

**Western Connecticut State University  
General Education Committee  
2008-2009**

**Members:** Daryle Brown (PS), Ron Drozdenko (Ancell), Robin Flanagan (At-Large, Chair), Veronica Kenausis (Library, Webmaster), Patty O'Neill (First Year Coordinator), Chuck Rocca (A&S), Alba Skar(A&S), Linda Vaden-Goad (Dean), Kerry Walker (VPA), Alan Anderson (CUCAS rep), Student rep

**Meeting Time:** First Friday of the month at 9:00 am. September 5, 2008, October 3, 2008, November 14 (recently rescheduled), 2008, December 5, 2008, February 6, 2009, March 13 (an exception), 2009, April 3, 2009, May 1, 2009.

**Meeting Place:** Old Main 3<sup>rd</sup> floor conference room

**Agenda**

**Friday October 3, 2008**

Recording: Drozdenko

- I. Conference call with Pam Bowers of Oklahoma State University ([http://uat.okstate.edu/assessment/assessment\\_at\\_osu/gened/index.html](http://uat.okstate.edu/assessment/assessment_at_osu/gened/index.html))
  - a) Please come prepared with questions for Pam Bowers, based on the assessment materials at their website. She has kindly offered 40 minutes of her time: from 9:00 to 9:40 am eastern time.
- II. Minutes of May 2 meeting
- III. Minutes of September 5 meeting (attached)
- IV. Input from community (15 minutes)
- V. Old business
  - a) Update on FYE (see attached report from Jerry Wilcox)
  - b) Update on assessment of General Education curriculum
  - c) Inside Higher Ed article on Gen Ed at Temple University (attached)
- VI. New business
  - a) The Writing Requirement
  - b) NEEAN Forum on Gen Ed Assessment for Learning and Teaching
- VII. Adjourn (by 10:30)

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

General Education Committee Minutes

DATE: September 5, 2008  
PLACE: Haas Library 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
TIME: 9:00am-10:40am

MEMBERS PRESENT: D. Brown, R. Drozdenko, R. Flanagan (Chair), V. Kenausis,  
P. Oneill, C. Rocca, A. Skar, L. Vaden-Goad, K. Walker,

Guests: Dr. L. Rinker, K. Allocco, L. Lindenauer

Appointment of recorder: D. Brown; V. Kenausis will not be taking minutes as  
she will be the Webmaster

Meeting times: first Friday of every month at 9:00 am/ 9/5; 10/3; 11/7; 12/5;  
2/6/09; 3/13 (an exception); 4/3; 5/1 in the Haas Library 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Conference Room

Welcome new members and guests: Chuck Rocca and Alba Skar (new  
members)/ Kate Allocco, Leslie Lindenauer and Dr. Linda Rinker (guests)

Minutes from May 2, 2008: deferred to October meeting

Community input and comments: none

Old business:

Update on FYE (P. O'Neill): this is year 2 of the FYE program/ preliminary report  
re: Class 2011: retention rate for those who took one FYE course fall  
'07 is about the same as the general population (70%); comparing FYE  
and GPA, the results were positive and significant/ will try to pinpoint why

Patty is currently recruiting for FYE instructors/courses for spring '09

Issue/concern of some faculty:

- instructors report that they are not able to cover as much content in FY courses
- not getting the number of faculty volunteers needed
- ratio of PT to FT faculty
- increase work for the course
- academic freedom

- FT person would teach FY courses which tend to be lower level courses and adjuncts would be hired to teach major upper level courses
- faculty are finding it challenging to weave the success and university factors into the course without sacrificing content

New Business:

Women's Studies course: WS 200 (is not a new course)/ discussion took place/ course meets the Gen Ed requirements for Humanistic Studies/ motion to accept WS 200 as a gen ed requirement that could fulfill humanistic studies option (Rocco/Brown)/ motion passed unanimously

Gen Ed Conference in June attended by Dr. L. Vaden-Goad:  
Information was distributed to members of the Gen Ed Comm.  
Oklahoma State used as a prototype/ assessment is done through goal portfolios/ goals and issues are assessed and not faculty, course or students

Gen Ed will presently be assessed with MAPP, freshmen and seniors/ portfolio based assessments will be reviewed

Goals for 2008-2009:

- support FYE
- begin assessment of Gen Ed

Dr. Rinker thanked the Committee for the work that they have done and will support the committee as needed.

For October meeting:

- discuss what can be done to help faculty participate in the FYE program
- invite Chair of the Writing Department to attend and discuss criteria for WIC

Adjournment: 10:40am

Respectfully submitted,

*Daryle L. Brown, Recorder*

### Three Weeks into Semester Report on FYE from Jerry Wilcox

Overall, 74% of the Fall 2007 first-time full-time cohort re-enrolled in the Fall 2008 semester (one-year retention; compared to 73% last year).

Here are the comparable one-year percentages for some subgroups:

48% of FY-Attempters (Withdrawn or Incomplete) and FY-Flunkers

**82% of FY-Passers -- huzzah! --** (whether the student passed one or more courses seemed to make little difference)

72% of FY-avoiders....

