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USF St. Petersburg Faculty Senate Committee: General Education: Meetings      USF St. Petersburg Faculty Senate Committee: General Education

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2-29-2012

## General Education Committee Meeting : 2012 : 02 : 29

General Education Committee

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**USFSP - GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 29, 2012**

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**Committee Members:**

Kathy Arthur, Chair  
Erika Asano  
Deby Cassill (partial with excuse)  
Maria Luisa Corton  
Morgan Gresham (partial with excuse)  
Thomas Hallock (absent with excuse)  
Hugh LaFollette  
Deanna Michael (new member)  
Phillip McCollam  
Adrian O'Connor  
Patricia Pettijohn  
George Roy (absent with excuse)  
J. E. Gonzalez (Ernie)

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The meeting was called to order at 1:05pm

1. Approval of the minutes for February 8, 2012
  
2. Chair report
  - The MAC 1105L case is closed and was sent to the faculty senate for their approval Feb. 15.
  - Geoffrey Sayre-McCord is the speaker for Wed March 7 12- 1:30 pm Harbor Hall. The committee discussed ways to make the entire faculty aware. Kathy will send a reminder on Monday.
  - Kathy reported to have had a meeting with Margaret Sullivan and Noreen Noonan.
  
3. Old business:
  - Philosophy: we basically look at Kathy's last version of GE philosophy which summarizes the proposals offered to the committee by some of its members and we based our discussion on the following:
    - 1) We discussed who is the audience we are addressing—prospective students, current students, or faculty with the statement--consensus that we have multiple audiences.
    - 2) Discussion and clarification about what we are trying to achieve with the statement are we focusing on education—teaching students how to think critical, assess, evaluate, write, etc... or on the persons we want to create.
    - 3) There was a discussion/concern about the use or inclusion of the following terms/concepts: disposition, civil engagement, responsibility, lifelong learners, compassion, tolerance and leadership. 'Embracing diversity' should be in. 'Democratic principles of learning and teaching' was attractive to all.

- 4) The format was also discussed: whether to have a long statement as opposed to a short one; whether to include bullets; whether to have two formats one short for the general audience and one longer targeting the faculty.
  - 5) What others are doing: the committee agreed on that each will bring a GE philosophy from a choice of university to the next meeting.
  - 6) Everyone will email Hugh with questions to address to Geoffrey Sayre-McCord
- GE Day – pending for next meeting.

Adjourn at 2:40pm.

<b>PHILOSOPHY PROPOSALS</b>
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**1) KATHY: PHILOSOPHY OF GENERAL EDUCATION — PROPOSAL**

**General Education Mission and Philosophy**

The faculty of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg commits itself to helping our students achieve the broad liberal arts education they deserve and need through our General Education curriculum. Students' work in general education courses will give them the benefits of a liberal arts education and will prepare them to flourish in their post-graduate lives. Our General Education curriculum will endow students with foundational knowledge and skills in preparation for a student's coursework in their majors. Then, courses in the students' respective majors should build upon, reinforce, and expand that knowledge, boost those skills, and strengthen the students' intellectual dispositions.

A successful liberal arts education provides students with broad knowledge of major areas of human learning, it instills and refines reading, understanding, reasoning, and communication skills, and it inculcates and strengthens essential intellectual dispositions: curiosity, intellectual honesty, a healthy skepticism, empathy, the imagination to understand and fairly consider the perspectives of others, and vigorous self-criticism.

This robust brew of knowledge, skills, and dispositions is the base of any quality university education. It gives the students the fundamentals they need for success not only in the classroom, but also in the swiftly evolving economy, society, and polity to which they will contribute before and after graduation. A liberal arts education will serve them well in their chosen careers, in their personal lives, and as informed, responsible citizens.

The USFSP General Education Curriculum will help students find and retain a job by broadly educating graduates providing them with a rich reservoir of knowledge, refined communication, and critical thinking skills, and motivated by curiosity and intellectual honesty. Graduates will be more diligent, creative, and effective workers, more innovative entrepreneurs, and more conscientious members of the local, global, and natural environments in which they live.

When **USFSP** students complete our general education curriculum and graduate, our goal is that that they will become life-long **Bull Sharks or Citizen Scholars**—individuals who like bull sharks decisively, competently, and responsibly engage and cultivate innovation and communication in their local and global communities with the integrity, honesty, compassion, and curiosity instilled in their hearts and minds.

