

Education SWATeam Meeting 2/8/21

Members in attendance: Mallory Mahen (Clerk), Gillen Wood (Chair), Jessica Nicholson (ISG), Ximing Cai (ISEE), Anna Mehl (Staff), Anna Riedl (Student), Cheelan Bo-Linn (Faculty), Creen Ahamd (ISG), Natalie Bosecker (Staff)

Members not in attendance: Jayce Carlson (Student), Blaise Torrence (Student), Eric Green (Staff), Sean Kennedy (Faculty)

Agenda:

1. Review the Sustainability General Education Requirement proposal from Illinois Student Government (ISG) members
 - a. Advise ISG on their upcoming presentation to the senate

Meeting:

1. Members of the ISG are preparing to present their resolution for a Sustainability General Education requirement to the educational policy committee and subsequently the campus senate
 - A letter of endorsement with signatures will be presented with the resolution
 - This resolution creates 3 credit hours of a sustainability course general education requirement, replacing 3 credit hours of a requirement in each college
 - Requirements to be replaced is up to the discretion of each individual college
 - This way, students' workload does not increase
 - Motivation behind the resolution is to prepare students to tackle sustainability problems, as these problems are growing in importance
 - The average student is not currently equipped with the knowledge required to face these problems
 - Additionally, many companies today are prioritizing sustainability, so it is becoming pertinent that students graduate with that in mind
 - The resolution references the ISEE's list of over 500 courses that relate to sustainability
 - Eric Green would have the most updated version of that list
 - He can be reached at ewgreen@illinois.edu
 - A survey conducted by the ISG showed that there is overwhelming student support for this resolution, feeling that it would be "very valuable" and have a "positive impact"
 - This survey also concluded that students are not *strongly* aware of the critical environmental state that we are in right now
 - Results of survey will be attached to resolution
 - Survey was a reasonably random sample of 464 students across campus
 - It is noted that when utilizing the data from this survey, ISG must look at the spread of participation and make sure that it is truly representative of the student body
 - ISG is advised to break down the demographics to college affiliation

- It will be stronger data if students from colleges that do not typically have a strong stake in sustainability, such as Gies College of Business or the College of Fine and Applied Arts
- 2. Members of the SWATeam share advice on how the ISG can strengthen their presentation to Educational Policy Committee or the Senate:
 - Kathy Martinson would have good insights as to what to expect from the educational policy committee
 - She can be reached at kmartens@illinois.edu
 - There is always a concern to not overload students
 - The resolution addresses this by being flexible per college in which requirement that the sustainability gen ed would replace
 - Many requirements are 6+ credit hour requirements, so ultimately nothing is being completely done away with
 - This is not a sacrifice to students, rather a balance
 - A very large strength to the resolution is that it is in alignment with the overall campus strategic plan
 - Sustainability is a part of the campus strategic plan, but the gen ed requirement also meets campus learning goals
 - Learning goals can be found here: <https://provost.illinois.edu/assessment/learning-outcomes-assessment/illinois-student-learning-outcomes/>
 - The resolution achieves iCAP objectives
 - ISG must demonstrate that it is in the best interest of the students, that it is valuable to the student experience
 - This resolution is a box that this campus can check to increase sustainability ratings and rankings
 - Colleges may have turf issues, as some colleges with not as many classes that will fit the requirement will see this as a sacrifice
 - The resolution will force curriculum committees in each department to specify which courses have a sustainability component
 - This is a positive process to undergo
 - New courses are continuously being developed and existing courses being revamped because sustainability issues are becoming more relevant
 - The resolution is creating agency for students
 - Sustainability education builds life-long skills for students to add to their portfolios
 - These courses will address relevant and future issues, preparing students to go into the world and use their Illinois education to solve problems in the world
 - Preparing students to solve problems that we do not even know that exist yet
 - Courses that will meet the sustainability gen ed requirement will have specific learning goals that go beyond just the content of the course including creative assessments and problem-based learning

- The evaluated skills developed during these courses are beneficial to every student
 - Examples of skills include higher critical thinking, perspective taking, and empathy
- These courses will be very experiential in nature
- Sustainability education is 21st-century education
 - This fits into the movement that is happening across campus in enhancing how students are learning
 - “Not your grand-dad’s U of I curriculum”
- One strength of the resolution is that there are already so many courses that exist to fill the requirement
 - It will also incentivize departments to create their own courses
- As a campus-wide requirement, the chancellor and provosts will have to sign on
- 3. Would a recommendation from the education SWATeam strengthen this proposal?
 - This would be a different route to get the chancellors support, but it may become confusing
 - Submitting the recommendation to the IWG does not create the urgency/bindingness
 - ISEE will support the resolution overwhelmingly
 - Once the phase of implementation is reached, recommendations through the IWG could help
 - Students on the Sustainability Council can make the resolution a discussion item for the IWG/sustainability council meeting in April