

**WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE
WMU ESSENTIAL STUDIES EXECUTIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of 19 February 2019**

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

Member Absent: Ed Martini

Ex Officio Member Present: Marilyn Kritzman (substitute for Suzan Ayers)

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

Advisory Members Absent: Jeanne Baron, Dave Reinhold

Guest: Richard Gershon, Faculty Senate President

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

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

Acceptance of the Agenda

Comments from Gershon were added as an informational item.

A motion was made by Y. Ford, seconded by Walcott, to accept the agenda as amended. Motion carried.

Approval of the Minutes – 5 February 2019

A motion was made by Perryman-Clark, seconded by L. Ford, to approve the minutes of 5 February as provided. Motion carried.

Chair's Remarks – Summy

Summy's comments included:

- American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Conference: offered the opportunity to network with other colleges and universities that are currently working on general education and assessment issues.
 - University of Central Florida (UCF) presented a session on "refreshing" its general education program. UCF has 66,000 undergraduate students, and only 55 general education courses. The state of Florida has specific requirements for general education statewide, and at UCF, general education courses are outside the major(s).
 - There was a sense of surprise at the number of courses WMU is evaluating for inclusion in WMU Essential Studies; however, WMU has a lower number of student outcomes in comparison.
 - The conference offered conversation about rubrics and evaluation.
 - In other schools, the office of assessment receives student work and scores it by assessors generally outside the discipline.
 - Assessment outcomes are created by the course instructors. There is higher interrater reliability between assessors using this method.
 - Other conference attendees reported about sampling, rather than evaluating every student, which has been proposed by some WMU departments. The recommendations received were to build one system; don't sample some courses and evaluate each student in others. If the chosen system is sampling, then the sample must be

normed. It was concluded that at this point in time WMU will assess each student in each course, but that model could be changed after a review of initial data was conducted.

- It was noted that other schools are no longer printing marketing materials because it is believed students don't look at printed materials, but rather use electronic media.

WMU Essential Studies

Course Review and Approval Committee Chair's Remarks – Hains

Hains' comments included:

- The 15 February retreat yielded good progress and things are on track for the two additional retreats. 87 course were reviewed, for a total of 153 courses, which is half of the courses submitted by the 31 December 2018 deadline.
- Course reviews are anticipated to continue into summer I.
- There is confusion about where to find review notes; they can be found in shared OneDrive and will eventually be posted to the Faculty Senate website once all the committee minutes are completed and approved.
- It was clarified that courses can still be submitted; however, they will be reviewed in the order that they are received, which may not be as part of the review this spring.
- The committee will seek faculty who are teaching already existing courses to pilot the evaluation process in D2L during the fall.
- Questions have come from faculty whose courses were denied and they are unsure how to proceed. It was suggested that reinforcement of the process would be helpful.
- It was noted that the timeline would be adjusted to recognize that course reviews from the 5 April retreat will not be addressed before the end of the spring semester.
- It was emphasized that each of the rubrics was developed by faculty; there were opportunities in fall 2017 to participate in that process. There will be a review/revise of the rubrics, but not before the fall 2020 launch.

WMU Essential Studies Director's Remarks – Elliott

Elliott's comments included:

- Updates were provided regarding the English Department recent appointment of Brian Gogan as Director of First Year Writing.
- There had been a request from a faculty member following the denial of ENG1050 to have the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee reconsider. The English department has proposed sampling students for assessment of the WMU Essential Studies Student Learning Outcomes, rather than evaluating every student to evaluate their competency. The basis for this recommendation is that the MOAs outlining the WMU Essential Studies program don't specifically state that every student must be assessed. There are 110 sections, each with 21 students. Discussion was held and this committee concluded it does not support sampling to evaluate student learning outcomes for the following reasons:
 - Sampling would cause the loss of significant data set which would have the potential to inform WMU about student learning.

- There are concerns that the model does not support sampling in some categories and evaluation of every student in others.
- It was noted that when the model was being created, it was clearly stated that every student must be assessed.
- The proposed sampling would create more work than assessing each student.
- There is not a mechanism to compel faculty to read other students' work, which would be necessary in order to adequately assess the sample.
- Based on anecdotal evidence at the AAC&U conference, sampling is not the best practice as conducted at other universities.

Remarks from Faculty Senate President Gershon

Gershon shared that he had received feedback from members of the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee regarding a faculty member from the English department recent presentation at the committee retreat. Gershon pointed out that he applauded Hains' decision to give the faculty member an opportunity to present the department's position, but those who contacted Gershon expressed concern. Gershon pondered if perhaps the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee is being too critical of the course submissions. Summy noted the items flagged for revision by the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee were minimal but necessary to fix before the curriculum goes live. Discussion was held regarding communication needs and the appropriate means of following up to objections. Kritzman asserted that the faculty member had been informed both verbally and in writing of the process to follow to address his concerns. The process was defined as follows:

1. Contact the Director of WMU Essential Studies to express concern(s).
2. If the concern(s) cannot be resolved by the Director, it will be brought to the WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee.

DISCUSSION / INFORMATION ITEMS

Feedback and Questions

L. Ford stated that there is a lack of clarity regarding how to respond to denied courses. Summy reiterated that when courses are denied, the team feedback form with comments is attached. Discussion was held.

Elliott noted concerns about the Communications Course Category and resources for oral communications. Currently there are 12 courses in the General Education curriculum, and 12 have been submitted for the WMU Essential Studies Curriculum. Should resources be redirected to address the potential demand for oral communication courses? Discussion was held regarding the possibility for combining oral and written communication into a single course category; neither the model nor the current resources support combining them. Elliott will follow up with Provost Jennifer Bott.

Knutson raised an issue to be addressed at the next meeting. He has experienced negative feedback from departments regarding denial of courses. He proposed discussion on communicating acceptance courses.

ADJOURNMENT

The WMU Essential Studies Executive Advisory Committee will meet next on 12 March 2019 from 1 to 2:30 p.m., in the Bernhard Center room 205. Chair Sarah Summy adjourned the meeting at 2:38 p.m.

Submitted by: Yvonne Ford, Secretary