

University of Nebraska at Kearney

## OpenSPACES@UNK: Scholarship, Preservation, and Creative Endeavors

---

General Studies

---

10-7-2021

### October 2021 General Studies Council Minutes

University of Nebraska at Kearney General Studies Council

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openspaces.unk.edu/genstudies>

---

**General Studies Council Minutes**  
**October 7, 2021 @ 3:30 p.m.**  
**Warner Conference Room, Warner Hall or via Zoom**  
**\*\* Approved Via Email \*\***

Present: Joel Berrier, Joan Blauwkamp, Noelle Bohaty, Greg Brown, Joel Cardenas, Jeong Hoon Choi, Jeremy Dillon, Beth Hinga, Mark Ellis, Miechelle McKelvey, Lisa Neal, Rochelle Reeves, Sri Seshadri, Rebecca Umland, Nita Unruh, Jeff Wells

Absent: Sherri Harms, Amy Rundstrom, Doug Tillman.

Guests: Todd Bartee, Suzanne Maughan, Ryan Teten, David Vail

**I. Call to order 3:30pm**

1. **Approve agenda** McKelvey/Unruh moved approval. **Motion carried.**

2. Minutes from September 2, 2021 meeting (approved via email)

**II Old Business (Open Items): None**

**III. New Business:**

**1. Course proposals**

a) HIST 305 (LOPER 6 and LOPER 9): Unruh/Reeves moved approval to send the course out to campus for comments.

David Vail stated that the course came about through discussion with students about finding new courses to address educational needs in this context (public health), as well as discussions with other faculty and program directors about an upper level class that could meet their students' needs.

**Motion carried. (11 approve, 0 opposed)**

b) PE 256 (LOPER 10): McKelvey/Unruh moved approval to send the course out to campus for comments. No discussion.

**Motion carried. (11 approve, 0 opposed)**

**2. GS Assessment Rubrics**

Blauwkamp: Wording on rubric instructions should be changed so that faculty members indicate the specific activity or assignment in the course being used for assessment, and submit a copy of the syllabus for this section.

Unruh: Thought that the syllabus of record was to be used for all instructors.

Dillon: Thought we were trying to get away from common rubric and assignment.

Umland: Objectives could be uniform and be met, but using different texts, assignments.

Blauwkamp: Syllabus of Record can be very general, and each instructor will have different assignments. Need to know which specific assignment from instructor will be used since these will be different across multiple sections with different instructors.

Brown: This appears to be looking at same thing from different angles. Instructors have to teach content, but may choose different assessments from syllabus of record.

Blauwkamp: Still think it would be good for faculty from each section to submit their course syllabus and indicate which assignment was used to assess each objective. Council can also use those syllabi also for syllabus review.

Umland: First bullet: each outcome assessment can be based on a different assignment.

Brown: That gives us a better opportunity for cross-pollination among faculty in different sections of the course.

Blauwkamp: Proposed wording: Please indicate the specific course activity or assignment from your course syllabus that you used for assessment of this outcome. (Note at the top of the rubric: All activities and assignments used for assessment must be consistent with the syllabus of record that the Council reviewed and approved.) And require faculty also to submit a copy of their course syllabus.

McKelvey: Will this be the same across all LOPER rubrics?

Brown: Yes

Jeremy: Will the Council be checking every syllabus?

Blauwkamp: No, but the Council could check if there was a problem.

Brown: Next step is to send this out for campus comment and back for approval in November. ITEC 290 will start this semester, all others in the spring.

Motion to send rubrics with the revised wording to campus for two-week comment period:

Umland/Reeves. **Motion carried. (11 in favor, 0 opposed)**

### **3. APR Teams/Timetable**

Everyone from GSC is assigned to 2 sections of the self-study document from the table of contents.

Brown: What is the timetable for completion so we can complete the APR this year?

Hinga: If we could get the APR self-study written by end of January and have it in final form in early February, can do the site visit in March.

Brown: Do we need a special meeting in January?

Dillon: Yes. Should we meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday in January?

*Decision: Special meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of January, January 20.*

Unruh: Teams send documents to Mark Ellis, Greg Brown, and Beth Hinga by end of December. They can edit in January, come together on January 20 with edits for the Council to review.

Brown: Teams should have their section drafts to him by December 31 (earlier is encouraged). Can work with Beth and Mark to have a draft back out to Council on January 13<sup>th</sup> for people to review, giving everyone a week to look at it. January 20, Council comes together for final edits.

Unruh to Brown: Please check Qualtrics account of GSC for student survey to see if it still exists.

Brown to Hinga: How do we choose an outside reviewer?

Hinga: Look at peer institutions, both the Board of Regents list and MIAA institutions. Look for a similar institution in size and with a general studies program that looks good (from website).

