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4-1-2013

## General Education Committee Annual Report : 2012-2013

General Education Committee

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**USFSP FACULTY SENATE  
STANDING COUNCIL/COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

PLEASE SUBMIT TO FACULTY SENATE CHAIR BY APRIL 20

NAME OF COUNCIL/COMMITTEE:

\_\_\_ Genera Education Committee \_\_\_\_\_

CHAIR

YEAR

\_\_\_ Kathy Arthur \_\_\_\_\_ 2012-2013 \_\_\_\_\_

COMMITTEE/COUNCIL MEMBERS                      YEAR SERVICE TERM ENDS (2 YEAR TERMS)

Erika Asano (Arts and Sciences)                      Spring 2014

Gary Austin (Library)                      Spring 2014

Maria Luisa Corton (Business)                      Spring 2013

Deni Elliot (Arts and Sciences)                      Spring 2015

Morgan Gresham (Arts and Sciences)                      Spring 2014

David John (Arts and Sciences)                      Spring 2015

Hugh LaFollette (Arts and Sciences)                      Spring 2014

Deanna Michel (Education)                      Spring 2014

Adrian O'Connor (Arts and Sciences)                      Spring 2014

George Roy (Education)                      Spring 2014

J. E. Gonzalez (Ex-Officio)

DATES OF MEETINGS                      MINUTES SUBMITTED    YES    NO

Minutes on D-space <http://dspace.nelson.usf.edu/xmlui/handle/10806/1404>

September 4, 2012                      X

October 12, 2012                      X

November 2, 2012                      X

November 30, 2012                      X

February 1, 2013                      X

March 1, 2013                      X

April 5, 2013                      X

April 26, 2013                      X

## Summary of Actions, Works in Progress, Concerns for Next Year

### Faculty Senate Charge For 2012-2013

1. Monitor the FL legislation that will impact Gen Ed requirements and courses, maintaining contact with the steering committees and discipline-specific committees that will be making recommendations for the implementation of the legislation.
2. Provide guidance to faculty in all colleges as they assess current GE courses in their disciplines and course pre-requisites to anticipate possible consequences of the legislation on their discipline's courses at USFSP.
3. Work toward developing a philosophy of GE outcomes for our students that will help guide choices of GE courses to offer at USFSP, outside of those that will be required by the state.

### 1. Monitoring Florida Legislation that will impact GE Ed

K. Arthur chair attended meeting in Oct. of the State Steering Committee and monitors the state website

*B 7135* passed summer 2013 <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2012/7135>

- reduce hours from 36 to 30
- Revised Gen Ed areas: communication, humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, math
- 15 hours of mandated Core Courses will be determined by a state-created committee
- 15 hours will be determined by each institution
- Effective date 2014-2015 Students must complete at least 1 of these core courses in each subject
- Each Institution must offer the Core Mandated Courses
- Each Institution must accept the transfer of Core Mandated courses from other state institutions
- Exit and Gordon Rule are not affected by this legislation Regulation 6.017 (the requirements for the BA) remain in effect. They also require 6 hours of ENC/writing plus 6 more hours of writing intensive (Gordon Rule) classes and 6 hours of math.

### *PCB HEW 13-01*

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?PublicationType=Committees&CommitteeId=2712&Session=2013&DocumentType=Proposed%20Committee%20Bills%20%28PCBs%29&FileName=PCB%20HEWS%2013-01.pdf>

- Return to 36 hour program
- Delete requirement that each institution must offer all courses
- Change the effective date to 2015-2016

### *HB1235* not yet on a committee or titled

[http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName=h1235\\_.docx&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=1235&Session=2013](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName=h1235_.docx&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=1235&Session=2013)

- Requests that 6 hours of US history lower division level be added as part of state core course
- Referred to Higher Education and Workforce Subcommittee 3/8/13 under Education Committee

General Education committee created a document voicing our concerns with HB7135, we included input from the wider faculty and received Senate approval.

Adrian O'Connor represented our committee at the Faculty USF System wide committee on Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> verbalizing our concerns over the legislation.