- Innovation and Life-long Learners. Students will transform their learning and knowledge into innovative and creative ideas through discovery, experiments, and critical thinking.
- Articulate Leaders. Students will demonstrate a command of language, mathematics, and arts through writing, speech, visual presentation, and technology to create effective and articulate leadership in their respective disciplines.
- Cultural Literacy and Compassion. Students will apply understanding, tolerance, and evaluative skills to issues of cultural and biological diversity.
- Global Competency. Students will apply creative, critical thinking, and problem solving skills to the governance, sustainability, historical, and security issues that continue to shape our global economy, environment, and populations.
- Responsibility. Students will become engaged citizens, who learn responsibility and the importance of intellectual and social integrity through active participation in human and/or environmental local, regional and global communities

In summation, the USFSP General Education curriculum gives graduates a common core of knowledge as well as shared educational experiences, thereby fostering a sense of shared purpose and identity among current USFSP students as well as among our *alumni* and *alumnae*. It also enhances students' abilities to communicate effectively with diverse people, expands their sources of enjoyment, improves their ability to control the course and character of their own lives, and strengthens their ability to make wise decisions in an increasingly complex world. In these ways, a liberal arts education prepares students to continue their intellectual, cultural, and personal development well beyond their years at college, and contributes to their becoming responsible citizens in the broadest sense of the term. It also enriches students' lives by improving their understanding of the world, the diversity of perspectives and lifestyles shaping that world, and their place within their communities—local, national, and global. These benefits to students also benefit society.

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## 2) ADRIAN: PHILOSOPHY OF GENERAL EDUCATION — PROPOSAL [REVISED – AOC]

The faculty of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg commits itself to helping our students achieve the broad liberal arts education they deserve and need: such an education will serve them well in their chosen careers, in their personal lives, and as informed, responsible citizens.

A successful liberal arts education provides students with broad knowledge of major areas of human learning, it instills and refines reading, understanding, reasoning, and communication skills, and it inculcates and strengthens essential intellectual dispositions: curiosity, intellectual honesty, a healthy skepticism, empathy, the imagination to understand and fairly consider the perspectives of others, and vigorous self-criticism.

This robust brew of knowledge, skills, and dispositions is the base of any quality university education. It gives the students the fundamentals they need for success not only in the classroom, but also in the swiftly evolving economy, society, and polity to which they will contribute before and after graduation.

A liberal arts education helps students find and retain a job. It also enriches students' lives by improving their understanding of the world, the diversity of perspectives and lifestyles shaping that world, and their

place within their communities—local, national, and global. It gives graduates a common core of knowledge as well as shared educational experiences, thereby fostering a sense of shared purpose and identity among current USFSP students as well as among our *alumni* and *alumnae*. It also enhances students' abilities to communicate effectively with diverse people, expands their sources of enjoyment, improves their ability to control the course and character of their own lives, and strengthens their ability to make wise decisions in an increasingly complex world. In these ways, a liberal arts education prepares students to continue their intellectual, cultural, and personal development well beyond their years at college, and contributes to their becoming responsible citizens in the broadest sense of the term.

These benefits to students also benefit society. Broadly educated graduates—with a rich reservoir of knowledge, refined communication and critical skills, and motivated by curiosity and intellectual honesty—will be more diligent, creative, and effective workers, more innovative entrepreneurs, and more conscientious members of the local, global, and natural environments in which they live.

The burden of providing a liberal arts education to all students falls primarily on the university's general education program. Each course within that program should provide the range of knowledge, skills, and dispositions students need. Then, courses in the students' respective majors should build upon, reinforce, and expand that knowledge, boost those skills, and strengthen the students' intellectual dispositions. Together, their work in general education courses and in their majors will give to students the benefits of a liberal arts education and will prepare them to flourish in their post-graduate lives.

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### 3) Deby: USFSP GENERAL EDUCATION MISSION- PROPOSAL

Our students will contribute to the advancement of societies (or humanity).

#### USFSP VISION

USFSP offers premier bachelors and masters degrees in the humanities, sciences, education and business to students who wish to contribute to the advancement of societies (or humanity).

#### STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Research/Creative Activities: Engage students in research and creative activities at the local, national or international level.
2. Diversity/Compassion: Engage students in academic and social events that prepare them to contribute to an inclusive society (or community)
3. Sustainability: Engage students in academic and community projects that prepare them to contribute to a local, national or global society (or community).
4. Leadership: Engage students in effective communication through multiple languages expressed in writing, speech, visual presentations, and technology.
5. Other?