There was additional discussion as various Council members asked Hinga (or Brown) for clarification on what their sections needed to include, whether the study should focus on the old program or the new LOPERs Program, where the relevant data could be located, and where old APR documents were posted.

### **4. Discussion regarding enrollment limits on First-Year Seminars**

Brown: Deans had varied views on a mandate, but all agreed that a limit of 20-25 was desirable.

Unruh: Chairs at the university-wide Council of Chairs meeting didn't want a mandate for specific enrollment limit but wanted to be able to choose 20, 25, 30...

Brown: Not sure Council can mandate, but giving strong advice would be good. A recommendation that they be capped at 20-30 students was suggested by Blauwkamp at the previous meeting.

Dillon: No need for a range, just use one number as the upper limit.

Unruh: Department chairs wanted discretion based on faculty and the specific situation.

Blauwkamp: Weren't Portals capped at 20 or 25?

Unruh: 25 was a recommendation.

Brown: Recommend First Year Seminar capped at 25? Add the justification for that limit?

Motion: As the purpose of the First Year Seminar is to facilitate faculty/student connection, it is recommended that a cap of 25 students per course be used. Unruh/Dillon moved approval. **Motion carried. (11 in favor, 0 opposed)**

Dillon: We should monitor that to be sure chairs are not putting 40 or 50 students in a class. If the -126 classes get too big, we can revisit issuing a mandate.

Brown: That's easy enough.

## **5. GS Governance Document – GS Membership**

Brown: Blauwkamp pointed out after the last meeting that the version of the governance document that was posted on Canvas in the September meeting agenda did not include the revisions from October and November 2019 that the Council had discussed and approved. Brown included those revisions in the version of the governance document posted on Canvas for this meeting, along with the November 2019 meeting minutes.

Brown: In the section on Council membership, the four divisions of CAS should be stated in Governance Document.

Wells: The divisions are stated in the College of Arts and Sciences Constitution. They are: Fine Arts and Communication; Humanities; Social Sciences; and Natural Sciences.

Brown: Council voted in 2019 to eliminate student positions on the Council. It has been suggested we reconsider that.

Dillon: Where did this suggestion come from?

Brown: SVCASA and deans.

McKelvey: They [students] were appointed but failed to show up. They couldn't attend with any regularity because of their schedules.

Ellis: Reach out to Student Government to see if they want to be represented on the Council, and ask for their recommendations.

Brown: Will ask Student Government if they want to be represented on GSC and will come back to Council with their answer. Any other concerns/questions/comments?

Choi: We now have 3 divisions in CBT. Should membership policy also require an appointee from each division rather than just from different departments to make sure each is represented?

Unruh: COE also has 3 divisions, so it might be worth looking into that in COE as well.

Brown: No decisions need to be made today; people need to be thinking about it and the Governance Document needs to be in place by the time of the APR visit.

Brown: Look at the voting policy. There is a concern that any college could have veto power.

Blauwkamp: It was written this way to make sure that we're working together and each college is being heard and their viewpoints are being taken into account. Council spent a lot of time debating this in October 2019 and decided that allowing the unified appointees from one college to block something was fairer than allowing a majority to force a change over the unified objections of appointees from an entire college. Not inclined to revisit that decision.

Unruh: So if all three members from COE didn't want to vote for something it wouldn't pass.

Brown: Or if one member was not present, the other members would have the vote for the college.

Unruh: Can we vote in absentia?

Ellis: That would create problems because the absent member wouldn't know what motions are being voted on and would miss discussion.

Brown: The governance document states that only those members present can vote.

There was no motion to consider changes to the voting policy (which requires a majority vote for a motion to pass, but the majority must include at least one member from CBT, at least one member from COE, and at least two members from different divisions in CAS).

#### **IV. Other Business**

Brown: There is a need for online First Year Seminar (LOPER 1). We have 33 online-only students this catalog year that need a FYS next semester online. Could ask one of the existing FYS to offer it online in the spring. Could apply for course development funding from UNK Online. One faculty member contacted Greg to try offering their FYS online.

Neal: There are at least three fully online bachelor's degrees and possibly more. Mark Ellis could provide an exact number.

Ellis: This year there are 33 online-only students needing FYS online, but in subsequent years we could have many more.

Brown: Concern about on-campus students taking online sections; they might fill too quickly and crowd out the fully online students and part of the purpose of LOPER 1 is to connect students to campus resources. We can designate the sections are only for students who are in fully online programs.

Brown: Should there be one large online section (exceed the 25 student suggested limit), or do we need to arrange for two smaller online sections? Is there perhaps an online -188 that could be used?

Unruh: One of KSS department's FYS (Blue Zones) was thinking of switching to online over the summer, might be willing to switch to spring.

