

RAC for Communication Studies
February 20, 2020, 12:00 p.m to 3:00 p.m.
Georgia Highlands College, Cartersville Campus

Present: Ron Ellison, East Georgia College
Pam Bourland-Davis, Georgia Southern
Mark May, Clayton State University
Mark Borzi, Valdosta State University
Danna Gibson, Columbus State University
Steve Stuglin, Georgia Highlands College
Allen Dutch, Georgia Highlands College
Brian Kline, University of North Georgia
Joe Bellon, Georgia State University
Niaz Khan, Georgia Gwinnett College
Peter Boltz, Gordon State College
Christian Norman, Middle Georgia State University
Ed Panetta, University of Georgia
Barbara Tucker, Dalton State College
Keith Perry, Abraham Baldwin State College
Melanie Conrad, University of West Georgia
Meredith Ginn, Kennesaw State University (for Barbara Gainey)
David Bulla, Augusta University
Scott Dillard, Georgia College
Hayley Scheeser, South Georgia State College
Absent: Bob Dickey, Fort Valley State University; representative, Atlanta
Metropolitan State College; representative, Georgia Tech; representative, Georgia
Southwestern State University; representative, Albany State University;
representative, Savannah State University; representative, Coastal College of
Georgia

Mark May called the meeting to order shortly after noon.

Mark May raised the first item on agenda, approval of minutes of February 14, 2020 meeting. Ron Ellison motioned for approval of the minutes, Danna Gibson seconded. No discussion. Approved unanimously by voice vote.

Mark May had new members introduce themselves. We then introduced ourselves as our tables and spent ten minutes sharing institutional concerns and mutual issues. The general education core revisions are a mutual concern, with related concerns of differences in impact of dual enrollment, ability to find qualified communication instructors in the region, size of institution, geography, demographic trends, and SACS visits. Mark Borzi raised the question of whether Film was going to have its own RAC (Danna Gibson and Barbara Tucker reported on work of the Academic Advisory Committee for the Georgia Film Academy).

At this point we segued into an open discussion about the general education curriculum revisions, with Mark May leading by showing the documents that resulted from the meetings he attended as the RAC representative and Dr. Denley's presentation to the BOR. Key points:

1. There is confusion still about the whole process.
2. Key priorities for Dr. Denley are transferability/portability of courses from one institution to another and from one major to another (within constraints; some of this discussion is driven by complaints to the BOR of students having to repeat courses or hours upon transfer). Another key priority is room for exploration in the first year and the goals of the Momentum Year initiative. The Chancellor said transferability was the biggest issue for him. Consequently, a goal of the revision is some more choice for students.
3. Mark May provided his narrative of the series of meetings in the redesign committee. There were 60 people at first meeting. After brainstorming and culling processes regarding what should be regarded as "core" to a college education, the committee ended up with eight areas: arts and humanities, math, history/government, social sciences, science, data digital fluency/ written communication, and oral communication. Mark May stated that the committee ended on the theoretical level, but the "nuts and bolts" have not been addressed, even though this committee's work seems to be done. Across most of these eight disciplinary areas run the cross-cutting competencies of run critical thinking, global competencies, and information literacy. Dr. Denley wants critical thinking to be possible in each course.
4. Exploratory courses have not been fully explained; they seem to be free floating electives and may be somehow tied together.
5. In terms of "nuts and bolts" there is still a great deal to be considered. However, these are the concerns of this RAC group:
 - a. Who teaches the course that goes in the oral communication box?
 - b. How can we guarantee that there is an actual course in that box?
 - c. Can we have institutional flexibility for what goes in that box (1100, 1110, interpersonal, or something else?)
 - d. Will other disciplines want to co-opt that box (such as Spanish) or will instructors in other disciplines (namely English or social sciences), whose own courses are reduced, want to teach the courses?
 - e. Will the "oral communication box" be reduced to a competency that can be addressed by a professor in any discipline with a rubric?
 - f. Is the current definition of oral communication sufficient to guarantee our uniqueness, and how can we rephrase the definition so that it passes muster with the Board of Regents or System Office?
 - g. If transferability is a major concern, how much say will institutions have in their curricula?
 - h. The need for each RAC member to be able to articulate the nature of the oral communication course on their campus if these issues get pushed down to the campus level.

- i. The timeline of this revision is a major change. The group reached consensus that there is not enough time for this to take total effect in Fall 2021, and that 2022 is a more reasonable expectation. However, there was also a consensus that our concerns will not be listened to, but members were encouraged to ask faculty senates to petition for more time. As this time, the process is being moved along, and by April Dr. Denley expects to get input from institutions.
- j. Concerns about SACS having no requirement for oral communication that would help drive our argument were stated. Also, fortunately, SACS' requirement of 18 graduate hours plus master's degree is a protection against those outside the disciplines trying to take over the course instruction.
- k. NCA's documents were accessed for help in revising the definition provided to the General Education Implementation Committee.

