

**WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY SENATE  
WMU ESSENTIAL STUDIES EXECUTIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Minutes of 30 October 2018**

**Members Present:** Leigh Ford, Yvonne Ford, Decker Hains, Kevin Knutson, Staci Perryman-Clark, Elke Schoffers, Sarah Summy, Delores Walcott

**Members Absent:** Ed Martini

**Ex Officio Member Present:** Suzan Ayers

**Advisory Members Present:** Carrie Cumming, Mervyn Elliott, Marilyn Duke, Matt Provenzale, Dave Reinhold

**Advisory Members Absent:** Jeanne Baron

Committee Chair Sarah Summy called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

**PROCEDURAL ITEMS**

*Acceptance of the Agenda*

A motion was made by Perryman-Clark, seconded by Y. Ford, to accept the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

*Approval of the 16 October 2018 minutes*

A motion was made by Y. Ford, seconded by Knutson, to approve the 16 October minutes as provided. Motion carried.

*Chair's Remarks*

Summy's comments included:

- The fourth Navigating WMU Essential Studies workshop was held on 26 October with 10 faculty members in attendance. Although there were fewer attendees at the most recent workshop, the questions were more focused. In total, 110 faculty have attended workshops. Summy thanked the committee members who have been able to assist at the workshops.
- Summy and Reinhold attended the New Faculty Orientation to discuss the WMU Essential Studies program.
- Summy and Elliott will be meeting with Family and Consumer Sciences.

*WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee Chair's Remarks*

Hains comments included:

- Input has been solicited from committee members regarding the course categories in which they have expertise. Data has been supplied from Elliott regarding the number of courses submitted in each course category. This information will be used to define course category subcommittees to review proposals. Where subcommittees may be light on expertise, faculty members with expertise in that area will be invited to participate.
- Summy, Hains, Elliott, and Reinhold have been creating a system to track proposals and status. Each submission consists of the electronic form, the syllabus, and the assessment plan. The three documents will be combined into a single PDF file. It is anticipated that this will expedite the review process by allowing reviewers to scroll through a single document, instead of searching through three individual documents.

*WMU Essential Studies Director's Remarks*

Elliott's comments included:

- A meeting was held with Tony Proudfoot, Vice President for Marketing and Strategic Communication. Proudfoot requested that the Marketing and Strategic Communications team be briefed on the identification, development, and intent of WMU Essential Studies, so that it can identify marketing points. That meeting is scheduled on 2 November at 2 p.m. in Walwood Hall; committee members are welcome to attend.
- As of this date, 160 courses have been submitted electronically and are in the process of college level review. Of these proposals, 10% are for new courses and 30% have identified the Diversity and Inclusion Student Learning Outcome, but only 8% have identified the Planetary Sustainability Student Learning Outcome, which may present a problem. Cumming expressed concern regarding verification that those two criteria have been met for graduation, since those areas are not separate and uniquely tracked course categories. Courses that meet Diversity and Sustainability requirements will need to be double counted, once for the specific course category in which the class falls, and once for Diversity or Sustainability.
- Elliott, Summy, and Reinhold have also planned a meeting with the Haenicke Institute for Global Education to develop guidelines for study abroad courses and how they will fit in the curriculum. The meeting is scheduled on 28 November at 11 a.m. in Ellsworth Hall; committee members are welcome to attend.
- Elliott will be meeting with members of the philosophy department to address their questions.
- The Science and Technology rubric as published in the online WMU Essential Studies tutorial does not indicate that submitters should choose two Student Learning Outcomes for evaluation. Faculty Senate staff are working to correct it.

