the General Studies Program from the student senate to the General Studies Council
 - III. Work with the Director of General Studies to solicit and evaluate student nominations for faculty members to be recognized for excellence in teaching General Studies courses
- *All Ex Officio Members*
 - Director of General Studies (Chair of GSC)
 - Registrar or representative of the Registrar's Office
 - Director of Assessment or representative of the Assessment Office
 - Director of Academic Advising and Career Development or representative.

The current council operations state in part the following (1.B.3):

1. Voting procedures
 - Actions are approved by a simple majority of the voting members in attendance, but the majority must include one vote from CBT, one vote from COE, and one vote each from at from least two divisions of CAS
 - The Director or a council member may request a ballot vote. Ballot will be used with consensus of council.
 - Tie votes result in the failure of the motion or action

The size of the current composition negatively affects a constructive deliberative process. The current operations often result in ties and vetoes. The result is that the student's academic interests are not foremost.

Charge

- First, an ad hoc committee of four members -- one representative each from each of the three undergraduate colleges and the student member -- should be appointed by the Director as soon as possible.
- Second, the ad hoc committee should review the governance document and determine which parts need to be updated, giving special attention to the

committee size, composition, and voting procedures, and if any additional considerations need to be made. The ad hoc committee should bring recommendations to the GSC committee.

- Third, an updated governance document should be drafted.
- Finally, the GSC committee should approve changes and submit a recommendation to me.

Timeline: Recommendations should be made to me by the end of March 2023.