

Meeting Minutes: Committee on English

Minutes

Academic Advisory Committee on English

January 24-25, 2008

Jolley Lodge, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia

Representatives from USG Institutions in Attendance: Bobbie Robinson, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College; Charles Heglar, Albany State University; David Wheeler, Armstrong Atlantic State University; Beverly Head, Atlanta Metropolitan College; Lillie Johnson, Augusta State University; Susan Hunter, Clayton State University; Barbara Hunt, Columbus State University; Mary Nielson, Dalton State College; Ulf Kirchdorfer, Darton College; Carmine Palumbo, East Georgia College; Patricia Worrall, Gainesville State College; Elaine Whitaker, Georgia College & State University; Jennifer Wunder, Georgia Gwinnett College; Lanelle Daniel, Georgia Highlands College; Carol Senf, Georgia Institute of Technology; Ted Wadley, Georgia Perimeter College; Curtis Ricker, Georgia Southern University; Margaret Ellington, Georgia Southwestern State University; Marti Singer, Georgia State University; Richard Baskin, Gordon College; Robert Barrier, Chair, Kennesaw State University; Debra Matthews, Macon State College; Crystal O'Leary, Middle Georgia College; Tanya Bennett, North Georgia College & State University; April Gentry, Savannah State University; Michael Fisher, South Georgia College; Mark Nunes, Southern Polytechnic State University; Jane Hill, University of West Georgia; Mark Smith, Valdosta State University; Sara Selby, Waycross College; Lisa Mallory, Atlanta Metropolitan College; Jason Mosser, Georgia Gwinnett College; Renva Watterson, Georgia Highlands College; Rebecca Burnett, Georgia Institute of Technology; Steve Raynie, Gordon College, and Greg Fraser, University of West Georgia.

University System Office [Liaisons]: Dorothy Zinsmeister, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Leslie Caldwell, Director of the Regents' Testing Program

Guests: Ron Balthazor, Assistant Administrator for EMMA, UGA, and Robert Cummings, Columbus State University

Absent: Stan Webb, Bainbridge College; Michael Hannaford, Coastal Georgia Community College, and Berlethia Pitts, Fort Valley State University.

Thursday, January 24, 2008

First Session:

Dr. Robert Barrier, chair of the Academic Advisory Committee on English, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m., welcomed participants to Kennesaw State University, reviewed the agenda, and introduced Dr. Richard Vengroff, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences. Dr. Vengroff welcomed the participants and made comments about the new curriculum changes.

Following the welcome and introductions, Dr. Dorothy Zinsmeister, Board of Regents Liaison, led a discussion on the core curriculum, the strategic plan, presidential projects, and the budget. The Strategic Plan, including combined scorecards, was provided to the committee prior to the meeting for their review and comments.

A detailed discussion of the strategic goals followed. In discussing Strategic Goal 4, there was concern regarding increasing the number of teachers by the target date.

Dalton State's selective baccalaureate degree was cited as an example of responding to the local needs of the community by putting into place courses that meet the needs.

Zinsmeister noted that Strategic Goal 1 includes student advising, and advising is an issue often mentioned to the chancellor during campus visits. In general, the student perception is that advisement is not good. A Student Advisory Committee will explore ways to improve the way we do advising.

Academic Advising was discussed at length:

Margaret Ellington: "Why are they not talking about critical literacies, making students self-sufficient? It seems that that there are larger issues that have been completely left out." Zinsmeister requested an e-mail from Ellington with critical literacies. The comment was made that "advising should be viewed in much broader terms by trying to help students to leverage their interests into something that will get them employed." Student advisement should involve long term planning.

Mary Nielsen had a question about course rotation. Zinsmeister responded by describing a tentative two year rotation of courses. Students want classes at a certain hour and may have unrealistic expectations. Offering courses on Sunday afternoon was also discussed, and Dr. Zinsmeister mentioned that "it might be interesting to try out something on Sunday morning."

Accountability, for both students and faculty, was briefly addressed. Lanelle Daniel's stated that "students are able to do whatever they like on the web, and there has to be personal accountability." Mark Smith commented that "accountability works both ways."