January 29, we provided Chris Davis, Chair of the Faculty Senate with a written statement, copied below in Appendix, which he presented at a meeting of the State Advisory Council of the Faculty Senates, BOG, and DOE.

## 2. Providing Guidance to Faculty & the State Mandated Course List:

K. Arthur Chair of GE education committee spoke at the Fall USFSP All Faculty meeting and at the CAS Fall Meeting in August 2012.

- ❖ November and December 2012 with the CAS Chairs, COB Faculty, and COE Faculty meetings- K. Arthur to update the faculty on the legislation and discussed overlap between GE courses and courses required for majors and minors on campus.
- ❖ GE committee sent out an email at the end of Fall semester reminding faculty to complete their GE assessment.
- ❖ March 2013. K. Arthur requested another meeting with all colleges in March 2013, only CAS responded and she met with CAS chairs to update them again on the status of the legislation, GE and to request which faculty will teach the state mandated GE courses.
- ❖ March 2013. Committee also sent out an email later that week, indicating which State Mandated Courses are “owned” in terms of course description by Tampa and St. Pete. Tampa “owns” all the currently taught USF system courses that are on the State mandated Course list (provided by Cynthia Collins). Faculty advised to turn in applications to the university and state soon if they want “ownership” of courses not currently taught in the system but on the State Mandated List.
  - In December of 2012 the State Steering Committee selected the following courses as the State Mandated Courses for all Institutions. I have indicated here which CAS department indicated they would teach the course and which courses Tampa “owns”. Business and Education said they would not offer any of the State Mandated Courses. The State Mandated Course list is expected to be finalized in August 2013.

### Communication

- ENC X101 English Composition I -Verbal and Visual Arts (VVA) – [Tampa]

### Humanities

- ARH X000 Art Appreciation History and Political Science (HPS)
- HUM X020 Introduction to Humanities- VVA & HPS in discussion [Tampa]
- LIT X100 Intro to World Literature- VVA
- MUL X010 Intro to Music Literature- VVA

- PHI X010 Intro to Philosophy- HPS

#### Mathematics

- MAC X105 College Algebra- Mathematics & QEP (MQEP) [Tampa]
- STA X023 Statistical Methods- MQEP [Tampa]
- MGF X106 Liberal Arts Mathematics I- MQEP [Tampa]
- MGF X107 Liberal Arts Mathematics II- MQEP [Tampa]

#### Natural Sciences

- BCS X005 General Biology- Biology ( BIO) [Tampa]
- CHM X020 Chemistry for Liberal- Environmental Science & Policy ( ESPG)
- PHY X020 Fundamentals of Physics BIO [Tampa]
- ESC X000 Intro to Earth Science- ESPG [Tampa]
- EVR X001 Intro to Environmental Science- ESPG [Tampa]

#### Social Sciences

- PSY X012 Intro to Psychology- Psychology (PSY) [Tampa]
- SYG X000 Principles of Sociology- Society, Culture, and Language (SCL) [Tampa]
- WHO X040 20<sup>th</sup> Century World History- HPS
- CPO X001 Comparative Politics- HPS
- CSL X000 Introduction to Anthropology- SCL [Tampa]

### 3. Develop a Philosophy for USFSP

We completed the new USFSP General Education Philosophy, approved April 5, 2013. The philosophy was discussed at the Spring 2012 General Education Faculty wide meeting and we incorporated faculty input from this meeting into the revised philosophy. A copy of the new Philosophy is provided below under Appendix.

### 4. Other Committee Work during 2012-2013

#### Course Applications:

Not accepting new GE courses. We will begin to accept applications for the new GE program for the State Mandated Courses mid-October 2013, and for the USFSP specific courses at the beginning of December 2013.

However, we revised our General Education Application and brought the application to the Senate for approval in March 2013. The senate decided that USFSP should have 1 application for General Education, Undergraduate Committee, and the 3 College Committees. The Chair of GE was charged with pulling this application together to streamline the process of course approval on campus. The Senate voted to approve the application with final input by the committees. The application will be posted by Fall 2013 for faculty use.

