

General Education Initial Discussion

Note: These minutes are not organized in chronological order. They are organized around common themes brought up in the discussion to aid in the reader's understanding.

Introductions

In attendance: Alexie McNerthney, Amy Clubb, Pam Kessinger, Ed Lindsey, Pam Miller-Tatro, Doug Jones, Tim McLaughlin, Sally Earll, Stacey Holland, Linda Fergusson-Kolmes, Jeremy Estrella, Kendra Cawley, Marc Goodman, Ann Cary, John Sparks, Sylvia Grey, Craig Kolins, Anne Haberkern, and Dorothy Badri

Something you did over the summer?

Committee members did introductions and shared something they did over the summer.

Background to the discussion on General Education

Why are we having this discussion now?

Jeremy introduced the college's charge surrounding general education and major discussions. Talked about the group that went to the AAC&U retreat in Oklahoma on general education re-form this summer, has started discussions with SAC chairs, LAC leaders group, and EAC retreat. We currently have 401 courses on our general education list in the three distribution areas (Arts & Letters, Social Science, Math, Science, and Computer Science). The question arose whether or not our current system is meeting PCC's goals. We want to keep students ability to choose, but have more intentionality behind those choices.

The two years prior a group of PCC employees attended the AAC&U conference, which presented some nervousness that students weren't meeting PCC's core outcomes with our current system. How do we step back from what we have and re-envision it in a more coherent way? There are several examples of how other schools are doing general education. PSU does exploratory pathways and University Studies. Montgomery College found while exploring their options that general education is less about the model they came up but more about the process. They are also a multi-campus district about our size; PCC may be a bit larger.

PCC is now able to offer Majors which may help drive the general education conversations and vice versa, we have a great advantage to be able to explore both of these simultaneously. However, we do have some constraints so long as we offer the AAOT and ASOT. We can't change the degree requirements, which currently keeps us within the parameters of discipline studies. However, we may be able to create something different within those constraints.

Discussion

The Committee had a free-flowing conversation regarding general education, Various topics and concerns were brought up.

Initial agenda questions. These questions were posed but as the discussion began it was discovered that much more fundamental issues needed to be covered first. Not all of these questions were discussed at this retreat.

What should be honored in our current Gen Ed system?

What should General Education look like?

What should General Education accomplish?

Is our current system of Gen Ed doing what we hope it should for students?

Is our current General Education System serving the attainment of core- outcomes as it should?

How does our Gen Ed philosophy statement and criteria fit into this larger discussion?

What should our role (Curriculum Committee) be in discussions about General Education?

What responsibilities do we have in regards to General Education?

Discussion surrounding the lack of understanding of our current Gen Ed system

- Many members of the college community may not know about our current Gen Ed system.
- How does general education work? What is it? It became clear that there are varying levels of knowledge surrounding general education.
- CTE – There seems to be a disconnect between general education and CTE programs; if you were to survey some SACs they probably wouldn't know what general education is and how it may impact them. This may be especially true of SACs with a large number of part-time faculty.
- This may be true in some LDC SACs as well. Additionally, there isn't much awareness of PCC's core outcomes.
- Core outcomes aren't very visible to students and Faculty/Staff, perhaps we need to do a better job. One idea is to have a general education program where students map the core outcomes to their completed coursework.
- How do we know our graduates meet the core outcomes, there is value in having clear goals for our students.
- Create guided help, to make it clear to the student the reasons why they are taking general education courses and how this will help them later. The bigger picture.

AAOT/ASOT/Transferability Issues discussed:

- The AAOT and ASOT are designed to guarantee junior standing and that students have completed their general education when they transfer to an Oregon school, there is no guarantee where you will stand within your declared major.
- What would the implications be for transferability?

Points about General Education as it is today

- The general education list gives the course a higher value, and there is a great concern that if a course isn't on the GE list then nobody will take it, the value in having the major conversations simultaneously is that we can have courses within majors which also hold great value.
- Does general education create barriers? We used to have 2 yr certs that were identical to the AAS degrees without general education. But with the implementation of the related instruction requirements, those 2 yr certs were required to add it to their certs.
- The other side, there are some Faculty (SACS) that would prefer to teach whatever the college decides to do with general education within the context of their courses, instead of having students take an additional 16 credits.
- Radical realignment of curriculum
- There is some nervousness of completely dismantling our current general education system, which some feel currently works okay.
- We don't want to lose the student experience; taking general education courses is sometimes a student's only exposure to different types of students.
- One idea is to start like general education is brand new? Ask ourselves, what should general education look like?

What should our role (Curriculum Committee) be in discussions about General Education?

- We should make sure outcomes are stated in an assessable way.
- We have to ask Faculty how they are meeting the core outcomes. We need a clear, concise definition of what general education is?
- We need pinpointed marketing towards specific groups – LDC, CTE, Advisors, Students, etc. Why should you want to know about this? How does this impact you?