The discussion returned to the core curriculum, and Bob Barrier asked about the timeline and the opportunities for input. Zinsmeister suggested that the participants review the committee lists and seek information from the representatives. While there will be other opportunities to respond, the group was reminded to provide feedback by Saturday and as late as Sunday.

Dr. Zinsmeister explained that there are at least two schools of thought as they relate to the core curriculum: "One school of thought feels that our current curriculum does not need major revisions—may need focus on global issues, ethics, etc. Another perspective says start from zero which may mean an incredible amount of work for something that we are not sure is broken."

The University of Georgia has eliminated Area B, moved hours into Area C, and has a different kind of core. Every course has to be resubmitted to their core to be approved. Every thing is being redone.

Zinsmeister reminded and encouraged the group to attend board meetings. The meetings are open, and agendas are posted.

Leslie Caldwell stated that the chancellor remarked that he never heard anyone complain about the quality of the faculty and the quality of the teaching during his campus visits.

Participants were encouraged to e-mail Dr. Zinsmeister with additional comments.

Break 2:50 p.m.

3:05 p.m. Meeting Reconvenes

Leslie Caldwell stated that the legislator passed a bill to grant block credit for the IB Diploma.

Caldwell reviewed the changes to the Regents' Testing Program which include testing in the first semester, although none of the system staff argued for first semester testing. Concerns were raised relating to the changes, including questions relating to remediation and the costs.

Changes to the reading portion of the test were discussed including a way for students to analyze the passages.

Caldwell also shared a chart with the group which shows the percentage of students passing the Regents' Reading Test on the first attempt and the percentage passing the Regents' Essay Test on the first attempt. Online grading of the Regents' Essay Test continues to go well with only one or two graders abusing the process. One rater has graded as many as a 1000 essays. Caldwell also noted that Bob Barrier has a 95% agreement rate.

3:45 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Subcommittee Meetings

4:45 p.m.-5:45 p.m. Reception—Upper Level Jolley Lodge

7:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m. Dinner—Fireside and Leadership Rooms, Student Center

Friday, January 25, 2008

Second Session:

Dr. Robert Barrier, chair of the Academic Advisory Committee on English, called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

9:15 a.m.-10:00 a.m. Subcommittee Reports:

Each chair of a subcommittee reported when called upon by Dr. Barrier (see attached for details).

The Regents Testing Subcommittee reported first, and the report generated an extensive discussion of the changes relating to the Regents' Test:

Dr. Caldwell addressed the concern of students being automatically put into remedial courses. He stated that "students that score 50 or below on the reading portion of the test will probably go directly into remediation. Students who score that low have a 15% chance of passing the Regents' Test."

Members of the committee expressed concern regarding the reading portion of the test: remediation for a score that low; extreme accommodations, and additional time were some of the issues raised.

Barbara Hunt commented that Columbus State is using a new reading software, a computerized reading program that is very expensive. ACE members who are interested in the software should contact irvin_terry@columbusstate.edu.

Bobbie Robinson questioned whether there is a any correlation between students who exit learning support reading and a high or low score on the test.

Curtis Ricker also expressed concern about students making good grades and not passing the test. "What is it about the test?"

Other issues raised include people who are teaching reading without enough knowledge of how to do it, the meaning of a 50 on the reading test, and the role of Learning Support.

Leslie Caldwell stated that "students who take and fail the test—six times—start low and get progressively better; there is no one category that students fit in." He also offered the following statistics: "21% fail rate on the essay for students who earned a C in English 1101 and 8% fail rate on the essay for students who earned an A in English 1101."

The discussion of the Regents' Test continued:

Curtis Ricker stated, "The test isn't matching the way the courses are taught. Core classes are requiring them to demonstrate reading skills."

Ricker also mentioned that political science is being looked at for comparison; however, Caldwell contended that it is "not as comparison; the test is measuring a different level of skills."

There were questions concerning what the test is supposed to demonstrate and the reason for the test.

Caldwell suggested that “the reason for the test is the same as it was in 1972 and offered a brief history of the test.”

The Freshman English Subcommittee reported next.

Ulf Kirchdorfer and others questioned whether the Regents’ Test should be administered during the first semester, and a discussion followed with several members agreeing that the test is being given too early. The possibility of an advanced composition course as part of the core or a writing across the curriculum course was also discussed.