Wells: HIST has a -188 online in the spring.

Neal: We need to have at least one -126 seminar online in the spring. Online portals would provide those students with additional enrollment options.

Brown: We have discussions about FYS with the fall semester -126 instructors next week on October 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.

Dillon requests -126 be added to the November agenda to discuss what is learned at discussions, and to talk about other problems with the program design that Council members have been hearing from chairs and deans.

McKelvey: At chairs meeting, it was discussed that nontraditional students were concerned about the need to take a freshman-level course.

Ellis: He has heard too that more mature students (adult learners) feel insulted by having to register for this class.

Brown: Krista Forrest suggested perhaps a waiver for non-traditional students, but that may not be a good idea. We want students to have interdisciplinary course.

Wells: Noticed through advising that the rule for waiver is 18 hours of courses in our current GS program. Encountered students in degree completion programs with 20-30 hours of college credit but very few GS courses. We're making them go back to take -126. Could we look at that?

Brown: Not sure why 18 hours of GS was chosen.

Wells: Don't remember the discussion being 18 hours of general studies, just 18 hours. Maybe changing the rule to 18 hours of any credits would help returning students avoid a class they feel isn't for them.

Neal: Two different types of students we're talking about—transfer students and adult learners, who did not go to college after high school so they are first time freshman students.

Unruh: Can we create an adult learner -126?

Neal: What is it that adult learners feel they do not need from the course? Actual assignments are not dumbed down, so can we get more guidance from online coordinators or Krista Forrest on why they feel workforce experience satisfies these experiences?

Unruh: I get questions from veterans as well.

Neal: Regarding students who do transfer in large amounts of numbers without a lot of GS, maybe we need to re-examine that requirement that the 18 hours needs to be in GS.

Wells: Would like to find a way to work with students who transfer large amount of hours in.

Neal: As long as we're just talking about LOPER 1. Students need to complete LOPERS 2-10 and perhaps 11 as required.

Wells: Agreed.

Brown: Some students transfer in a lot of dual credit hours.

Neal: Those students are not transfer students, so they still need to take the full GS including -126.

Reeves: LOPER 1 should not be waived for anyone. It is an information literacy course. We do not have another information literacy course. This is the one course that's been designed for that. Juniors and seniors often don't know anything about information literacy. Feel very strongly about this, that information literacy should be a large part of what is being taught in this course (focus of LOPER 1 learning objectives). Non-traditional students do not necessarily come to college knowing that. Also, the Library faculty are not sure what we need to do with -126 students. Faculty are telling students to make appointments with a librarian, but without an agenda or assignment. Library faculty need help from -126 instructors – guidance on what they can do to help.

Brown: Are students not going to the library's workshops?

Reeves: Library staff want to get workshops set up for things like citation help, etc. They are short-staffed.

Brown: Hopefully we will get that feedback in discussion sessions next week. Hope to set up session with students at the end of the semester as well.

Dillon: To clarify, Council members have been receiving a lot of comments (complaints) about logistics of -126 courses, not about the content or multidisciplinary structure, but concerns about students not understanding registration issues, dropping a section, and the grading issue of needing to pass all three sections.

Brown: Lisa Neal gave detailed information about grading to chairs.

Umland: Has also heard that there is contention about grading. For example, if a student fails one of the three courses, they have to retake entire 3 courses again. Faculty and students balking at that.

Brown: Is this a problem that's happening or are we worrying about something that's not happening?

Neal: Problems come from uncertainty about grading when a student is borderline and they have a final project outstanding. Will not know if they failed one of the three courses until the end of the semester.

Umland: Need to examine the issue, in principle. It is unethical for a student to be placed in that situation whether it happens to one student or many.

Unruh: Look at it after the semester so we know how often this happens.

Neal: The proposal to extend the drop date to 12 weeks will go before Academic Affairs at their October meeting.

Wells: Is it possible to have a report on drop rate for -126 versus other -100 level GS courses at the November meeting?

Neal: Yes

McKelvey: Grading was discussed extensively during design of class.

Unruh: Have a -126 that's not sequential. Doesn't matter which section they start with. Students could fail a different five weeks.

Dillon: We are seeing problems now that we're offering the courses that may require tweaks to the course design to fix them.

Neal: Example was from a faculty member who knew a student was failing their section but won't grade the final project at the end of that 5 week course so student won't know until the end of the semester – too late to withdraw.

Brown: It's good that we're hearing feedback. We want this to be a good experience for students, and for this to make them better students. Problems will be on our radar so we can examine them.

Neal: One other item to note. CYBR 101 (LOPER 4) is before Academic Affairs this month. They are reducing the course from 4 hours to 3, with no reduction in content.

Meeting adjourned at 5:02.