

Notes from Gen Ed Sustainability Working Group meeting
December 1, 2021

Present: Stephen Downie, Geoffrey Challen, Jim Miller, Bill Stewart with guests from the student committee Jessica Nicholson, Sammy Yoo, Meredith Moore and Eric Green

After introductions, Jessica walked through the proposal for the sustainability gen ed requirement. Some highlights:

- Proposal approved by ISG vote
- Sustainability as a gen ed requirement overwhelming favored in a student survey as long as it did not add more gen eds to their requirements. Survey conducted by the student committee.
- 3 credit hour course is proposed
- Inspiration for the proposal is tied to the iCAP goals and agenda
- Baseline of courses was drawn directly from iSEE course listings. Over 300 courses per year related to sustainability are offered on campus
- Student committee in collaboration with iSEE staff are currently developing a model to predict impact of this proposal on course capacity
- The proposal organizes “sustainability” as a gen-ed underneath the natural sciences and technology category for gen ed. Six credit hours of gen ed needed in this category, students could choose to fulfill them through a physical science, life science or sustainability gen ed courses.

After a 15 minutes presentation, questions and comments followed:

- The sustainability working group was appreciative of the efforts by the student group to develop this proposal, and impressed with the process they’ve taken to date.
- Embedding the sustainability gen ed requirement under the “natural sciences and technology” category was deemed as an effective remedy to some of the problems that otherwise could have come forward.
- Questions came forward about engaging the college deans and other administrators. There was recognition that passing a proposal that adds a new gen ed category would require a coalition of support from various parts of campus. The student group has already reached out to all college deans, of whom some have met with them and many did not respond. They received some useful advice from this outreach, including embedding the sustainability gen ed requirement within natural sciences and technology.
- Advice to student group: Courses amenable to gen ed certification are typically at the 100 or 200 level. Consider reviewing the current list and eliminating courses that are 400 level or higher.
- Advice to student group: Consider being explicit and more consistent with the definition of sustainability in the proposal. Each discipline on campus may have a different definition of sustainability, and this proposal should be broad enough to fit many of

them, yet distinct enough to set boundaries. Currently there is not a definition identified in the proposal, and the narrative at times constricts the meaning (focused on environment) and other times expands the meaning (includes social equity and socio-ecological relations). Provide a definition and be consistent with its application.

- Advice to student group: Consider developing three or four points that you would like students to learn from taking a sustainability gen ed course. Draft these take away points as general learning outcomes for the requirement. You've already got some outcomes drawn from the iCAP report which could be a starting point to further adapt for this requirement.
- Advice to student group: Work closely with LAS, ACES and ENGR to keep them informed and, if possible, secure their support. With the natural science positioning of this proposal, these three colleges would likely be the most affected by its implementation.
- Amended advice to student group: It would be helpful to provide criteria and/or examples of how to evaluate courses that meet the sustainability requirement. Each Gen Ed category has a set of requirements to demonstrate the fit with the given category. Sustainability will need to have such a description, and the proposal could provide some examples of substance of courses that would meet the requirement. Addressing this point would also help with questions about the definition and scope of sustainability.
- The timeline for the students was to polish-up the proposal over the next couple months, and bring to the faculty senate by the middle of spring semester. They also wanted to conduct a second student survey that would be like the first survey only with up-to-date details related to the proposal. The iSEE will be helping with the distribution of this second survey.

Students were encouraged to continue their progress. We told them of the role of the working group in keeping the larger gen ed board informed, that we may provide feedback to them after informing the gen ed board, and that we'd like to keep abreast of their progress.