The Sophomore committee reported next, and a discussion of the potential impact of the changes to the core curriculum at the University of Georgia began, especially as they relate to the Area C literature elective and transferability.

10:00-10:15 a.m. Break

10:15 a.m.-11:15 a.m. Dr. Ron Balthazar and Dr. Robert Cummings provided updates on the Electronic Markup Management Application, the <emma> project. Dr. Balthazar provided a brief history of <emma>.

The online portfolio encourages process writing, and the assessment is tied to the *St. Martin’s Handbook*, integrates instructor feedback, and allows for peer review. Other rubrics and handbooks may also be used with <emma>.

Balthazar and Cummings announced an opportunity for schools to participate in the program by “volunteering for at least four sections of composition, creating a consortium of interested institutions.” If interested, institutions should contact cummings_robert1@colstate.edu

Turnitin.com may be used as usual with <emma>; the portfolio is owned by the institution, and institutions may download <emma> to try it. After the <emma> presentation and questions and answers, there was a brief break.

11:15 a.m.-12:00 p.m. General Business, Elections, and Wrap-Up

The group discussed the possibility of having two meetings, one in October and another in January or April, rather than just one. The discussion will was tabled.

Leslie Caldwell and Bob Barrier agreed to establish a listserv for the committee.

A discussion of tenure and salary compression followed. Individual presidents are now responsible for tenure. There was agreement that we have to do a better job of showing what we do. The lack of tenure at Georgia Gwinnett College was also discussed.

Mark Smith mentioned a salary survey that was done at Valdosta State University based on discipline, rank, baseline salary, and phasing over three years.

The Executive Committee nominated Dr. Curtis Ricker for chair-elect and recorder.

Bobbie Robinson moved to close the nominations, and Ulf Kirchdorfer seconded it. The motion was unanimous.

Dr. Barrier turned the meeting over to Debra Matthews, who will serve as the new chair.

Dr. Matthews thanked Dr. Barrier for serving as chair and told the group that she looks forward to seeing them at Macon State College in January 2009. The meeting convened shortly after noon.

Executive Committee: Debra H. Matthews, Chair
Curtis Ricker, Chair-Elect
Robert Barrier, Immediate Past Chair
Ted Wadley, Member at Large (two year)
Marti Singer, Member at Large (four year)

Minutes respectfully submitted by Debra Holmes Matthews.

Subcommittee Reports:

Report from Freshman English Subcommittee:

Attendance: LaNelle Daniel (Georgia Highlands), Lillie Johnson (Augusta State), Crystal O'Leary (Middle Georgia College), Mary Nielsen (Dalton State), Steve Raynie (Gordon), April Gentry (Savannah State)

The Subcommittee on Freshman English met for about 45 minutes and submits three areas of concern/discussion for your consideration: first, issues connected to the possible reframing of the core curriculum; second, the need for students to have a minimal one year experience in written communication; and third, general issues that are an ongoing concern for this discipline.

Area 1—Core Curriculum Issues

- The subcommittee first affirms that written communication skills are essential to a curriculum that responds to the needs of students so that they might enter a broad spectrum of occupations after completing their education in and for the 21st century.
- Additionally, in keeping with Strategic Goal 3, our discipline already addresses the skills/competencies needed for employment by Georgia's strategic industries.
- Without enumerating them, the subcommittee further affirms that the skills/competencies we provide currently meet the needs of students in such a way as to enable them to participate in the economic advances found in a global Georgia.

Area 2—Need for Minimal Experience

- The subcommittee advocates that, in the 21st century, students need a minimal exposure of a year's experience in written communication to acquire the skills they need to exist in the current climate of accelerating options and globalization.
- This is the minimal length of time necessary to impart to these students all that they need in terms of critical thinking, research, technological, and related competencies that establish a framework not just for the rest of their college years but also for a lifetime of productive activity.

Area 3—Continuing Issues in the Discipline

- The subcommittee briefly brought up some of the ongoing issues in our discipline that continue to plague all institutions and which must be considered in all efforts to change and/or upgrade curriculum.
- All institutions must be provided with the means to address technological needs for written communication in a global environment.
- Tenure track faculty are a necessity to provide the quality instruction essential in this area.
- Class sizes need to be controlled and kept at manageable levels so that faculty can give students the best possible experience in writing.