### Assessment and Data Collection:

Faculty are to continue to submit their assessment to either Ernie Gonzalez or on the Q drive.

- ❖ New database. Ernie has developed a new database that was approved by the GE committee for use beginning Fall 2013. However, the committee requested:
  - a better security system so that individuals can only access their own courses.
  - the system be set up so that we can access the database off campus
  - the new system sends an acknowledgement receipt to the faculty member and to the new GE Chair email account. The email account for the GE chair will only be consulted when there is a discrepancy between faculty and administration concerning compliance.
- ❖ Fall 2013, we will have a meeting with faculty to discuss new options for assessment associated with new GE program

### Student Learning Outcomes:

We are completing the new USFSP Student Learning Outcomes, and we hope to have them finished summer 2013 or early fall 2013.

- ❖ The SLO were constructed to enhance the state mandated SLOs and the 5 new subject areas required by the state.
- ❖ Both State mandated and USFSP SLOs will be required for all GE courses in the new program.
- ❖ Faculty on GE subcommittees were chosen to lead each subject area based on their disciplines participation in that subject area. A copy of the new SLO is provided below under Appendix.
- ❖ The SLOs were vetted among the wider faculty through heads of the GE subcommittees who specialize in the 5 subject areas.

### Concerns for the Coming Year

We will be primarily concerned with receiving the State's final mandated course list for General Education, which is expected in early Fall. We hope to have a faculty wide GE meeting in early September to review the new Philosophy, SLOs, and GE course application. Our main concern for the fall will be working with faculty to approve the State Mandated GE courses on campus and then the USFSP specific GE courses on campus.

## APPENDIX

### **USFSP Faculty's Concerns about HB 7135**

The faculty of the University of South Florida Saint Petersburg are extremely concerned about the effects of HB 7135, recently signed into law by Governor Scott.

Although we are confident that the legislature's and the governor's intentions were well-reasoned, we are adamant that this law will deprive students of the quality education they deserve and are contrary to the best interests of the state of Florida.

In brief our concerns are these:

- With the number of required course reduced by six hours, Florida state colleges and universities will be unable to provide the well-rounded and breadth of general education that our students need both on the job market and throughout life.
- We will be unable to expose students to the array of disciplines, subjects, ideas, and analytic methods they need.
- Since many students change majors many times during college as they are introduced to new subjects, this law will inevitably slow students' time to graduation and increase the cost of their undergraduate education, undermining progress towards the Dept of Education's goal of substantially decreasing the six-year graduation rate and the Governor's plans for accelerated degrees.
- These changes will jeopardize the accreditation of Florida's state colleges and universities by both regional and national agencies. These agencies require that each institution's faculty have primary responsibility for *"the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum . . ."* This law undermines institutional autonomy in ways likely to threaten accreditation.
- This law will require most of the state's colleges and universities to depend even more heavily than they currently do on legions of adjunct instructors to teach these state- mandated courses. Even the best adjuncts cannot perform these critical teaching roles as the faculty mentors who bring continuity and personalized attention to undergraduate education.
- This change will increase the student-to-permanent faculty ratio. That diminishes the quality of education we offer our students and undermines the regional and national prestige of these schools, making it harder to attract first-rate students and faculty to the state. This in turn promises to have negative consequences for the state economy in both the short and long term.
- This change eliminates international studies in the State Core Subject, which will be detrimental to our student's ability to develop skills associated with working with international cultures and businesses. This is an eminent concern considering Florida has an increasingly diverse international resident population, our number one industry is tourism (83 million people, a top world tourist destination), closely followed by international business (40% US exports to Central and South America pass through Florida).

One of the fundamental reasons for providing public education in the United States is so that U.S. citizens are educated enough to participate in self-government. A required course in American National Government helps to fulfill these essential goals. The failure to include POS 2041 American National Government in the "Social Sciences" category will have a negative effect on the already critical state of Florida's civic health.

>

We hope that our concerns will be received as an expression of our devotion to serving the students and people of this state, that they will be considered on their merits, and that they will be taken into account as legislators in Tallahassee and people across the state consider the future of higher education in Florida.