After concerns were voiced, we worked in small groups at tables and then corporately to craft a more appropriate definition of oral communication. Lively discussion ensued about the components and wording of the definition and how to balance the public speaking/skills/theory/human communication aspects. This is the definition at the end of the meeting:

"Coursework in this area will enable students to develop, organize, design, and present content for a variety of audiences, occasions, and purposes. Students will be able to evaluate oral communication through the application of ethical frameworks, critical thinking, and informational literacy skills. Students will apply communication principles to improve relationships through communication with diverse others, adapt messages in real time, and adjust to the ever-changing relational landscape. "

Mark Borzi made a motion that a subcommittee of 3-4 meet over next two days (at GCA), and post for comments until Feb. 29 through the RAC's discussion board in GeorgiaView on Clayton State's server. The subcommittee would then review comments and revise as needed within two days and have a vote. Pamela Bourland-Davis seconded the motion. There was no further discussion or opposition to an approval vote. There was one abstention. Niaz Kahn moved that Mark Borzi chair this subcommittee. Pamela Bourland-Davis seconded that motion. Again, there was no opposition to the approval and one abstention. Niaz Kahn, Steve Stuglin, and Pamela Bourland-Davis volunteered to fill out the committee.

Mark May moved on to the next item on the agenda: the timeline concern. Due to the intense complexities of such a change across all campuses, August 2022 seems more feasible for implementation. A motion that we propose as a RAC that the implementation be delayed until at least August 2022. An amendment was made that the Board of Regents retain the 2021 deadline for completion and approval but that institutions have another year after that to fully implement the new curriculum. Ron Ellison seconded the motion, there was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

The fourth agenda item was put on hold. This had to do with information from Dr. Brown at the System Office about training for chairs of RACs.

The fifth agenda item was about the request to provide help to eCore about redesigning COMM 1100 (as well as other courses). We can email Mark May if we have an interest in helping with that project.

The sixth agenda item was whether D2L was a good way to continue our discussion and retain records. There was consensus that yes, it is, since there is an ongoing record there.

The seventh agenda item was the petition being discussed and circulated in some state communication organization, such as Florida, to get SACS to put the oral communication requirement back in their general education requirements. This is actually a GCA issue since (a) it affects the private colleges, not just BOR institutions, and (b) it would not be wise of the RAC to advocate anything to SACS; it's not our role.

The next item was election or volunteering of officers. First, the matter of sector representatives on the Executive Board was addressed. Joe Bellon from Georgia State will take over for R1s from Ed Panetta of UGA. The representatives from the state university and state college sectors is pending.

In terms of the three main officers: Vice Chair, Chair, and Past Chair, their attention is now focused on different matters than originally. A few years back there were issues over competing programs at competing schools and lots of new majors being proposed, so the workload and politics for chairs and members of the RACC were challenging; now the matters are more curricular.

As a result of the elections, Travice Obas will take over as Vice Chair if the Vice President of Academic Affairs at Georgia Highlands approves it; as of Feb. 26 the appointment was approved. Niaz Khan made the motion to nominate Travice pending the approval, Steve Stuglin seconded, and the motion was approved.

Danna Gibson will become Chair, and Mark May will become Past Chair. Barbara Tucker will continue as Secretary. Steve Stuglin pointed out that consolidated schools can only have one vote now, not two. This point suggests that Travice cannot become the Vice-Chair until she is officially appointed as a Voting RAC member by her provost. The discussion is ongoing; awaiting a resolution of having two members from the same consolidated university.

Niaz Khan offered appreciation to Barbara Tucker for drafting the letter to the Board and to Ed Panetta for his service on the RAC

Barbara Tucker brought up that next Spring's meeting, if we meet the day before GCA, is in Dalton, which is quite a distance for some RAC members to travel. That fact was recognized and discussed, but it was generally decided to wait on setting the date for next year's Spring meeting. The By-laws suggest it to be concurrent with GCA.

As the last item, Mark May raised the matter of the attendance at the RACC meeting of the liaison from the System Office. Mark Borzi stated that a few years ago the System decided to not send liaisons to the RACs to save money. Barbara Tucker stated that the presence of the representative might stifle discussion. It would generally be best to have a representative at the meeting. by phone, at least for the early part of the meeting. Pam Bourland-Davis suggested informing the System Office of our schedule so one of them can attend by phone for some of the meeting. This way there could be upward as well as downward communication.

Niaz Khan moved to adjourn. Brian Kline seconded, and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Barbara G. Tucker, Secretary