Minutes from the Council for International Education

1:00 PM, Monday, February 5, 2018

Horrabin Hall 60 & the Quad Cities Campus via videoconference

In attendance: Davison Bideshi (chair), Pedro Bidegaray (ex officio), Jesse Caverly (student representative), Boh Young Lee, Fuyuan Liang, Michael Murray, Rafael Obregon, Tolulope Olupona (student representative), Mandeep Singh (via videoconference), and John Stierman

Guest: Dr. Keith Holz, WIU Art Department

I. Approval of Minutes from November & December 2017

a. Motion made (Obregon) & seconded (Murray & Singh). Minutes approved as written.

II. Announcements

 a. Dr. Bideshi brought a recent Western Courier article on the importance of foreign language study to the attention of the Council, and discussed the WIU Nacirema simulation activity.

III. Student Representatives to the CIE

 a. Dr. Bideshi introduced the two student representatives attending today’s meeting, and the members of the Council introduced themselves.

IV. Deans Invitation Update

 a. Dr. Bideshi announced that he had invited the College Deans to attend the next meeting of the Council, and said that four of the five deans had confirmed their plans to attend. Dr. Bideshi encouraged the Council members to prepare to query the deans on their ideas about international and cross-cultural education.

Dr. Bideshi said he had invited Dr. Keith Holz from the WIU Art Department to visit today’s CIE meeting, as Holz is the chair of the Council on General Education/General Education Review Committee (CGE/GERC). Dr. Bideshi hoped that Dr. Holz and the members of the Council would share their recent discussions concerning modifications of the definitions of Foreign Language/Global Issues courses. Dr. Singh said that discussion along these lines has been ongoing for nearly two decades, and that the CIE initiative to work on the definitions began back when Joseph Rallo was the Provost.

V. Keith Holz, Chair, GERC and CGE

a. Dr. Holz began by saying that the charge of the General Education Review Committee (GERC) is, among other things, to address Multicultural general education courses in relation to Foreign Language and Global Issues (FL/GI) courses. He noted that the GERC recognized all FL/GI and Multicultural courses as important for students’ personal growth, global awareness and responsibility.

Concerning the question of “double dipping” courses (i.e., the practice of taking a single course to satisfy two graduation requirements), Dr. Holz said that WIU Registrar Angela Lynn had intended this practice to be allowed in the case of FL/GI and Multicultural general education courses, and that the GERC also found this practice acceptable. Holz then acknowledged his understanding that the CIE was opposed to double dipping FL/GI and Multicultural general education courses, and that the Council felt it should not be allowed.

Dr. Holz said that the GERC had not yet fully sorted out the double dipping issue, and described two proposals the GERC had entertained for dealing with the problem: 1) a proposal to eliminate the FL/GI course requirement entirely, and 2) a proposal known as the “Essential Skills/Knowledge” proposal. In the latter proposal, the FL/GI course requirement would be retained, and courses satisfying the requirement would be agreed upon by the CIE and GERC/CGE. This proposal would require new criteria for evaluation of global issues courses.

At this point, Dr. Holz opened up the problem for discussion, and noted that the GERC was somewhat divided on the FL/GI versus Multicultural issue this year. Dr. Bideshi asked when the GERC/CGE met, and Dr. Holz answered every other Thursday at 3:30 PM in Stipes Hall 501.

b. Dr. Singh asked Dr. Holz if the administration had given any direction about the number of FL/GI and Multicultural courses that would be appropriate. Dr. Holz responded that officially, they had not, nor had they specified a hard deadline as to when a decision should be made, although he speculated that the end of this academic year would be desirable. Dr. Singh asked if there was any consensus as to which FL/GI courses should be retained. Dr. Holz said that for the moment, the current FL/GI courses seemed acceptable. Dr. Holz noted that the main concern of GERC was the reduction of the number of hours students would be required to take to a single three-semester-hour (3 SH) course. Dr. Bideshi stated that in going through various department requirements in the course catalog, he was unable to find any department that required more than one 3 SH FL/GI course. Dr. Bideshi said that if a vote to retain the FL/GI course requirement came up at Faculty Senate, the requirement might be eliminated. Dr. Obregon said that the State of Illinois did not require a FL/GI course, but Dr. Holz noted the State did mandate a Multicultural course somewhere in the general education curriculum.

