PALM BEACH STATE COLLEGE

PHYSICS, ASTRONOMY, EARTH SCIENCE, GEOLOGY CLUSTER MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, March 24, 2011
1:30 – 3:00 p.m.
Lake Worth Campus

ITEM 1. **What are discipline-specific ethics** that are currently being used in your courses?

Discussion: Ethics and integrity are essential in the scientific pursuit of knowledge.

Data/data source: (where appropriate)

Action: At the start of each semester, we present the College Policy on ethics and honesty in all of our classes. We also emphasize to our students the importance of ethics, integrity, and objectivity in all scientific endeavors, including data collection and analysis.

ITEM 2. **Information literacy** is the ability to find, evaluate, organize, and use information and it is one of the general education learning outcomes at the College. How do faculty in this Cluster approach information literacy through assignments, projects or activities. Please provide some examples.

Discussion: All of us agree that information literacy is important.

Data/data source: (where appropriate)

Action: We require students to conduct internet searches on various science related topics. In some classes, research papers are assigned. In labs, students collect and analyze data. Students are often required to use graphing calculators for data analysis and other computations. A variety of computer software is also utilized, including Study Mate, Pasco, XCEL, and Logger Pro. Scientific journals are recommended to our students as an excellent and reliable source of information. Student presentations using power point is required in some classes.

ITEM 3. **Nomination of Courses for Inclusion in General Education –** discussion and cluster approval (if applicable).

Discussion: No additional courses in our discipline were suggested.

Data/data source: (where appropriate)

Action:

ITEM 4. **The General Education Assessment Committee** has selected two learning outcomes for the College to target for improvement. They are:

Communications: Develop effective communication skills for a variety of audiences.

Critical Thinking: Engage in purposeful reasoning to reach sound conclusions.

Please review the assessment material in the handouts and indicate: 1) how your cluster can support the proposed improvement strategies; 2) other strategies that you plan to carry out directly in your classrooms/clusters that will improve student learning in communications and critical thinking; and 3) new ideas for improvement strategies that can impact the College as a whole.

Discussion: It is an absolute necessity for our students to be able to effectively communicate information and implement critical thinking to reach conclusions.

Data/data source: (where appropriate)

Action: Our students develop and improve oral and written communication skills by doing the following; participating in class discussions, class presentations, group work, lab reports, essays on special science topics, problem solving, conceptual questions, website posting, and emails. We are all in favor of including a component in the ENC 1102 curriculum to teach formal writing styles. Several cluster members expressed interest in having a "Critical Thinking Problem of the Week" challenge or contest for our students. Cluster members suggested including science and technology vocabulary in classes that teach English as a second language. We also suggested implementing software that encourages learning scientific terminology in the form of crossword puzzles, matching columns, etc.

ITEM 5. **Developmental Education Cluster only –** Please discuss the impact of the PERT and the new competencies for the College's prep courses, including the EAP courses, which must follow the same competencies. These revised courses will be implemented for the Spring 2012 term.

Discussion:

Data/data source: (where appropriate)

Action:

ITEM 6. **Discussion and recommendation** on courses recommended by the General Education Committee for deletion from General Education:

Mathematics Cluster:

MAS2103 (Matrix Theory) – This course teaches highly specialized material appropriate for those who intent is to major in mathematics. The committee recommends that the cluster consider eliminating this course from the general education program.

Natural Sciences Cluster:

AST1004 (Stellar and Galactic Astronomy) – This course has not been offered since spring 2009. The committee recommends that the cluster consider eliminating this course from the general education program.

OCE1001L (Introduction to Oceanography Laboratory) – This is an optional lab and hasn't been offered since spring 2009. The committee recommends that the cluster consider eliminating this course from the general education program.

Communications Cluster:

Intermediate language courses (SPN2200, SPN2201, FRE2200, FRE2201, GER2200 and GER2201) – Professor Victor Schlesinger informed the committee that while these courses are at an intermediate level, they contain a good deal of basic grammar instruction, which is why they have been included as general education courses. However, the German and French intermediate courses have been inactivated and the Spanish courses have been offered very infrequently. The committee recommends that the cluster consider either removing the Spanish intermediate courses from the general education program or re-activating the German and French courses in order to have consistency with all three foreign language offerings.

Discussion: AST1004 is currently being taught at the Boca Raton campus and should not be eliminated. Members of the Biology Cluster indicated that they would like to keep OCE1001L and asked that our minutes reflect that.

Data/data source: (where appropriate)

Action: The cluster members voted to continue offering this course to students.

OTHER.

Attendance:
R. Fleisher, M. Grasso, L. Jordan, G. O'Brien, C. Ramos, S. Stemle, J. Sundquist, A. Trupin, W. Walecki

Submitted by:

Marie Grasso
Scribe

c. Minutes Distribution List