**CURRICULUM COMMITTEE**

February 3, 2014

Present: Ayers, Grimland, McCandless, Miller-Francisco, Oline, V Smith, Simpson, J Smith, Walsh

Guest: Karen Stone

The meeting began at 10:31 a.m. The minutes from the January 27 meeting were accepted.

Alignment of general education program

Before discussing the actual proposal, there were some general questions about the Curriculum Committee’s role in evaluating the general education revision proposal, compared with the review by the University Studies Committee. Ayers said the University Studies Committee is supportive of the alignment proposal, and has made some recommendations for improvement. The University Studies Committee is meeting each week and giving priority to the alignment proposal and the House Experience proposal. Curriculum Committee will evaluate the proposals in parallel with the University Studies Committee. The University Studies Committee will evaluate the proposals for University Studies objectives.

Stone presented the proposal to align University Studies and SOU’s general education program with AAC&U’s LEAP standards (Liberal Education: America’s Promise) that have been adopted by OUS. She said the review process is important, and said not to get stuck in details that are flexible. She presented a diagram of the current general education program compared with the proposed program. Significant changes are to reduce Explorations credits from 36 credits to 12 credits, and to add a new Strand K (Engagement and Leadership) requirement of 8 credits. Total general education credits will decrease from 64 credits to 48 credits. Some previous questions have been how SOU will continue to consider itself a liberal arts school, with the reduction in general education credits. Stone said the emphasis will be to be more purposeful in learning outcomes, instead of accumulating more credits. She added that we haven’t had assessment in all the general education courses, and that just because a course prefix implies a certain discipline doesn’t mean that expected course objectives are met. Some current general education courses will require tweaks to adjust the learning outcomes, but not major overhauls. New general education courses will be developed with the learning outcomes at the forefront.

Another change to the general education program is that students will not be able to double-dip and count a general education course as a course for their major. Stone said in the current model, where it is common to have an Explorations or Integration course also count for the major, instructors sometimes don’t know whether to teach to general education goals or content needed for the major. However, Stone said that in the new model, students can decide whether to use a course to fulfill University Studies requirements, or a requirement in their major, but not both. Stone said we want general education to have a purpose, not just to fulfill a checklist. The g.e. courses should be more focused on learning outcomes, not content; content-rich courses are more for upper division courses.

Some departments have generated a lot of SCH with general education courses. In the new structure, general education will be under the Division of Undergraduate Studies, not the discipline-specific divisions or programs. We will have a rubric to evaluate the assessment goals, and the Division of Undergraduate Studies and Office of Assessment will monitor the general education courses. V Smith said it’s difficult to assess the current general education courses, and we need safeguards in place for the new system so it doesn’t become like the current system.

The new Strand K is meant to foster a leadership role for students. Students will complete 2 of the credits within the Foundations requirements, and the remaining 6 credits will be completed by seniors, and it is hoped that these credits will dovetail with their majors and capstones.

House Experience proposal

The House Experience proposal was developed to align with the proposed general education structure, so the curriculum program already matches. What is the added value of the House Experience? It promotes leadership, agility, and teamwork. It is planned to lead to greater student retention, and includes some of the elements we already know leads to retention, such as greater campus and community involvement. There were questions about how the House Experience will fit with transfer students and others who are not traditional freshmen. If the new general education proposal is approved, and the House Experience proposal is approved, we will likely have three structures for general education: The House Experience, Honors College (which would match the proposed alignment of general education), and a third structure meant to fit transfer students or students whose education plan doesn’t work with the other two structures. But it is hoped that transfer students would have a path to join a House after fulfilling certain of the other general education requirements. With reduced credits for general education, there may be more flexibility for majors.

Stone said the new general education alignment is not envisioned to be in place for Fall 2014, but for Fall 2015. Taskforces will need to be created to work out some of the details for the transition.

Oline asked committee members to send him their questions and ideas about the two proposals, with the idea of continuing the discussion at the next meeting. Stone will be invited back to continue the discussion. The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.