

Faculty Meeting September 12, 2014: Summary of Buzz's Groups Discussions

Group 1: Making Connections:

- a) *How can we encourage horizontal connections between GE and Department majors?*

Students are generally advised to front load GEs at the start of their four years; this doesn't make for synthesis. Faculty need to explicitly make connections apparent to their students and teach students how to do so themselves. We could use what we've got without having to make that many new structures as long as we foster the ability to connect knowledge. We need more 200-300-400 level GEs, too.

- b) *How can we encourage lateral connections across GE courses in different categories?*

How to make these connections depends on the disciplinary context; hopefully students make choices with connections in mind. How do we help students do this? Do some Departments/Units encourage these connections?

- c) *How do we make Liberal Learning run across and through a 4 year education?*

Related to taking GEs over a four-year period and having GEs options across developmental levels without pre-reqs. We could create a set of questions for students and faculty that would encourage reflection and synthesis. College could examine what a sample of students have actually taken and what possible connections could have been forged across content. "Contemplative learning."

- d) *How can courses be "related" in terms of beginning, intermediate and advanced?*

Can we use curricular mapping here?

- e) *Bin List (Things we don't know about, can't make sense of, or need to figure out later.)*

Can FYS be derived from the 100-200 level courses we already offer?
Change sequence in which students register: let freshmen register first to get the courses they need and have pre-reqs for so they can plan their studies more carefully.

Group 2: Creating options/flexibility for students:

- a) *What would a basket of Liberal Arts courses look like?*

First, we should consider whether a basket is a good idea or not.

Then, 7 out of 10 is a good idea. We should stick to the basic the SUNY wide requirements

b) *How might we create "interdisciplinary" courses that might fulfill more than one category.*

Need faculty incentives and support to compensate for additional workload.

c) *How would we assess those "two-fers".*

Assess on alternate years not back to back.

d) *What are the advantages of allowing students to choose among broad categories? What are the disadvantages?*

Advantages: Students will have an easier time completing requirements and taking courses that meet their interest.

Disadvantages: Students might never be exposed to some areas that they might otherwise.

e) *BinList (Things we don't know about, can't make sense of, or need to figure out later).*

The first year seminar.

Group 3: Balancing depth & breath:

a) *What should the total number of required credits be? (30 BOT, 39 – 42 New Paltz)*

Flexible number from 30-36 depending on major or double major.

Worried about number getting too high to accommodate majors and minors.

b) *What are the advantages of requiring a semester of additional credits compared to other schools?*

High standard for our students.

Focus on double dipping major/GE or multiple GE categories as always to keep the total number of GE credits down.

c) *What are the disadvantages for different majors, incoming freshmen and transfer students?*

Transfer ability diminishes. Additional requirements makes meeting seamless transfer obligations harder.

d) *BinList (Things we don't know about, can't make sense of, or need to figure out later.)*

Make sure that there is faculty awareness of how increased credits in GE impacts our transfer students and comparative nature of admissions.

Group 4: Speaking & Writing:

a) *What role should writing and speaking play in the curriculum?*

There is no answer for this question.

b) *What are the advantages of one, 4-credit course and a first year seminar versus two 3 credit courses? What are disadvantages?*

Loss of mentoring relationship over a year in two courses versus one four credits class. Writing as a form is different from writing about a content area. So students might lose specific instruction in techniques and mechanics and rhetoric.

c) *What would the consequences of any changes be on the English Department? On transfer students? On graduating seniors as they enter the employment market?*

Transfer students may be vulnerable in terms of writing skills if they missed the course and FYS. Hence importance of overseeing the discipline specific WI courses to ensure consistent instruction.

d) *How do we encourage the development of students' writing and speaking skills throughout their four years?*

Professional development and team teaching will ensure that major specific WI courses are rigorous in writing instruction. Perhaps a set of improved criteria generated by the English Department, but agreed by all disciplines.

e) *BinList (Things we don't know about, can't make sense of, or need to figure out later.)*

Financial burden of FYS seminar. The one, four credit class needs to be genuinely reinforced by the FYS. That need is why the FYS has to be required as a part of the curriculum with small class sizes also guaranteed.

Some General Comments.

- While the total number of GE requirements are decreasing across SUNY, at New Paltz, the number is increasing.
- Faculty concentrate more on teaching within their majors than on teaching in GE.
- We need flexible GE based on majors that are approved. One size does not fit all.
- A number of comments were concerned with meeting the needs of seamless transferring.
- Cross referencing GE with majors and minors or double dipping in GE categories could keep the total numbers at a reasonable level if all departments thought about correlating GE in tandem with their major or minor plans.

Respectfully Submitted,
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