

**Rhode Island College
Committee on General Education
Meeting Minutes**

**Date: Friday, March 15, 2024 (9 – 11 am)
Location: Zoom**

Regular 2023-24 COGE Members

Present: K. Almeida, S. Basu (Chair), B. Caouette, J. Capece, S. Costa, J. Dagle, Q. Hughes, R. Kraus II, **Carolynn Masters**, E. Miller, S. Oliveira, S. Picard, L. Schuster, R. Quintana Vallejo,

Excused: D. Gill, J. Harrison, H. Shadoian

Absent:, J. Fearon-Lynch

The March 15th COGE meeting had a dual objective: 1) to hear submitted Gen Ed proposals and 2) host an open forum to hear feedback from faculty at large on the latest iteration of the General Education Revision proposal. Provost Masters joined at 9:30 am to take and respond to questions during the open forum.

The meeting started at 9:00 am on Zoom with the following Chair's updates,

- Please reserve March 29th and April 5th, 9-11 am, for special COGE meetings to hear another round of feedback in the second open forum hosted by COGE, then vote on the Gen Ed proposal on April 5th.

COGE Business on the March Agenda

Course and Program Proposals

- **First up were proposals from Biology on two co-requisite courses. Eric Hall was present to summarize the need for the proposed new structure in the BIO 201 and BIO 202 courses. Elisa Miller moved to consider the proposal. Silvia Oliveira seconded the motion.**
- Eric noted that the changes were tied to a sequence of anatomy and physiology courses. Instead of having separate Anatomy and Physiology courses, its now a two semester A&P 1 and A&P 2. Most colleges in the North East have this model and having separate courses causes transfer issues. As BIOL 201 and 202 will be replacing BIO 108, it was suggested these courses be proposed as Natural Science courses. The model of separating lecture and lab at RICs is experimental but other schools use this model. The courses are mutual corequisites and students can choose any BIO 202 lab course that is tied to BIO 201. This makes scheduling more flexible. Students who fail one or the other can retake just that component but still continue on with their program.
- The following questions were raised by faculty:

- Is a similar numbering program being considered for other Biology courses that have labs? Yes, A&P 2 is the only other one in the works that will be proposed as an AQSR. These two are the largest courses that will be converted but the model is not appropriate for upper-level Biology courses.
 - Some of the Learning Outcomes are not similarly described across BIOL 201 and 202. Those need to be clearly discussed and more specific. For example, it is not clear how ethics would be assessed as there is no mention of scientific or health care ethics in BIOL 202.
 - The response was that without a unit specifically geared towards ethics, biologists can talk about ethics but are not qualified to teach ethics. What would COGE propose?
 - If BIO 201 deals with scientific ethics but 202 doesn't it would be okay. Perhaps a brief exercise or reading would address this concern.
 - Another suggestion was to include the ethical treatment of animals and ethical reasoning in a healthcare setting.
 - Eric agreed that ethics extends far beyond the class and grades and probably formalizing a short assignment would address the concern of teaching ethical reasoning.
- A subsequent question was, should there be a friendly amendment that Eric will address these issues. Yes, so the vote would be this proposal with the friendly amendment. Further questions followed.
 - Under the current Gen Ed program, can students take the two courses in separate semesters? The answer is no as the two courses are co-requisites.
 - Why are there extra Learning Outcomes? Response was that the course has learning outcomes beyond Gen Ed ones. But the Learning Outcomes will be edited after the meeting to meet COGE requirements.
 - Will all sections have a common syllabus? Yes, there will be a set syllabus and labs for all sections but faculty will still have some freedom to customize in their section.
- The proposal was ready for a vote following the above discussion. Becky Caouette put forth a motion to approve BIOL 201 and BIOL 202 with a friendly amendment that more detailed explanation be provided of activities that assess ethical reasoning. Stephanie Costa seconded the motion.
 - There were 12 votes in favor; the proposals were approved.
 - **The second proposal up for discussion was the RN to BSN online program which was seeking approval for exemptions from the Second Language and Connections requirements. Donna Huntley-Newby from School of Nursing was present to summarize the request.**
 - The motion was to hold a hearing on the proposal. Joan Dagle moved, Stephanie Costa seconded.
 - Donna stated that School of Nursing is undergoing a major curriculum change and responding to community partners. SoN used this moment to revisit the RN-BSN program. No state schools in RI currently offer an online RN to BSN program and students have to go outside the state for a similar program. The proposed program is aligned with all other RN to BSN programs around the country. Students will transfer in 90 credits and will be required to complete 30 residency credit which includes 6 courses and 2 electives. The expectation is that majority will transfer in their

Gen Eds within those 90 credits and if any, except Second Language and Connections are missing, would be asked to take at RIC using their two elective credits in the program.

- Faculty asked the following questions:
 - How does this proposal specifically affect Gen Ed? Answer provided was that majority of Gen Ed credits will transfer in for most students, otherwise students will have to take the ones missing through the Electives provision in the program. The program is specifically requesting exemptions for Second Language and Connections; nurses are required to use certified interpreters and connect with a variety of perspectives and people in the field.
 - How would someone fulfil, for example, the Literature category in seven weeks? All programs on campus have to fit in the current Gen Ed program and has Nursing reached out to other departments to check whether seven-week Gen Courses would be offered?
 - An aligned point raised was that several Gen Ed categories do not offer fully online courses, for example Connections, Literature, Art. Also, History does not offer seven-week courses and scheduling for a few students would be an issue.
 - Also, BPS courses are seven-week courses and designed for the BPS format. If the proposal was approved then COGE is being asked to approve a new special Gen Ed program.
 - Is the RN to BSN program a continuing Ed adult education or an academic program for adults?
 - Justin Dilibero, the Dean of SoN who was also present, clarified that the population is unique and already holds an Associate degree. They have passed licensure, in a professional role already, now engaging in continuing education. That said, it is an academic program as RN-BSN programs have very rigid accreditation requirements aside from NECHE.
 - BPS is an adult degree completion program; RN-BSN is not a degree completion program but majority of students enrolling would have met the bulk of the Gen requirements.
- Given the above discussion, the Chair agreed with the suggestion to table the proposal and revisit for further review at the COGE Executive committee.