c. Dr. Obregon said that, given the lack of direction from the administration, the Council could do whatever it wanted to as far as a FL/GL course requirement was concerned. He noted that recently the Council has been comparing Western’s curriculum with those of some of its

peer institutions, and he noted that the requirement that students take one 3 SH FL/GI or Multicultural course out of a total of 120 SH for a complete bachelors degree was so small as to be ineffectual.

d. Dr. Bidegaray suggested that instead of focusing on how many FL/GI courses a student should be required to take, the Council should shift its attention to defining what sort of global profile a student graduating from WIU should have. The Council should consider how students measure up in terms of sensitivity to global issues, or global or multicultural awareness. To focus on the number of FL/GI courses WIU students are required to take is effectively missing the point. Dr. Bidegaray reiterated Dr. Obregon’s point that requiring a single 3 SH course is not effective, and said if that is all we intend to require for our students, we may as well do away with the requirement. Dr. Holz agreed with this, but reminded the Council that for the CGE and others, any curricular requirements would need to be stated in terms of number of courses to be taken. Dr. Bidegaray said that if the University does not know what it wants its students to know, any discussion of curriculum is not an effective use of discussants’ time.

e. Dr. Singh asked if there are any objectives in the general education categories that have to do with global issues. Dr. Holz answered that the CGE committee has been through the different general education areas and revised each area’s objectives. Dr. Singh asked if the general education included any objectives concerning global issues, to which Dr. Holz answered yes. Dr. Singh asked if the Council could have these objectives and revise them if necessary, and give them back to GERC as they move forward. Mr. Stierman read briefly from objective no. 5 from the GERC Philosophy and Principles document. Dr. Singh said the suggestion that a single course will render a student globally aware is outrageous, noting that a 3 SH class constitutes 2.5% of an undergraduate students’ total course work in a 120 SH bachelors degree program. Dr. Bidegaray added that this problem provides the Council with a great opportunity for real, innovative global education.

f. Dr. Bideshi asked the student representatives for some of their thoughts. Ms. Olupona noted that there were a number of courses in the Economics program that dealt with international markets, poverty and other world economic issues. Mr. Caverly said that the 1 SH class he took before travelling abroad, while not really enough, still enabled him to get a lot out of his visit to Ireland. He also said he thought it would not be an unreasonable requirement for a student to take several FL/GI classes, and that two classes should be required in any case. Mr. Stierman asked if there was any sort of thinking in GERC about globalizing courses across the university generally. Dr. Holz said that in the Human Well Being area and in the natural sciences, globalization was not seen as a big issue. In his own department, Dr. Holz said that the multicultural aspects of art were sometimes broken out into separate courses, as in the case of Western Art versus Non-western Art. Mr. Murray added that in every course he taught, whether it was nominally a GI course or not, there was some time spent on global issues. He suggested that part of the current problem could be that faculty see no compelling reason to add global issues elements to their classes. Dr. Holz said that the GERC will be discussing these issues in future meetings.

VI. Definitions Work Group Report

 a. Noting the late hour, Dr. Bideshi briefly touched on his recent research concerning definitions, and charged the Council with developing a process-oriented definition of “culture” instead of a static, positivistic definition. Mr. Stierman added that the “salad bowl”

 interpretation of multicultural also needed to include different aspects of cultural life beside ethnicity, such as gender and sexual preference, and the like. Dr. Bideshi asked the definition work group to get their thoughts and ideas back to him by Thursday 15 February.

VII. Meeting adjourned at 2:06 PM.

Next meeting will take place on at 1:00 PM on Monday, March 5, 2018.

Minutes submitted by Michael Murray.