More detailed explanations of these concerns and of our response to the state government's recent legislative efforts regarding state-supported institutions of higher education are provided in the pages that follow. Detailed explanation of the University of South Florida system faculties' concerns about recent legislation regarding the structure and content of state-supported higher education in Florida, especially HB 7135:

The most significant of the state's legislative actions regarding higher education have focused on the place of "General Education" courses in university curricula. Recent legislation has made three changes to the General Education system in state college and state university institutions. First, it has reduced the number of General Education credit hours required of students from 36 to 30. Second, it has reduced the number of content areas comprising General Education from 7 to 5. Third, it has called for the establishment of a common General Education "core," a list of state-determined courses in each of the General Education content areas. Each institution would be mandated to offer and to accept as part of its General Education

program the courses on these state-generated lists, and students would be compelled to complete 15 of their 30 General Education credit hours by taking courses on those lists.

Taken in aggregate, we are concerned that these legislative actions weaken institutions' ability to offer students the quality education those students deserve, that they represent an inappropriate intrusion into academic curricula and a usurpation of faculty control over universities, and that they are contrary to the best interests of the state colleges, state universities, the students who will enroll in those institutions in the coming years, and to the long-term interests of the people and state of Florida.

Our concerns are many, but they coalesce around several central points: our desire to offer students a first-rate education in state-supported institutions; our belief in the important role of the General Education program in contributing to that quality education; our commitment to academic autonomy and independence for faculty and for institutions; our belief that such autonomy and independence are central to the mission and purpose of a public system of higher education; and our commitment to making the state college and university systems the best they can possibly be.

The first of our concerns focuses on the reduction of required General Education hours from 36 to 30, a reduction that will hinder our institutions' ability to provide a quality and well-rounded education to students. The reduction is particularly troubling when viewed alongside the legislature's efforts to compel students to take 15 of those 30 credit hours in state-determined courses. This limitation undermines one of the basic functions of a general education program: to expose students to an array of disciplines, subjects, ideas, and analytic methods.

A second concern related to this reduction in General Education hours, and in the limited distribution of those hours, is that it may (even if inadvertently) slow students' time to graduation, as it delays their exposure to fields in which they might eventually decide to major. The average student changes his or her major three times while in college, and most do so at least once. This consequence would be particularly troubling in a system such as ours, where credit hours beyond the minimum 120 needed to graduate cost students more than do earlier credit hours, penalizing them for changing majors and/or pursuing their interests as those interests develop. Among the most important functions served by institutions of higher learning is to expose students to new and innovative ideas and forms of knowledge, and to then offer them an opportunity to pursue those interests, ideas, and ambitions in directions they could not have foreseen. This sort of curricular exposure and institutional flexibility are among the attributes that have made universities one of the best sites for research, technological innovation, and economic opportunity in modern history, and they ought not to be jeopardized by legislative interference, no matter how well intentioned. In a recent presentation to the FL State Board of Governors – attended by Governor Scott – Dr Donal O'Shea (a mathematician) pointed out that 30% of the graduates from New College – a state liberal arts college – were in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

A more systemic concern focuses on the consequences these legislative actions might have for the Florida state colleges' and universities' standing with regional and national accreditation agencies. The requirements that each school teach all of the state-mandated 15 courses and that each school accept those courses as transfer credits from any other institution in the state-college or state-university system violate Comprehensive Standards 3.4.1 and 3.4.10 of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools requirements for accreditation, which place primary responsibility for "*the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with [each institution's] faculty.*" Usurping institutional discretion and quality-enforcement related to accepting these courses as transfer credits undermines



institutional autonomy broadly and threatens to undermine accreditation for every institution within the Florida university and college systems.

This problem is aggravated by the fact that the steering committees created to consult on the selection of the state-mandated course offerings do not include representatives from all of the state college and state university institutions; do not represent equitably or justly those institutions which do have a member on a committee, and certainly do not represent anything approximating those faculty “responsibility” for the content, quality, or effectiveness of the education offered at an institution. Without such informed and responsible expertise, it is impossible for institutions to meet SACS requirement 3.4.1, which requires that programs of study be approved by each institution’s faculty.

