**FHSU General Education Committee**

**Minutes**

Meeting Called by

Bradley Will, Chair

Date: Monday October 9, 2017

Time: 3:30-4:30

Location: Rarick 205

Members

Douglas Drabkin (AHSS)

Marcella Marez (AHSS)

Jessica Heronemus (BE)

David Schmidt (BE)

Kevin Splichal (Ed)

Teresa Woods (Ed)

Trey Hill (HBS)

Glen McNeil (HBS)

William Weber (STM)

Tom Schafer (STM)

Robyn Hartman (Lib)

Helen Miles (Senate)

Adam Schibi (SGA)

Cheryl Duffy (Goss Engl)

Kenton Russell (FYE)

Tanya Smith (Grad Sch)

3:32 (1 minute) All members were present with the exception of Duffy, Russell, and Smith. McNeil served as proxy for Smith. Paul Lucas returned as an observer.

3:33 (54 minutes) Hill presented some early fruits of his work formulating measurable learning outcomes for the social science mode of inquiry. Most of his presentation concerned process – how he went about getting feedback and achieving a preliminary consensus. And his suggestion was that this is something we might try for the other modes of inquiry. Basically what he did was come up with a plausible set of three measurable learning outcomes and then take them around to a few chairs of departments that clearly do work in the social sciences. Hill, who currently serves as chair of psychology, began by taking his draft-outcomes to the chair of sociology. Hill asked, “Does this capture what you understand it is to do social science?” The two of them discussed and tinkered with the list. The modified set of outcomes was then taken to other departments, and in this way a consensus was developed. The list they came up with was the following:

*Students will be able to:*

1. *identify useful ways of explaining social phenomena in daily life,*
2. *evaluate the merits of social science research at the level of an informed citizen, and*
3. *compare and contrast human behavior in cultures around the world using social science concepts.*

The committee spent a little over a half hour thinking through these outcomes and the process that led to them. Drabkin asked if they discussed the implications of the third outcome, that every social science mode of inquiry course would necessarily have an international/cross-cultural component. Hill replied that this was the most controversial of the three, and that it may need to be modified or removed. Heronemus recommended that the economists in the college of business and entrepreneurship be consulted in formulating the social science outcomes. Woods recommended, similarly, that the social scientists in the college of education be consulted. Splichal suggested, if we choose to repeat this sort of thing for the other modes of inquiry (approaching colleagues in other departments with proposed measurable learning outcomes and try to build a consensus one conversation at a time), that we take a consistent approach, perhaps beginning by introducing ourselves as members of the general education committee, describing the idea of our project in general, explaining the need for measurable learning outcomes, proposing a few carefully selected outcomes as a starting point, and then moving on from there. Hill shared with the committee a one-page handout that he used to help achieve this sort of thing. Chair noted that we should be careful not to leave out any departments that really should be consulted in formulating these outcomes. Woods recommended casting the net widely and systematically, seeking input in a way similar to the committee’s survey of faculty in the fall of 2015; and if the input we get is divergent, we will just have to do our best to serve as arbiter. Regarding the first proposed outcome, Chair recommended that examples be given of ways of explaining social phenomena, e.g., operant conditioning, supply and demand, etc. Woods and Chair both recommended replacing “in daily life” with something like “in a given scenario.” Regarding the third outcome, Drabkin raised the issue again about “in cultures around the world.” Chair suggested making the language somewhat more vague, e.g., “in multiple cultures” or “in various cultures.” Regarding the second outcome, Chair suggested changing “evaluate the merits of social science research” to “evaluate the merits of specific examples of social science research.” All these suggestions were generally met with a quiet nodding of heads, but nothing was put to a vote. Marez asked, by way of clarification, what it is we are planning to do with these outcomes. The plan is to invite courses into the new general education program that promise to achieve the outcomes we identify, and then, to assess these courses (collect data) on their success or failure at achieving them. Schafer made the observation that the potentially revolutionary nature of what we are proposing may take some of our colleagues uncomfortably by surprise. A great many courses that have never been considered for general education credit will suddenly become eligible for consideration in the new program. And this will inevitably cause disruption. Chair acknowledged that this disruption could, for a time, be significant, but that it is too early to see what the effects are going to be of what we are proposing. It would seem that some courage is going to be needed in the coming months.

4:27 (7 minutes) Drabkin distributed a handout indicating an idea for getting started formulating measurable learning outcomes for all seven of the modes of inquiry. (The idea, roughly, is to have a core set of three outcomes for each mode. The first would demonstrate that the student understands something of ***the scope*** of the mode, what sorts of things it is concerned with. The second would demonstrate that the student has achieved some ***basic skill*** at thinking in the mode. And the third would demonstrate that the student appreciates something of ***the significance*** of the mode as an important way to organize experience in meaningful ways.) Discussing this may be on the agenda for next week.

4:34 Meeting ended. The next meeting will be Monday October 16 at 3:30 PM in Rarick 205. The topic for discussion will be either or both of the following: Jill Arensdorf’s thoughts on our university’s First Year Experience program, and Drabkin’s proposal for taking a patterned approach to formulating measurable learning outcomes for each of the seven modes of inquiry.

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**Submitted by D. Drabkin, Recording Secretary**

