

Minutes of the GE Special Faculty Meeting  
October 11, 2018

- Call to order at 11:32 a.m. by Provost Marci Sortor.
  - The Provost invited Dan Hofrenning, Chair of the Faculty Governance Committee to the podium. Professor Hofrenning then invited the Chair of the Board or Regents, Larry Stranghoener '76, to address the faculty.
    - Provost Sortor noted the importance of the meeting and the earlier meeting of the GE Taskforce in a plenary with the Board.
    - Dan Hofrenning followed this with a note mentioning the difficulties inherent in the process and the unique aspect of this meeting with the inclusion of the Board of Regents [BOR] members. He then laid out the background of the Chair of the BOR - Larry Stanghoener and invited him to the podium.
    - Larry Stanghoener also noted that this was a historic event. He stated that himself and the BOR “put the faculty on a pedestal”, and that they admire the work the faculty does with the students. He further noted that what the students learn is very important to the Board, even though they possibly don’t agree on all points regarding what exactly or how things should be taught. He was reminded that he learned the lesson of the need to listen to each other from his daughters, with whom he had had discussions about the general education curriculum as it now stands. He is confident that the process will end with a set of general education requirements that continue to support the mission of the college. He thanked the faculty for the invitation and looked forward to the dialogue.
  - The Provost then invited Professor Shelly Dickinson, Reporter for the Task Force, to the podium.
    - Professor Dickinson outlined the process after thanking the BOR for joining the faculty today. The plan is 1] straw poll related to a mission statement; 2] followed by discussion of the prompts; 3] will end up with a final poll. Notes the importance of the notetaker to collect and summarize the comments for submission at the end of today. She then read through the proposed GE mission statement draft as distributed to the faculty.
  - The faculty participated in an initial clicker straw poll about the proposed Mission Statement on general education, which was distributed to the faculty along with a rationale:

*Your St. Olaf [new general education \*name\*] explores inclusive academic approaches and ways of knowing that connect classroom work with experiential learning. This curriculum supports the examination of faith and community values, encourages habits of mind and body that sustain lifelong learning, and prepares you for globally engaged citizenship in a diverse and changing world.*

Rationale: The existence of a general education mission statement is one way for the St. Olaf core to be **owned and supported by the faculty**. A revised general education curriculum will promote stewardship of faculty potential for teaching and mentoring in their areas of interest and expertise. Just as the college mission statement articulates our values and identity as a liberal arts institution, the general education mission statement clearly states the aims of general education to our students and to the rest of the St. Olaf community, and enhances our ability to coherently implement and nurture the curriculum. This mission statement responds to the call from the 2017-18 GE Task Force Report for a “rededication to a college-wide, intentional effort to support students’ recognition of the meaning and value of their GE” (p.1) and reiterates that the responsibility for providing the general education curriculum is shared by all faculty members in departments and programs across the campus. The statement also addresses the observation that “too many students...regard it mainly as an obstacle to other activities they regard as more meaningful, such as study abroad, major courses, or career-related courses” (p. 6).

- The words “your [new general education \*name\*]” address students directly and signify that this statement is for them. These words relate to the principle that general education promotes **student agency**. A revised general education curriculum will inspire students to be more thoughtful about how they fulfill their requirements, and this, in turn, will deepen their capacity to articulate the purpose of general education and question their preferences, not just follow them.
- The words “academic approaches” and “ways of knowing” relate to the principle that general education supports **breadth** that complements depth in a major. Students develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions across a range of disciplines and interdisciplinary areas of the liberal arts. They should come to appreciate the distinctive contributions of academic disciplines, and how they interact to advance understanding of the world.
- The word “inclusive” relates to the principles that general education supports the **college mission** and is **inclusive, accessible, and supports equity**. These principles suggest that the general education curriculum welcomes all students, fosters belonging, and supports their learning without presuming a particular student profile.
- “Connecting classroom work with experiential learning” relates to the principle of **breadth** and reflects a range of pedagogies such as team-based learning, laboratory work, off-campus study, and creative work.
- “Habits of mind and body that sustain lifelong learning” and “prepares you for globally engaged citizenship in a diverse and changing world” relate to the principles that general education supports **breadth**, the **college mission**, **student agency**, and is **forward-looking**.

Clicker Straw Poll 1: Faculty participated in the poll, indicating their agreement (from 1 to 5) with the statement, "I am prepared to support the proposed Mission Statement for general education." Results of the poll were: 144

- 1 = Strongly agree 32%
- 2 = Agree 41%
- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 14%
- 4 = Disagree 8%
- 5 = Strongly disagree 6%

Discussion: Professor Dickinson invited faculty, who were seated at tables of 8, with one member of the Board of Regents at each table, to have a 30-minute discussion, responding to the prompt, "Discuss your thoughts about the proposed Mission Statement for general education:

- How might it help us to better explain the purposes of liberal arts education to our students and empower our students to make more of their St. Olaf education?
- How might it support our advising and inspire our advisees to embrace general education as an endeavor beyond checking boxes?
- What suggestions do you have for the Task Force regarding the content of the Mission Statement for general education?
- What suggestions do you have for the Task Force about the rationale that will accompany the Mission Statement for general education in the Curriculum Committee resolution?

Each table was asked to designate a note taker and turn in their notes at the end of the meeting. Faculty were also encouraged to write individual comments about the Mission Statement on sheets of paper provided at the tables. Kelsey Thompson (IR&E) will assist the GE Task Force by summarizing these written comments and the summary will be posted on the webpage of the GE Task Force.

Clicker Straw Poll 2: Faculty participated in a second poll, indicating their agreement (from 1 to 5) with the statement, "I am prepared to support the proposed Mission Statement for general education." Results of the poll were: 144

- 1 = Strongly agree 24%
- 2 = Agree 20%
- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 19%
- 4 = Disagree 22%
- 5 = Strongly disagree 15%

Shelly Dickinson invited Provost Sortor to the podium.

Adjourn: Provost Sortor adjourned the meeting at 12:29

Recording Secretary: Karil Kucera