LaNelle Daniel, Georgia Highlands College, reporting for the group

Report from Sophomore Subcommittee: Mark Smith, Chair

Sophomore Subcommittee Members Present: Mark Smith (Valdosta State), Debra Matthews (Macon State), and Renva Watterson (Georgia Highlands)

The subcommittee discussed the core curriculum changes, especially the changes in the University of Georgia core curriculum. Mark Smith expressed concern about the English literature requirement in Area C not being a part of the new curriculum at UGA and concerns about transferability.

The group also discussed academic advising and the need for advising to be ongoing.

Major Programs Committee: Ted Wadley, Chair

Major Programs Committee Members Present: Tanya Bennett (North Georgia College & State University); Charles Heglar (Albany State University); Jane Hill (University of West Georgia); Susan Hunter (Clayton State University), Mark Nunes (Southern Polytechnic State University), Carol Senf (Georgia Tech), Ted Wadley (Georgia Perimeter College), and Elaine Whitaker (Georgia College & State University)

The committee discussed the strategic plan and the core curriculum.

The committee also discussed Area F. Georgia College and State University includes a Shakespeare course in Area F.

Testing Subcommittee: Patricia Worrall, Chair

Regents Testing ACE Subcommittee Members Present: Bob Barrier (Kennesaw State University), Leslie Caldwell (Board of Regents), Margaret Ellington (Georgia Southwestern State University), Greg Fraser (University of West Georgia), Beverly Head (Atlanta Metropolitan College), Ulf Kirchdorfer (Darton College), Lisa Mallory (Atlanta Metropolitan College), Carmine Palumbo (East Georgia College), Curtis Ricker (Georgia Southern University), Bobbie Robinson (Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College), Marti Singer (Georgia State University), Jennifer Wunder (Georgia Gwinnett College), Jason Mosser (Georgia Gwinnett College), Patricia Worrall (Gainesville State College)

Date of Subcommittee Meeting: January 24, 2008

Minutes Recorded By: Greg Fraser, University of West Georgia

- Curtis Ricker questioned the viability of using Georgia Southern as a representative example to justify Regents testing in the first semester, since most students at his school enter with high SAT scores and typically do not require coursework to improve basic reading and writing skills (issues that face the majority of the 35 USG schools). Georgia Southern does not use the test to identify students with reading and writing challenges.

- Leslie Caldwell addressed concerns about the prospect of schools being mandated to place students in remedial courses if they fail the Regents exam in their first term at college. He suggested that he does not know of plans to mandate such remediation.
- Leslie Caldwell spoke about measures to prevent abuses in grading the Regents exam, where a tiny number of graders give blanket grades of "1" or "2," and earn high fees because of the speed with which they process exams. A new prevention system allows Leslie's office to norm during the grading process—spot checking and policing graders who might attempt to exploit the system for profit.
- Patsy Worrall informed the group that she will be stepping down after seven years as chair of her department at Gainesville State College; consequently, she will be leaving the subcommittee and will no longer be able to serve as chair. She called for nominations for a new chair, and Peggy Ellington was elected by unanimous vote.
- Leslie Caldwell addressed group questions about the new "flagging" system in the pdf processing of the exam. He explained the functions of the flags and noted that they did not get wide use in the last grading cycle.
- Bob Barrier asked if the Regents' Test is in any way threatened with discontinuation by the Board of Regents. Leslie Caldwell noted that some university and college presidents within the UGS have called for the test to be abandoned, but that there is no formal proposal at present to abolish the exam.
- Leslie Caldwell offered comments on the potential for changing the exam from its present form, where student are asked in the exam to respond in ways that meet professorial expectations for college-level reading and writing. Another way to gauge their proficiency would be to compare their responses to those given by previous exam-takers who succeeded on the test.
- A brief discussion ensued about a required reading course, and how to ensure that students read at appropriate levels to succeed in college. Peggy raised the question of how our discipline presently defines "reading"—many in the field have taken to discussing "information literacies" which cover different forms of media through which students absorb pertinent information.

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