ACN Meeting Minutes

December 13th, 2022

Welcome (Amanda Soika):

 Thank you for coming to today’s meeting during this busy time of the semester. Your work is appreciated. As a reminder, there will be an ACN Happy Hour next week on Tuesday December, 20th at Camp Bar in Shorewood at 4:30pm Everyone in the ACN is welcome. For today, please remember to fill in the sign in sheet, and please enjoy the coffee.

Advisor of the Year Committee:

 Maggie Flath began with an overview of the Advisor of the Year Award. She mentioned that the award is presented annually to recognize an advising or counseling professional at UWM that demonstrates excellence in serving students through advising, counseling, or coaching services. She noted that the winner of this award will receive both a plaque and $1500. Maggie noted that any UWM advising/counseling/ or coaching staff member whose responsibilities focus on these areas are eligible for the award (including those who serve current or prospective students). Maggie noted that the nominations will open on January 3rd, and that they can be submitted up through March 26th. She also noted that the nomination form will be sent out the ACN listserv. The announcement about the winner will be made at the May ACN meeting, and the winner will also be recognized at the UWM Fall Awards Ceremony.

Regarding the nomination requirements, Maggie mentioned that the nomination webform will be located at this website **Online Form (**[**https://uwm.edu/advisor-counselor-network/acn-awards/**](https://uwm.edu/advisor-counselor-network/acn-awards/)**)** beginning on January 3rd. Nominations will need to include the nominee’s name, title, School/College/Division, and email address. The nomination will need to include details about the nominee‘s most notable achievements during 2022. The total years spent in advising, coaching, and counselling roles will need to be included as well as the number of years spent in these roles here at UWM. At least two letters of recommendation will be required and up to four letters may be submitted. At least one of the letters needs to come from a student and one of the letters should be from the nominator. Note: A resume will no longer be required as part of the nomination. If you have questions about the award or the nomination requirements, you can contact Maggie Flath at mlflath@uwm.edu .

GER Reform Updates:

Dave Clark began by with the 2030 problem statement describing how over the years, UWM’ core curriculum has grown to include a wide variety of differing University, College, and Program requirements that are difficult to understand, deter student progress, and limit opportunities for academic collaboration. Dave noted several course principles for this project. He noted that the value of GERs should be developed in an intentional and coordinated way that students can easily understand. He also noted that plans for GERs include having them focus and structured around UW System learning outcomes (LO). He also noted that GERs should not be a barrier for students when it comes to switching majors, moving between our School/Colleges, or transferring to UWM from other institutions. He also mentioned that GER courses should be consistent between UWM’s 3 campus locations. In regards to GER reform, Dave emphasized that it is important that our campus recognize the investments that have already been made in our personnel and to utilize these personnel to teach future GER courses. Dave also noted that it is critical to address the financial impact that GER reform can have on academic units based on our central budgeting situation. He also highlighted the importance of having staff or a dedicated GER unit within Academic Affairs that will work with faculty governance and instructional units to manage the GER course options.

Dave provided an overview of the key problems with our current approach to GER management. For example, he noted that UWM offers thousands of courses and most of them cannot be easily or reasonably assessed. He also noted that the APCC has not been provided with guidance on how to evaluate whether courses should be included or excluded, and they do not have the authority that would be needed to remove courses from the GER array. He noted that the APCC lacks the resources to evaluate GER requests and current GER courses. He also mentioned that instructional staff need support to be able to create, evaluate, and revise general education course offerings.

Dave reported 3 recommendations from the Core Curriculum Action Team. The first recommendation would be to provide a simplified distribution of 18 credits across 6 “areas of inquiry” which would include Natural World, Society and Culture, Creativity and Aesthetic Innovation, Global Perspective and Responsibilities, Cultural Diversity, and Health and Well-Being. The second recommendation is to provide clarification on what constitutes a General Education course. Course content should fit within the Area of Inquiry, and the content should be designed to meet the learning outcomes that are set for that Area of Inquiry. Mechanisms for assessing courses should be built into a central depository such as Canvas. The course size should be based on pedagogical goals, and it should fit within the array of the Area of Inquiry. The 3rd recommendation focuses on making sure that support is provided for Faculty and Governance. This includes sharing recommended criteria, planning support, and policies with Faculty and Governance. Dave also noted that support needs to be provided for School/College advising units and shared governance on offering consistent General Education offerings across UWM as well as offering support for course development and any programs related to the General Education Program. Dave also mentioned the importance of providing resources and programming (possibly with support from CETL) that will support improvement of delivery modes, technologies, and pedagogies for General Education. Dave also noted that it will be important to develop and coordinate processes for continuously improving General Education through assessment and feedback and for reviewing how General Education fits with the UWM undergraduate experience.

Dave also mentioned that the Core Curriculum Action Team recommends adding a 1 unit University Experience course for new Freshmen and transfer students. He noted that there are already a number of programs that have this. Dave then offered time for questions and discussion. Topics discussed included:

How plans for structuring GER course around UW System Learning Outcomes could also include creating lists of transferrable skills that will be developed through courses to help demonstrate the value of GER courses for students. It was also noted that the transferable skills gains could be listed on a course’s syllabus.

Discussion on hopefully improving (expanding on) course descriptions in the course catalog. It was noted that because course catalog information used to be printed, many course descriptions have been very short to reduce printing costs. This is not likely much of an issue anymore. It was also noted that if students had more information about courses, they may be less likely to pick courses at random.

Discussion on concerns for programs that have major specific required courses with GER credit. Dave noted that this is important, and ongoing conversations are occurring related to this. Dave mentioned how this approach has helped a number of programs address issues related to time to graduation.

Discussion on English, Math, and language requirements and how they will need to be reviewed separately from the other GERs.

Discussion on incoming transfer student issues with GERs. A question was raised about if we adopt new more flexible Areas of Inquiry, could transfer students maybe receive GER credit for courses that often transfer in as “Art X” or other similar forms of credit. Dave talked about how Chris Head from the Registrar’s Office will be involved in some upcoming meetings that will be addressing how GER reform can impact transfer students. Dave noted that students who transfer in from two-year institutions are usually well covered for GERs due to the MOUs that are in place, but that students coming from four year institutions tend to have more issues with transfer credit and GERs.

Some additional discussion about the challenges with Math curriculum came up and how this can become even more complex for transfer students. There was also some discussion on whether there could be an assigned individual who can address when exceptions to Math curriculum requirements are made since this process differs across Schools/Colleges.

Dave also noted current/continuing students will be grandfathered in where they have the option to stay with the current GER Area of Inquiry structure. It was also noted that it will take a couple years before the new GER structure will be implemented. Dave also mentioned that by that point in time, we should have full access to Stellic which will help with degree planning as the new GER structure is put in place.

Campus Community Announcements:

Conner Sampson announced that College of Nursing Advisor Donna Wier will be retiring from UWM, and that a retirement party will be held in January. Watch for an email invitation coming soon.

New advising webpage coming soon: It was announced that a new advising webpage will be linked to the UWM homepage soon. It will be accessible through the “Academics” drop down option and through the “Advising” link. It will be designed so that students can find information about UWM advising more easily.