Minutes of Essential Studies Committee, October 16, 2015 at 1:00 pm

I. A meeting of the Essential Studies Committee was held on October 16, 2015 in Carnegie, Rm 102. Lori Robison presided.

In attendance at the meeting: Erich Jauch, Christina Fargo, Dave Yearwood, Ken Flanagan, Donovan Widmer, Karyn Plumm, Sukvarsh Jerath, Ryan Zerr, Jeff Carmichael, Tanis Walch, Darryl Joy

Absent: April Bradley, Beth Bjerke, Melissa Gjellstad, Karen Peterson, Joan Hawthorne, Krista Lynn Minnette, Jacob Geritz, Carla Spokely

II. There was a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting. The motion was voted upon and carried with one abstention.

III. Ryan Zerr gave a brief ES Director’s report, mentioning the meeting to be held on October 27 for ESC members and those teaching capstone courses. The meeting will be used to begin the planning process for Assessment Week 2016. Ryan also mentioned a scoring session to be held on December 14, 9-1, at which student work from the Q performance task administered in February 2015 will be scored. Finally, Ryan distributed a book, “General Education Maps and Markers” to all ESC members, asking them to read this for additional background on general education best practices.

IV. The remainder of the meeting was spent in discussion about the idea of a gen ed “core” for Essential Studies, which emerged at the last meeting as a way to modify the ES program to better match gen ed best practices and to help respond to issues identified in last year’s program review.

To facilitate this discussion, Lori distributed a handout with a summary of ideas from the last meeting. Lori asked if there were thoughts on revisions to this document, which will serve as a charge for upcoming work on this idea. This generated discussion that included mention of the NDUS requirements for gen ed programs: 36 credits, 9 in Communication; 9 in Math, Science, & Technology; 6 in Humanities & Fine Arts; and 6 in Social Sciences; with the remaining 6 coming at any place in these four breadth of knowledge areas. This information will provide some of the parameters for what is possible if a gen ed core is recommended by the committee. There was also discussion of how the creation of a core could lead naturally to a cohort of gen ed faculty – either in a very formal way, as part of a newly-created administrative home for the program (like a college), or as a more informal way to bring like-minded faculty together based on a common commitment to liberal education.

Discussion continued related to the idea of whether a core, if recommended, ought to be an optional or mandatory part of the program. The always difficult issue of how this might work for transfer students was raised as an important consideration as the discussion moves forward.

Lori ended the discussion by indicating that the process will proceed over the next few weeks within two subgroups: one focused on a consideration of the program’s goals, and the other on developing proposals for a gen ed core. She asked that ESC members email her to volunteer for one or the other of
these subgroups, neither, or both. Once the work of the two subgroups advances, Lori indicated she will determine when the next full ESC meeting will occur and notify the committee members accordingly.

The meeting adjourned at 1:50.