**DISCUSSION/INFORMATION ITEMS**

*Feedback and Questions*

Topics included:

- Reinhold stated that he has been asked why the section on providing rationale for courses that will not meet every year exists, particularly since it was already determined that the only exemption from this standard will be for study abroad courses.
  - It was agreed that although there is only one exemption at this time, there might be rationale or situations submitted that will identify additional reasons for the exemption. Note that insufficient enrollment when offered every year, is not allowed (see 16 October 2018 minutes).
- Reinhold pointed out that some submitters are embedding the assessment plan in the syllabus and attaching the single document to the proposal. It was asked if such submissions should be rejected at the college level for that reason.
  - While this may be acceptable at the department or college level (and worthwhile to include in the syllabus for students enrolled in the course), the assessment plan needs to be submitted as a second attachment to the electronic proposal so that members of

- the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee will be able to locate it quickly.
- The College of Arts and Sciences has raised questions regarding additional WMU Essential Studies requirements for some of its programs. An example is that CAS has a foreign language requirement for graduation that other colleges do not. The concern is that departments or majors will start identifying requirements independent of other departments, which potentially will drive up credit hours required for graduation, and create a scheduling/advising challenge. Knutson and L. Ford remarked that they do not anticipate that this will happen.
  - Reinhold pointed out that the WMU Essential Studies program is a minimum requirement, and colleges and/or departments may add to it, and in doing so will bear the responsibility for justifying such decisions.
- Schoffers expressed that students' perception is that general education courses should be easy; many students take them in order to boost their GPAs. Perryman-Clark agreed that this is the case, and in fact, it works for many students.
  - Discussion was held regarding the progressive nature of the model, and how it is scaffolded. The current General Education program is not. WMU Essential Studies is a curriculum, not just a group of courses.
  - Schoffers noted that this needs to be emphasized to students. Y. Ford suggested that this topic be included in the meeting with Marketing and Strategic Communications.
- L. Ford asked to revisit the cap on Level-III courses. MOA:17-05 includes a parenthetical statement that Level-III course enrollment is 25 – 30 students. For example, the communication school offers a course in persuasive writing that has an enrollment cap of 75 students per semester. This course was submitted but was rejected because the enrollment exceeded 30. However, the course meets the criteria outlined for Level-III courses. If the faculty member is willing to evaluate the submissions for the specified enrollment, why wouldn't the higher enrollment be allowed. The small enrollment caps might also create a challenge in the number of sections for all students to be able to take Level-III courses.
  - Summy reviewed the 16 October minutes when this question was originally discussed. It stated, "submitters must provide clear and reasonable rationale for the course to have an enrollment greater than 30; such rationale include the ability of the faculty to adequately evaluate the student learner outcomes." However, this may not be clear to college curriculum chairs and committees. Elliot was asked to follow-up with the college curriculum committees.
  - Reinhold also noted that there could be bottlenecks in student progression due to caps on courses. However, the committee members agree that the focus needs to be on what is in the best interest of students.
- Discussion was held regarding writing courses offered by departments, and if departments should be allowed to restrict seats to only those students in the program or major. There is some long-standing history of this being done, undone, and now being re-done.
  - The committee determined that if a course is going to have reserved seats for students in specific majors or programs, then it does not meet the criteria to be a part of the WMU Essential Studies program.
  - Several committee members commented that resources are a dean level conversation. Summy stated that Provost Jennifer Bott has communicated this to deans.
- Reinhold asked for clarification as to why departments need a discipline specific writing course. He questioned what ENG-1050 is not delivering to students that departments find necessary.
  - Perryman-Clark stressed that the outcomes for ENG-1050 are focused on the mechanics of writing, and not on disciplinary formats, customs, or language.
  - Y. Ford pointed out that ENG-1050 is a prerequisite for admission to the nursing program, and there seems to be a lot of variation in achievement of course outcomes. The nursing faculty have found students write with a disagreement of subject, object, and/or verb; one-sentence paragraphs; run-on sentences and paragraphs; and incorrect grammar and spelling.

#### **OTHER**

Summy stated that Elliott will be distributing the draft of the FAQs for comments, additions, and/or suggested revisions. It was emphasized that these need to be posted sooner rather than later, so committee members were asked to send feedback to Elliott as soon as possible.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee will meet next on 13 November 2018 from 1 to 2:30 p.m., in the Bernhard Center, room 205. Chair Sarah Summy adjourned the meeting at 2:23 p.m.

Submitted by: Yvonne Ford, Secretary