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GENERAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

August 18, 2015, 8:30 A.M.
Champ Hall Conference Room

Present: Dawn Kirby, Chair; Eddy Berry, Social Sciences; Harrison Kleiner, Connections; Mary Leavitt, Advising; Kacy Lundstrom, Library; Kris Miller, Honors; Melanie Nelson, USU Eastern; Michele Hillard, Secretary; Dan McInerney, American Institutions; Dan Coster, Quantitative Intensive; Brock Dethier, Writing Program; Stephanie Hamblin, University Advising; Brian McCuskey, Humanities; Trevor Olsen, USUSA President; Dick Mueller, Science

Absent: Cindy Dewey, Creative Arts; Laura Gelfand, Arts; Bob Mueller, Regional Campus; Karen Mock, Natural Resources; Shelley Lindauer, Education and Human Services; Lee Rickords, Agriculture and Applied Sciences; Dean Adams, Engineering; Larry Smith, Provost's Office; Kathy Chudoba, Business; Ryan Dupont, Life and Physical Sciences; John Mortensen, Student Services

Visitors: Nancy Mesner, Chair, Water Cluster Group; Janet Anderson, Provost's Office

Call to Order – Dawn Kirby

Approval of Minutes – April 21, 2015

Motion to approve minutes made by Eddy Berry. Seconded by Harrison Kleiner. Minutes approved.

Course Approvals

N/A

Course/Designation Removals

WILD 3300 (CI) **APPROVED** Brock Dethier
Motion to approve made by Eddy Berry. Seconded by Brock Dethier.

Syllabi Approvals

N/A

Business

Water Cluster (see attached) - Nancy Mesner briefed the committee on what is happening with the Water Cluster group. Courses to be included would be flexible and non-prescriptive nor mandatory. The group would like to have these implemented by spring 2016. They would like the courses to include service and experiential learning. The faculty are encouraged to interact informally to share learning objectives, help with integration of the theme into the existing courses, and to enrich students' experiences. Dr. Mesner noted that faculty might choose to use this model for future thematic course clusters.

Connections Update – There were 130 applicants for teaching Connections. Because of the high number, the committee held interviews and selected those best suited for the objectives of the Connections curriculum and goals. All classrooms on campus as well as the Spectrum were used for this event.

What is an Educated Person? – Dawn Kirby mentioned that the What is an Education Person? Conference will be held October 22-23, 2015, at the Homestead Resort in Midway. The Provost's office has agreed to provide limited funding for travel and registration for this conference. Interested faculty should contact Dawn Kirby.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 am.

Proposed Water Cluster

An Ad Hoc subcommittee of the General Education committee has been working on a set of clustered general education courses, all of which focus, to one degree or another, on water. Students would be able to choose from a set of approved courses to meet their breadth, depth, and perhaps their university studies requirements. Students completing these courses would receive a certificate noting they had completed the water cluster. Appropriate courses need not focus solely on water as a topic, nor does a course need to satisfy all of the proposed water cluster goals. Rather, we understand that some courses appropriate for the cluster may address a single cluster goal, or that only a portion of classroom time—say, two or three weeks—may focus on water.

Proposed Water Cluster Goals

Students completing the Water Cluster will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the aesthetics and symbolism of water.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of water in the rise and fall of civilizations.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the evolution and functioning of biological systems using water.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the structure and functioning of the Earth's water cycle.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of the political, legal and market forces affecting water allocation and quality.

Proposed Catalog Description

Water is the most prominent feature on Earth's surface, regulating our environment and sustaining all life systems. Water is the lifeblood of all past and present civilizations, supporting agriculture, industry, and providing transportation and connections between civilizations. Water plays an important role in many religious and spiritual traditions. It informs our sense of aesthetics and our sense of fun.

An understanding of water is essential to society for issues as diverse as feeding and clothing the world's increasing population, addressing present and future climate changes, and protecting ecosystems that depend upon and maintain Earth's water supply.

Courses in the Water Cluster embed the story of water in a student's curriculum and fulfill the student's general education requirements.

A few suggested 'wicked questions' that may be integrated into courses that are part of the water cluster:

Water symbolism and aesthetics

1. How has water informed our sense of beauty and aesthetics?
2. What roles does water play in religious traditions?
3. How has water been used as metaphor in literature?

Role of water

1. How has water availability affected the rise and fall of civilizations? What are some possible consequences of significant water shortages? How have uses and abuses of water determined development and decline of many historical communities?
2. What is the relationship between water abundance and policy / social structures?
3. How have water's properties determined evolution and structure of life?
4. How do water's properties affect Earth's atmosphere and climate? The physical structure of Earth?

5. How much water is on Earth? How much is available for human use? For ecosystems on Earth?

Water Resources (management, engineering, policy, economics, access):

1. How does the climate govern the amount of fresh water reaching the surface? What effects are likely to result from climate change? Why will this be important?
2. Is there adequate water today for everyone on Earth? If not – why? Elaborate where
3. there are problems and why they exist -- natural vs. human induced etc.
4. How many people do not have adequate access to water meeting minimal health standards? What would be required to change this?
5. What are the main uses of water today in USA?
6. Are there important examples where the water use is not sustainable? Where? Why? Implications?
7. What options are available to mitigate such future problems?

Next tasks –

Communicating with faculty on the proposed courses in the cluster and possibly identifying other courses.

Establishing some criteria or guidance on what courses can be included in the water cluster?

Timing?

Further discussion / ideas on the possible forms for a water cluster experience.

Suggestions include: Service learning, capstones, internships and other forms of praxis.

Specific suggestions?

Shall we gather a list of these possibilities?

Shall we start the process of creating a certificate or wait until we try this out?

Create opportunities for faculty teaching water cluster courses to informally communicate with others about specific goals of their courses, concepts being addressed, etc.