

Attachment C

Motion:

Resolved, that the Ad Hoc Committee on General Education proceed with developing specific versions of general education programs along the lines of Model I: Distributive and Model II: Distributive with themes. These will be submitted to further faculty discussion, to the Educational Policies Committee for analysis, and to a Provost appointed cost analysis committee, with the goal of presenting such a program or programs to the faculty assembly in March 2008 for formal action.

Background:

The Ad Hoc Committee on General Education has been working hard this year to build on the previous two years of an inclusive and deliberative process of looking at what is valued when it comes to our common project of general education. The Principles of General Education tell us that “The university sustains the Lutheran commitment to the life of the mind, to engagement and service in the world, and to nurturing the development of whole persons—in body, mind, and spirit.” They state that “We understand academic disciplines, as well as multi-disciplinary fields of inquiry, as ways of knowing. They do more than organize knowledge. They define the questions, methods, and modes of discourse by which knowledge is produced.” We also are committed to helping students develop “the ability to express oneself effectively and creatively, to think critically, to discern and formulate values, to interact with others, and to understand the world from various perspectives.” These Principles were examined in light of feedback from the 2005 Faculty Fall Conference, and faculty and student surveys to form the Guidelines for a General Education Program at PLU (plu.edu/~gened/).

This year the Committee took these guidelines seriously as we began looking at various approaches to general education. We sought to present approaches, along with evaluations of these approaches, as they might work here at PLU. We sought your responses through various forums and a survey, to get a sense of where the interests and passions of the faculty lie. We had about a third of the faculty respond to the survey and almost everyone gave us comments about their choices. So far we have coded for eight specific criteria, and we will continue to read and use these comments as we proceed with our work.

As part of the General Education Survey, respondents selected two models that they wished the campus community to “pursue” and two models that they wished the campus community to “not pursue”. We scored these responses as following: +1, pursue; 0, no response; -1, don’t pursue. By computing the average response score for each model, we can compare the degree of support for each of the models. The pattern of means (*M*’s) revealed that the most interest is in pursuing a distributive model (Model I, *M* = .76) and a model that is distributive but which includes themes as part of its organization (Model II, *M* = .82). Little interest was expressed in pursuing distributive by school and division (Model III, *M* = -.40), distributive by skills and abilities (Model IV, *M* = -.57), purely themed (Model V, *M* = -.60) or a Mixed model (Model VI, *M* = -.53). Reasons expressed for pursuing Model I included issues of cost, respect for disciplines and the liberal arts, and marketability. For Model II reasons to pursue included respect for disciplines and marketability. There were few responses that suggested not to pursue these two models, but of those few comments, reasons not to pursue Model I included marketability and assessment concerns and reasons not to pursue Model II included cost, staffing, assessment, respect for the liberal arts, and issue for transfers.

Attachment C

There were few comments associated with pursuing Models III and IV. Of these comments, reasons to pursue Model III included respect for disciplines and comments about specific courses and reasons to pursue Model IV included respect for disciplines, and assessment. The reasons for not pursuing Model III included cost, staffing, turf, and respect for the liberal arts. Reasons not to pursue Model IV included turf, lack of respect for liberal arts, and other curricular comments. Models V (thematic) and VI (mixed choice) received almost no comments and no push to pursue or not pursue—they were largely ignored.

The experts in the field tell us that while almost any model of general education can deliver an effective education, no model can be successful without general buy-in, commitment, and passion for the program. Given this, today we seek your permission to continue the process by developing several (number not determined in advance) specific programs along the lines of Models I and II for further discussion and cost analysis in the fall. We will then revise and possibly narrow the options (again no number determined in advance) we will bring to the faculty assembly in March or April of 2008.

General education reform will inevitably put to the test our loyalties and values. These may be disciplinary loyalties and values, political loyalties and values, pedagogical loyalties and values, and more. Our request to you is not to abandon your various loyalties and values, but to hold them in a way that allows for seeing and respecting other loyalties and values and working together to arrive at a general education program we can stand behind and deliver effectively, with enthusiasm and integrity.

We would like to remind everyone that this is still (and always) just another step in an ongoing process. Even if we vote to approve a specific program of general education next spring, that does not mean all things are decided and settled. Oversight, assessment, and faculty development for general education will be assigned to the portfolio of a person (or persons) in the Provost's office. We imagine that the tasks present for this person would include a thoroughgoing assessment of what we currently do and what we plan to do as we make whatever necessary transitions would be required by the program. No program or practice is perfect and we all can grow from continuous conscious attention to, and discussion of, our ongoing loyalties and values with regard to general education, our various disciplines, and to various pedagogies.

We continue to invite your input into the process. If you have any particular elements you want the committee to consider including in detailed programs, please communicate those to the Carol Bautista (bautisca@plu.edu) by May 31st. If you would like to submit detailed versions of programs along the lines of Model I and/or Model II, please get those in as soon as possible, but no later than September 15th. Proposals will come to the committee anonymously unless you desire otherwise. We also plan to hold forums in the fall to give all units a chance to briefly articulate their disciplinary goals for general education courses. More details on that opportunity will be coming soon.

We cannot say in advance what exactly may come with the programs that will continue to emerge, much less with that which might eventually be chosen. We thank you for your willingness to engage the process thus far and ask that you continue to engage the process as we proceed with openness, commitment, and flexibility. This is a task worthy of our most critical minds and generous spirit.