General Education Program Committee
Minutes
16 June 2004

Present: Chuck Booth, Hope Cook, Richard Jones-Bamman, Margaret E. Martin, David Pellegrini, Delar Singh, Carol Williams, Nancy Salter (ex-officio)

1. Review and acceptance of draft minutes 16 June 2004 Motion accepted (Booth, Singh).
Review and acceptance of draft minutes 9 June 2004 Motion accepted (Singh, Jones-Bamman).

Old Business

2. GEPC Web page development
Launch

The academic bargaining unit membership list has been completed and sent to CIT for loading into the survey and electronic forum programs. David Pellegrini will work with Mike Palumbo today to finalize questions regarding the e-forum and post the first thread. Proposed text of the thread was edited and approved. We expect that the list will be loaded into the survey tool sometime tomorrow. An electronic announcement will be sent to the University community as soon as the site is available. Committee members request that a hard copy of the announcement be sent to members at their home addresses.

Models text
Delar and Richard will work on links to representative models. It is expected that they will describe key aspects of models and post links to curricula.

The Committee suggested that we secure a laptop and LCD projector for our meetings to be able to discuss the content and design of the Web site at our meetings. Maggie will check on availability. Mike Adams will be invited to a meeting to discuss approaches to electronic communication. Carol suggested, and Committee members concurred, that opportunities for face-to-face interaction with University members and AAUP members during the summer be developed. A social event will be planned.

3. Departmental Survey
Most departments have replied to the departmental surveys and Maggie has phoned chairs of those departments who have not yet responded. Carol reported on the survey of departments regarding capstone courses. Most departments currently use capstone courses and most of these satisfy the University writing intensive requirement.

4. Committee guests
Dr. Pachis will visit the Committee today and Dr. Carter will join the Committee next week.

5. Summer Planning
Data from Planning and Institutional Research
Maggie reported on her meeting with Bill Gammell and Brian Lashley of the office of Planning and Institutional Research. The office will assist us in better understanding the characteristics of the student body and the resources currently employed in offering the general education program.

6. Fall planning and timeline
Lunch and Learn Fall presentation
Carol has reserved the BTR immediately following the fall University meeting for the GEPC. We will plan a presentation and discussion.

7. CT Department of Higher Education General Education Regulations
Dimitrios Pachis and Bill Gammell Committee Guest

Committee members discussed their reflections on the proposed Connecticut Department of Higher Education regulations for general education. Committee members expressed concern that such regulations may make it difficult to Eastern to distinguish itself as Connecticut’s public liberal arts university. Committee members responded to a draft response presented by Chuck which expressed concern regarding the validity of general education program outcome evaluation and value-laden and imprecise terms, such as “appreciate cultures” and the promotion of good citizenship. How the regulations will be enforced is unknown and
potentially problematic. Carol noted that many states have mandated testing to assess program outcomes and individual performance.

Dr. Pachis contends that all Universities must be accountable to achieve their missions and that curricula must be consistent with these. His concern is that the University will be using valuable resources to report on meeting objectives that are representative of our mission. Although supporting outcome assessment for general education which can be specific and manageable, Dr. Pachis argues that assessment must be integrated into the design of a general education program and must be meaningful to both faculty and students.

The Committee will discuss the DOHE regulations at its next meeting and present written comments to the Vice President.

Bill Gammell reported on the latest data regarding Eastern’s retention rates, indicating that most of the approximately 25% of students who leave after freshman year, continue in higher education. Students who choose majors are more likely to be retained than others. Eastern’s freshman class is about 850 students but we integrate another 300 transfer students into each class prior to graduation. How students in this changing population are served by a general education program will be central to our deliberations. Materials from his office will be distributed throughout the Committee planning process.

In closing, Dr. Pachis presented his vision of general education reform to the Committee. He contends that the work of the Committee is to transform general education for our university for the future. The general education program should hallmark the University and the qualities of an Eastern graduate – not for who we are now but for who we, the University, want to be. Our survival depends on a focused, coherent, distinctive program that reflects our unique mission. The GEPC must represent the “special:” nature of Eastern.

New Business

9. Next meetings
   Dr. Carter 9:30 a.m. June 23, 2004
   The June 23, 2004 meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

Margaret Martin, Chair