However, we realize that early-enrolees have the best chance of getting into FY courses , and [insert your favorite caveat here]....

| Comparisons of FY-Course Attempters and               |             |                 |                                   |
|---|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Other WestConn FTIC-F Matriculating in Fall 2007      |             |                 |                                   |
|   |             |                 | Percent Re-Enrolling ___<br>Later |
| Student Group   | Cohort Size | <b>One Year</b> | One Sem.                          |
| FY Attempt (non-pass, non-fail)                       | 25          | <b>48.0</b>     | 76.0                              |
| FY Fail   | 27          | <b>48.1</b>     | 88.9                              |
| FY Pass 1 course                                      | 178         | <b>81.5</b>     | 97.8                              |
| FY Pass 2+ crs.                                       | 133         | <b>82.7</b>     | 97.0                              |
| No FY Course  | 553         | <b>72.2</b>     | 88.4                              |
| <b>All FTIC-F*</b>                                    | 916         | <b>74.1</b>     | 91.2                              |
| * First Time In College, enrolled Full-time in sem. 1 |             |                 |                                   |

## General Education in the City



The story might seem familiar: A core curriculum had been in place, but, over time, its core became hard to find. Many of the classes counting toward distribution requirements also served as portals into majors (introduction to psychology, say), the “undertow” increasingly pulling core course content into disciplinary folds. “That was the way things were, I guess you could say, entropy-ing over a period of time,” explains Terry Halbert, Temple University’s director of general education and a professor of legal studies in the Fox School of Business.

That entropy-ing has ended, with a new general education curriculum in place at Temple this fall. The general education program, which comprises about a third of the undergraduate experience, requires students to take 11 courses in nine areas, including a four-course foundation in reading, writing, humanities and math. The curriculum is characterized in part by a focus on interdisciplinary study and a thematic approach that Halbert hopes will keep the curriculum fresh and full of what she calls “the gen ed spirit” — even as time goes by.

The curriculum includes four themes: Community Based Learning, Globalization, Sustainability, and, most notably, the “Philadelphia Experience.” The final theme was developed organically: About half of the original 101 new general education courses designed and proposed by faculty included taking students into Temple’s urban locale. “So we started to tout it as a theme,” Halbert says. “It’s actually the strongest one at this point.”

Just over 10 years ago, in 1997, one in five students said they were coming to Temple “in spite of” its Philadelphia location, according to Halbert. In 2007, that statistic was down to 1 in 20, and 60 percent called the surrounding city a very important positive factor in their decision to attend the university.

“They’re consciously interested in our city. They come here because of it,” says Halbert. Of the “Philadelphia Experience” theme, she says, “From an educational point of view, from a purely gen ed perspective, I like it because I know that the students already find this place interesting. So it’s the hook that we can use to make it more likely that they care about what they’re doing.”

Halbert stresses a more explicit focus on teaching in the new curriculum. “Before it was all about the content, what should the content be. And now it’s at least as much about how we teach,” she says.

New courses with Philadelphia-rooted components include one on “Sacred Space,” where students will visit the [Japanese House and Garden](#) in Fairmount Park and the [Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul](#), and “Criminal Behavior,” where they’ll assess potential high-crime spots. There’s a “Religion in Philadelphia” course, and William W. Cutler’s [class on higher education in American society](#) includes fieldwork assignments at Temple and other close-by college campuses.

“It gets them on their feet and out into the world. Freshmen, for the most part, they’re looking for a college experience that’s not just intellectual but fun,” says Cutler, a professor of history and also of educational leadership and policy studies.

“They’re pretty green,” he says of first-semester freshmen. “They don’t understand how higher education works. They don’t understand how it reflects larger themes and larger cultures. There are so many ways you can use the city and the environs to underscore the themes I’m going to teach.”

Speaking more broadly of the new general education curriculum, Cutler contrasts Temple’s approach with standard distribution requirements, in which students are required to take a certain number of courses in a variety of disciplines or divisions. “It’s not distribution, a little bit of this and a little bit of that, that’s being sought after, but rather an attempt to take those pieces and make something larger out of them,” he says.

Nevertheless, the move into a more interdisciplinary realm has raised some questions. “I think there are still some faculty who are concerned about pedagogy versus content,” says Karen M. Turner, the director of Temple’s broadcast journalism sequence and the Faculty Senate president. Turner recently completed a three-year term on the university’s general education committee.

“The intent of the executive committee that I sat on so many years was to ensure there was that proper balance. It’s great to have wonderful pedagogy but you also have to have wonderful content, and to have that marriage,” says Turner.

“Because I sat on the committee, I saw the hard work that we all did in trying to really take something that was hard to wrap your arms around and really develop it into something concrete. It was almost like birthing. I think that it turned out fine, but as with anything there’s always tweaking that needs to be done.”

To fulfill the general education curriculum, Temple students will take three courses in common: a required four-credit reading and writing course, and a two-course sequence in the humanities. With nearly \$5.5 million in new support from centralized university funds, sections of the writing course will be capped at 20 students, and the humanities courses at 25, Halbert says. Students also select one of six quantitative literacy courses, the fourth and final component of what’s considered to be the curriculum’s foundation.

Beyond that, students take seven general education courses for “breadth.” Students select two courses from the science and technology category, and one each in arts, human behavior, race and diversity, U.S. society, and world society.

— Elizabeth Redden

*The original story and user comments can be viewed online at  
<http://insidehighered.com/news/2008/09/05/temple>.*