Q&A with Provost Masters in an Open Forum on Gen Ed Revisions

- Around 9:41 am the meeting pivoted to an open forum on the proposal for Gen Ed revision. Provost Masters provided an update on the revisions made in the current version based on two previous town halls hosted by the Provost's office.
- Provost Masters stated that she used the Task Force's recommendation, feedback received at the town halls, consultation with COGE Executive committee, Council members, and feedback from the Qualtrics survey to update the draft. She added that she is open to more revisions based on further feedback received that day. She particularly noted the following specific themes from the Qualtrics survey:
 - Overall favorable responses from the survey. Most concerns were around the themes of
 - 3 vs 4 credits. She has reconsidered the move to all 3 credit Gen Eds and is suggesting that courses be a mix of 3 **and** 4 credits.
 - RIC 100 would fill the gap in allowing students to get to 40 credits with the mix of 3 and 4 credit courses, however, faculty support removing RIC 100 altogether from Gen Ed and making it part of first year college or major requirement.
 - Everyone seems on board with the recommended Learning Outcomes.
 - Some disagreement about number of prior credits required for Connections courses.

- Why a Culmination course, when RIC already has Connections. Some programs don't have space for a Culminations experience after 60 credits. This was suggested by the Task Force, modeled on URIs Grand Challenge.
 - The Science category should not include Computer Science. This came from the original Task Force recommendation that Computer Science be included in an integrated STEM category.
 - Math category being part of First Year Experience may have to wait till Fall 25.
- The following is a summary of statements/comments/questions by attendees as well as COGE members
 - The current version is the correct next step for Gen Ed for coming years because, it satisfies a lot of comments from faculty, Learning Outcomes are well-defined and assessable, second language has a home, Connections is contemplated to be preserved, progression in opening up Gen Ed is good – Elective is better than AQSR, strengthening of First Year Experience is reaffirming - reduces wait time for students to take math early on. However, the proposal does not go into finer details.
 - We have to balance having Liberal Arts with Professional Schools in the same college. English is losing the most but accept that Modern Languages is being included in the joint category and understand big picture. If Computer Science is a Science then anything can be a Science. Some of these changes make the Gen Ed more major specific and takes the General out of General Education.
 - The way the Learning Outcomes are working here are problematic. Is Greek philosophy not global understanding? Is civic knowledge included in Psychology? What can be implemented in 2024 in terms of Learning Outcomes that is assessable? Also, the LOs are the fundamental element of the design of the program. Either LOs are not meaningful or certain departments will not be able to offer courses that fit the prescribed LOs.
 - A response provided was that Civic Knowledge is already a learning outcome for the Social Behavioral category under the current Gen Ed program and will need to be tweaked. The Learning Outcome won't be affected unless the LO implementation team comes up with learning objectives.
 - What is this process for? Are there going to be revisions to the proposal? The input is for what purpose?
 - Provost Masters responded that the Task Force's plan is a recommendation so input gathering is important for figuring out how to revise the plan.
 - Natural Science is taking a lot of hits but okay as flexible for students. Lab elimination is also okay as it addresses the transfer issue. However, adding Computer Science to this category fundamentally changes the Science category. That will take away a fundamental piece of general education. Science education is especially needed in this anti Science climate.
 - There is a lot of conversation about a one-year program. Is this actually a transition or the new program that will be here for long-term? Will these categories stay as is? Understand the need for some changes from Fall 24 for Hope and students. Lot of changes were made by the Task Force but the proposed plan is the same as the current Gen Ed program. What powers does COGE have to make changes? What are we voting on? What is the plan for implementation?
 - Feedback and change is still possible.
 - The Gen Ed revision will be final once it comes back to COGE.
 - The College does not have the technology to sustain a floating Learning Outcomes model.

- The idea is to take the current model and move towards the Task Force's recommendations in a 2-part process.
- People like the Learning Outcomes (model) proposed by the Task Force but it is difficult to implement. Flawed as it is, leave the categories as is. CCRI has the technology, we do not have the resources to invest in the required technology.
- We need to be sure that we are voting on the fundamental categories, structure, what the Learning Outcomes are and how they will be implemented by the end of this semester or latest by Fall. Gen Ed is too important to be "up in the air" for long.
 - Biggest shift here is in the Learning Outcomes
 - We do have to look at how to implement them next year.
- This is a bit confusing as we haven't discussed and agreed on the Task Force's model. So, the end point shouldn't necessarily be moving to the Task Force's model.
- Can we at least identify the parts we agree on by April?
- Identify what can be done and what should be done with Gen Ed. There needs to be an overlap between the Task Force and other faculty in implementation.
- We are not going to get to a Gen Ed model that we are all happy about as dealing with only ten slots in a 4-credit model. Some might be implementable in Fall 24.
- Becky Caouette moved to adjourn the meeting at 11 am. Seconded by Karen Almeida.

Respectfully submitted by

Suchandra Basu

COGE Secretary for March 2024