

General Education Advisory Council Minutes
Discussions Regarding General Education Designations
January 26, 2021

Members participating: Deni Blum, Jovette Dew, Cristina Gonzalez, Michael Holmes, Kelva Hunger, Amy Martindale, Mindy McCann, Tammy Mix, Haley Murphy, Marianna Patrauchan, and Jeanette Mendez (chair)

This meeting is a follow-up meeting to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) discussions. This meeting was scheduled to talk about the diversity courses and possible changes to propose to Faculty Council. Minutes from the November 20th General Education Advisory Council (GEAC) meeting prompted discussions with the Associate Deans and it was noted that there would be little to no interest in adding more general education credits to degree plans.

Which brings to surface broader questions:

- What are we doing with the diversity designation?
- How can we better manage what this looks like?
- What results do we expect and how would this be accomplished?
- What is the review process?

The starting point is not only with the OKState Stand United group but in addition, there is also data collected from the Student Campus Climate Survey and the Employee/Faculty Campus Climate Survey and the majority of responses indicate that diversity courses are ineffective campus-wide. Only twenty percent felt that diversity courses were effective. Couple that with the next biggest item on both the surveys is that faculty, staff, and students do not feel comfortable with talking about diversity with others on campus or with their peers. Those are the starting points.

Other institutions are going in different directions focusing on diversity and equity (DE) or diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) courses. What do we see as a group?

We will not be taking this to Faculty Council this semester as we will use this semester to further discussions and possibly bring the discussions to Faculty Council in the Fall with some potential changes in order to think through the issues thoroughly and not just to overhaul the diversity requirements for the sake of doing so.

Dr. Mendez commented that she would like to open up the discussion to members. It was noted that sociology has many diversity courses and commented that many faculty are trained under so many different dynamics and may not be bringing in contemporary voices or diverse voices into the curriculum. There are many ways to shift the courses to better address diversity, equity and inclusion broadly as a University. As the University values this, faculty might gain a different perspective and reflect this in their lectures and there are efforts being made on the department level towards increasing awareness through the disciplinary areas.

Dr. Mendez went on to say that, a DEI task force has been created and is looking at the broad-based curriculum. Dr. Ormsbee is working with her team in populating some resources to encourage faculty to think about their courses and how faculty can incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion in the class materials.

Dr. Mendez has an example of a program from New Mexico that offers faculty stipends of \$1000 for redesign of a course with DEI limbs and it includes a list of strategies, in addition to the diversity content. This is a broader approach to the process by providing some ideas of how DEI could fit into many courses that are not normally perceived as such.

Dr. Mendez also questioned if the review process should be broader and ask if this should be determined on an individual course bases being that the same instructor does not always teach the course. Members noted that many courses are taught by graduate students. It was agreed that there should be training for teaching faculty to better guide them in teaching general education courses. Members endorsed the idea of training but wanted to point out that in certain circumstances, there may not be the opportunity for a faculty to receive training and those faculty who have the credentials to teach these

courses, should not be required to take the training. University Assessment and Testing is currently working on providing instruction and guidance on assessment of the diversity designation by providing rubrics as well as examples of assignments that meet the needs for assessment. Members commented that the rubrics should be constructed in such a way that is inclusive of more than one view of the issues. Training faculty and staff about diversity, inequity and inclusion is important and it was suggested to enhance teaching strategies by providing 10-20 ideas for DEI education or classes. Also suggested was offering general content diversity classes which include race and ethics issues and then those classes that cover inequities, as well as people with disabilities with a long term impact on society.

It was asked, could we ask people to explain how the courses meet the requirements for general education credit. Dr. Mendez agreed that would be good to have the faculty describe how the courses meet the expectations. It was noted not to criticize the faculty and their teaching methods but perhaps provide guidance for improving the course for general education. Another suggestion was to add rubrics to the general education website.

In 2016 a committee was formed to discuss diversity issues composed of members from the Oklahoma State University Committee for the Assessment of General Education and the Office of University Assessment and Testing. Discussions within the committee revealed that there is still the need for more awareness and discussion regarding diversity, equity and inclusion. Members noted that a person has to have years and years of educational training to become a faculty member and it doesn't make the best sense to require more training for general education. Instead perhaps have the selection of diversity courses smaller and taught by faculty that have the expertise in the subject through their discipline and educational experiences. It was also suggested to create a capstone course in every major that would incorporate DEI issues related to the field. Such courses could include diverse situations which have occurred or might be encountered. It was noted that disciplines in the analytical areas would find it difficult to incorporate DEI discussions or a related capstone course being that there is a lack of knowledge about the subject.

It was said that there is a need to engage in discussions with departments and work with them to create new courses, reshape existing courses as well as encourages faculty to offer diversity courses. It was noted that this will take many ideas and perspectives reflecting a common support for any initiative.

A smaller population of diversity courses could result in students enrolling in courses with more diversity focus towards their education and career. Members suggested identifying the diversity courses that are effective and identify those faculty that are knowledgeable about diversity.

It was asked if 2 or 3 questions in relation to those courses that offer general education could be incorporated in the student survey of instruction and it was noted that a few questions could be considered but this would have to be reviewed.

As a reminder, there is still a need for a voting faculty member for diversity representation on the General Education Advisory Council. It was noted that this is working its way through Faculty Council along with consideration for an international representative.

Members asked if there were any best practices at other university that we could use as models and Dr. Mendez noted that she did review other institutional websites and it was not apparent that there were any university processes leading the way on any new initiatives. Waiting to see of the DEI group can come up with some direction for this process.

Top Four Ideas to Share with Faculty Council

- Faculty incentives to redesign courses to conform to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
- Faculty training (provide resources and guidance)
- Reduce general education offerings to courses/disciplines which have the faculty expertise and background.
- Create DEI perspectives within existing curriculum