#### GE METRICS

1. Research/Creative Activities: number of research or creative projects completed per student per semester (PowerPoint presentations, long-papers, short papers or summaries, posters, research articles, etc).
2. Diversity:
3. Sustainability: number of service contributions at the local, national or international level per student per semester.
4. Leadership: number of communication venues completed per student per semester.

#### GE STANDARDS

1. Student Performance in Research/Creative Activities: 75% of students will complete "x" number of research or creative projects with a minimum of 75% competency (PowerPoint presentations, long-papers, short papers or summaries, posters, research articles, etc).
2. Student Performance in Diversity:
3. Student Performance in Sustainability: 75% of students will complete "x" number of service contributions at the local, national or international level per semester.
4. Student Performance in Leadership: 75% of students will complete "x" number of communication venues per semester with a minimum of 75% competency.

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#### **4) HUGH: Philosophy of General Education — Proposal**

The faculty of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg students commits itself to help you, our students, achieve the broad liberal arts education you deserve and need: such an education will well serve you in your chosen career, in your personal life, and as an informed, responsible citizen.

A successful liberal arts education provides students with broad knowledge of major areas of human learning, it instills and refines reading, understanding, reasoning, and communicative skills, and it inculcates and strengthens essential intellectual dispositions: curiosity, intellectual honesty, a healthy skepticism, the imagination to understand and fairly consider the perspectives of others, and vigorous self-criticism.

This robust brew of knowledge, skills, and dispositions is the base of any quality university education. It gives the students the fundamentals they need not only within their respective majors; it enables them to deftly shift careers in a swiftly evolving society.

A liberal arts education helps students find and retain a job—and that is no small feat in a hostile job market. It also enriches students' lives by improving their understanding of the world, the diversity of perspectives and lifestyles shaping that world, and their place within their communities—local, national, and global. It gives graduates a common core of knowledge. It thereby enhances their abilities to communicate effectively with diverse people, expands their sources of enjoyment, improves their ability to control the course and character of their own lives, immunizes them from the claims of the ignorant and the appeals of hucksters, and strengthens their ability to make wise decisions in an increasingly complex world.

These benefits to students also benefit society. Broadly educated workers—with a rich reservoir of knowledge, refined communicative and critical skills, and motivated by curiosity and intellectual honesty—will be more diligent, creative, and effective workers. They are also more apt to be informed, contributing, and caring citizens.

The burden of providing a liberal arts education to all students falls primarily on the university's general education core. Each course within that core should provide the range of knowledge, skills, and dispositions students need. Then, courses in the students' respective majors should build upon, reinforce, and expand that knowledge, boost those skills, and strengthen the students' intellectual dispositions.

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#### **5) HUGH: Draft Report to the USF-SP Strategic Planning Committee**

##### **Vision**

USF St Petersburg seeks to provide a quality undergraduate education, founded on a strong core curriculum, completed by rigorous and challenging majors, in a research intensive, student-centered, intellectually vibrant, metropolitan university. Our core curriculum should inculcate essential skills, expose students to the humanities, social and natural sciences, emphasize cross-disciplinary work, and provide common educational experiences for all students. Our undergraduate education aims to prepare students to be productive and ethically sensitive members of our modern global society.

We can achieve these aims because of the size of the school and the character of our faculty. USF St. Petersburg seeks the benefits of both large research universities and small liberal arts colleges, without the drawbacks of either. Our students work with thinkers who are respected in their fields; since most of our classes are small, our students have the opportunity to work closely with—even collaborate with—faculty.

## **Recommendations**

• Revisit our core curriculum to ensure that it meets our stated aims. We want to look at the array of courses we offer, and explore ways to:

" Reduce our reliance on adjuncts to teach core courses

" Place our recognized teacher-scholars in core courses, and

" Explore ways to coordinate course content to ensure more common educational experiences for most (if not all) students.

• Establish a standing committee to monitor the core, to determine if it is meeting its stated aims.

• Charge this committee to find further ways of enhancing the intellectual climate on campus, e.g., by

" Having faculty give lectures and lead discussions in the new dormitory.

" Encouraging all first-year students to read and discuss a single book chosen by faculty;

" Finding ways to show students how faculty in different disciplines approach the same issues and material;

" Developing blocks of courses for first-year students that explore related themes.

