Report to Mont Alto Faculty Senate – November 12, 2014

The Mont Alto Faculty Senate ad hoc committee on general education met on Monday, November 3, 2014 to discuss the proposed general education prototypes and to offer feedback to the university-wide general education task force.

Since many of the students at the Mont Alto campus complete 2-year associate’s degrees, we would like to know what the Task Force is considering regarding the general education credits for these programs. The Task Force should realize that many of the 2-year programs have stringent accreditation standards and have very few options for general education credits.

We believe that the goal of general education should be to provide students with a framework for understanding the world. More specifically, general education classes should help students see themselves and their majors in the broader context of human experience so that they are prepared not just for employment but also for citizenship. To that end, we need general education course offerings that provide a cohesive academic experience. The ad hoc committee concluded that a plan such as the Modern Literacies Prototype is most likely to achieve this goal.

Below we offer comments on each of the three prototypes, with the understanding that the final recommendation from the task force will incorporate aspects of one or more of these but will not be identical to any of them.

The Chosen Topics Prototype
Pros:
• Allows great connections between the courses.

Cons:
• May seem arbitrary to students, which is the main problem with the existing model.
• Some faculty may not wish to incorporate the chosen topic into their classes.
• May be particularly difficult for transfer students or adult students bringing in credits from other experiences.

• Additional Comments: We could offer a campus theme, such as healthy people/healthy planet. This theme could change every year or couple of years
• Because one of our campus goals is to bring in more adult students with some college experience, the issue of transfer students is especially concerning to us.

The Scaffolded Prototype
Pros:
• This is an ideal format from a pedagogical perspective,
• From an advising perspective, this is a la carte chaos. This model would make advising very difficult and complicated.
• It would be overwhelming for students to make choices.

Additional Comments:
• Why is GQ missing from the list of domains? Is this an oversight or is there a reason for it?

The Modern Literacies Prototype
Pros:
• Gives students a taste of all the academic disciplines and also builds basic academic skills.
• The integrative piece that allows for an interdisciplinary minor is very appealing.
• Relatively easy to understand; we can see what it is trying to accomplish.
• It seems more likely that we could offer a cohesive selection of courses to create a good experience for students with this model.
• Would allow faculty to communicate with each other to create a meaningful experience for students and help us more clearly communicate the value of this experience to the students.

Cons:
• Seems to require new courses, e.g. Financial Literacy. While we don’t object on principle to creating new courses, we would like more information how that would work and how the literacies are defined.

Additional Comments:
• Some comments on the Task Force web site recommend that financial literacy be part of GQ. We would like to note that GQ is not the same as financial literacy.
• Another point made on the web site is that health and technology literacy are also important, perhaps equally so. We agree with this.

The members of the ad hoc committee share the General Education Task Force’s vision for a comprehensive and interconnected general education curriculum. Of the three prototypes presented, we believe the Modern Literacies Prototype offers the plan that is most consistent with the objectives identified by the Task Force and the goals identified by our ad hoc committee. We are extremely interested in the education of all PSU students, and we look forward to continued communications regarding the general education curriculum.

THE MONT ALTO FACULTY SENATE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON GENERAL EDUCATION

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