Standards such as these set by SACS exist for a reason, and undermining the role of faculty in universities and in establishing university curricula is directly contrary to the interests of those institutions, their students, and the state. Faculty members pursue careers at universities not for wealth or fame, but because we are devoted to the fields we study, are invested in contributing to and spreading knowledge of those fields, are passionate about our teaching and our responsibilities to the university and to the community – and because we believe in the importance of universities and of education. By undermining faculty control over the content and caliber of the education offered in our institutions, and by inserting a state-mandated roadblock between students and faculty, this law weakens one of the attributes that makes universities unique and uniquely valuable places, and threatens to introduce a “lowest common denominator” culture of General Education throughout and among the institutions of the Florida state college and university systems.

On a more practical note related to faculty and university well-being, this law will almost certainly require many, probably most, of the colleges and universities in the state systems to depend even more than they already do on legions of adjunct instructors to teach these state-mandated courses. This will cement Florida’s place among the national problem areas of contingent academic labor, an issue that

should be of concern to university administrations and faculties, to students enrolled at those universities, and to those who seek to put the state college and university systems on a sustainable path towards long-term success. Reliance upon adjunct instructors and contingent academic labor undermines the sense of continuity and community on our campuses, hinders faculty members' efforts to get to know and to interact personally with their students, and hurts students when they pursue career opportunities after they graduate but have nobody from their time at college from whom they can get a personalized and credible letter of reference.

Among the consequences of reliance on adjunct instructors and the state's desire to mandate that specific courses be taught throughout the system will be increases in the student-to-permanent faculty ratio at state colleges and state universities. Given the importance of such ratios for regional, national, and international rankings, as well as for our universities' membership or position in honors societies or other bodies that confer prestige upon our institutions, this law could lead to a foreseeable plummet in prestige and in prominence for institutions of all levels in Florida. The consequences of this law could amount to a system-wide rot that would undermine the prestige and position of state institutions at all levels.

We recognize that those state legislators and in the state administration who seek to overhaul higher education in the state of Florida may do so with some conviction that their efforts will improve the education offered in our state colleges and our state institutions. However, we believe that their efforts are misguided and ill-informed, that they threaten the quality, stability, and long-term interests of the state colleges and the state universities, and that they run counter to the interests of our students and of the people of the state of Florida. We hope that our concerns will be received as an expression of devotion to our mission of serving the students and people of this state, that they will be considered on their merits, and that they will be taken into account as people in Tallahassee and across the state consider the future of higher education in Florida.

**USFSP General Education Philosophy  
For New GE Program 2014-2015 (or a year later if passed in legislation)  
Approved by GE Committee April 5, 2013**

General education is the cornerstone of academic life at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg. It is shaped and inspired by the faculty's commitment to give our students the broad liberal arts education they need and deserve.

A liberal arts education provides students with broad knowledge of major areas of human learning, it instills and refines quantitative literacy and reading, understanding, reasoning, and communication skills, and it develops and strengthens essential intellectual virtues: curiosity, a healthy skepticism, intellectual honesty, the imagination to understand and fairly consider the perspectives of others, and the willingness and ability to constructively evaluate their own ideas and arguments. Such an education allows students to appreciate the cultural and biological diversity of an increasingly inter-connected world, provides them with critical thinking skills to engage issues shaping our global economy, environment, and lives. It thereby prepares them to continue their intellectual, cultural, and personal development long after college.

General Education courses in mathematics, social sciences, humanities, communication, and the natural sciences lay the groundwork for a quality liberal education. All require students to write clearly and think critically. We further encourage faculty to incorporate, where appropriate, discussion of diverse cultural perspectives and significant ethical debates into their respective discipline's general education courses.

Students explore a range of subjects, many outside their anticipated field or major. These courses encourage the development of a habit of inquiry that is flexible, disciplined, and able to grasp multiple perspectives; it is scholarly while understanding that the force of ideas extends beyond the classroom. A sound General Education curriculum empowers students to pursue a liberal arts education by giving them the academic tools required for success in their respective majors and minors.