## **Honors program**

A vibrant honors program elevates the intellectual climate on campus. We should support, and even expand our program, as well as develop honors-in-discipline tracks. The honors program might also sponsor or coordinate some of the programs mentioned above.

## **2 Assessing Undergraduate Education**

To ensure that we provide the highest quality education for our students, we need some method of self-assessment. This requires assessing both our programs and our core curriculum.

We must be flexible in establishing these assessment measures. We want to establish helpful measures—not merely erect time-consuming and ultimately unilluminating—measures. We think it would be a mistake to impose any single template on all programs.

Rather we should have a plan that is:

- developed, refined, and implemented by faculty, a plan which
- identifies the central aims of our programs and our core,
- for which we can devise helpful (and relatively unintrusive) measures,
- that we annually check to see if we are meeting our stated aims, and
- adjust our programs in light of what we find.

### *Programs*

We currently have academic compacts for every program in the university. These are new, so we do not have any way to determine whether they are adequate assessment measures. It would be a mistake to immediately change or abandon the compacts, but upon evaluation we should be prepared to change them. However, it is important to recognize that although there are many commonalities between the desired outcomes for different programs, there are also significant differences. That is how it should be. There are also different forms of self assessment. That, too, is how it should be. We should not force a single set of outcomes, or a single method of assessment, on all programs.

Here, though, are some available options:

- Often the most illuminating (and least intrusive) measures are course embedded. That insures, among other things, that the students will be motivated to do their best; that is something exit exams—at least on their own—cannot do.
- Using student portfolios can be revealing and relatively unintrusive. Faculty within a program would examine graduating students' written work in the major to see if faculty have succeeded in teaching the skills and relaying the knowledge they want. If the faculty finds that the results unsatisfactory, they can explore ways to change the major—or some courses within the major—accordingly. Departments may choose to examine a representative sample.
- This form of evaluation could be externally validated by occasionally (say, every three

years) having an external examiner read the papers of representative students.

- One way to evaluate a program is its students' success in graduate and professional school.

#### *Core curriculum*

We also need to evaluate our core curriculum. However, that is not something we can currently do in any robust way. It is critical to understand the history that has brought us to our current place.

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For most of its existence, USF St. Petersburg was a senior college. When students arrived on campus, they would have already completed their core requirements. Thus, the school did not need to worry about assessing their core curriculum.

In the minimal sense that we did have a core, it was borrowed from the Tampa campus.

That core currently was put in place in 1994. Beginning in 2001, the USF General Education Assessment Committee evaluated the core by (a) analyzing writing samples, (b) conducting student surveys, and (c) assessing students' quantitative skills. Based on those findings, the core curriculum was revised, and the new one will become effective in Fall 2006. USF St. Petersburg has been—and will continue to be—governed by that core until we gain separate accreditation.

Since we are not yet wholly autonomous with our own core curriculum, we really do not have either the authority or the wherewithal to formally evaluate the effectiveness of the core. Assuming we are accredited, that will change.

Our subcommittee proposes that one of the university's first tasks after accreditation is form a special committee to revisit the core curriculum. That sentiment is not ours alone. The CAS faculty recently adopted (by a vote of 41-1) a new vision statement which specifies, among other things, that the school should reexamine its core curriculum. That committee could conclude that we simply adopt Tampa's program. We expect, though, that it will recommend modifications to the core so that it better utilizes the strengths of USF-SP—smaller classes, strong pedagogical relationships between faculty and students, and a faculty interested in cross-disciplinary work.

Only after the core is developed—only after we are clearer about precisely what we want the core to achieve—can we decide how best to assess it. That is when we will develop a full assessment plan.

#### *Further Guidelines for Assessment*

We urge the university to adopt measures that are not merely means of assessing students, but ones that build upon and reinforce good teaching. This parallels best practice within a classroom. A good teacher should design exams, papers, etc, that are part of the learning experience rather than mere measures of that experience.

Thus, the plan should avoid unnecessary or duplicative assessments. As much as possible, we should use, build upon, or at least find measures that parallel, assessment measures used elsewhere. For instance, we think that one important aim of our core curriculum should be the inculcation of critical reasoning skills. This is also one component of all programs' academic compacts. Thus, one measure of the success of the core curriculum would be whether the various programs succeed in their aims of promoting critical thinking.

Before we can identify more direct and specific measures, we will need to wait and see the **PRECISE CONTOURS OF THAT CORE.**