



# Committee for the Assessment of General Education (CAGE)

## Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 9, 2017 • 2:00pm – 3:00pm • 101 Whitehurst

Present: C. Beier, J. Comer, J. Gelder, C. Johnson, J. Knecht, B. Miller

Absent: M. Bayles, G. Wilber

Guests: A. Witham

**Introductions and Call to Order.** Dr. Comer called the meeting to order at 2:00.

**Follow-up discussion on Diversity Gen Ed presentation to AAIC.** Dr. Miller brought up that GEAC is considering requiring courses with Gen Ed designations to have written assignments that tie directly to their designation. This would naturally create more artifacts for assessment purposes. She herself is considering incorporating something similar to the Photovoice project for her I-designated course. Dr. Johnson suggested sending Gen Ed D-designated course instructors some uniform directions for their writing assignments. Dr. Miller suggested the rubric used to evaluate D-content artifacts could be sent to those instructors to help them develop assignments that meet the criteria. Dr. Comer noted that these rubrics are located on the Assessment web site and suggested that, when someone adds an I or D designation to their course, the associated rubric could automatically pop up for the instructor to see. Instructors would automatically be informed that they may be asked to provide artifacts. At that point, prompts or guidelines could be provided on how to structure artifact-quality assignments. He also acknowledged that this would necessitate additional programming from the IT department. Dr. Gelder remarked that often the prompts currently provided to students are sound – it is the way the students follow through with the assignment that doesn't meet the requirements appropriate to the assessment rubric. Dr. Johnson suggested putting the assessment rubric in front of the students as well. Dr. Comer reiterated that giving rubrics to instructors could help improve assignment prompts that are not so great.

The question of whether or not the assessment of the diversity artifacts was of any value was posed. Dr. Comer stated that he believes nothing really actionable came out of the diversity assessment artifacts; however, reviewers did learn how difficult it is to get students to think and write critically about diversity rather than summarizing what students read in their books or writing about something they observed. The group all agreed that the Photovoice project was very interesting, but they wondered about time constraints if the project were to be repeated in future years. It was brought up that publications from projects like this (and the Diversity Photovoice project *has* resulted in publications) make this type of project appealing to faculty and, therefore, more likely to be incorporated in future assessment. The question becomes whether instituting projects similar to the Photovoice project would eventually make artifact collection obsolete. Behavioral changes seem to be the desired outcome – especially in a diversity course -- and they are difficult to measure. Dr. Johnson brought up that although quantitative data is easier to work with than qualitative data, qualitative data can provide more depth and direction to coursework. She also felt that the real impact from the Photovoice project came from the one-on-one (focus group) conversations with the students, and, although this type of qualitative research takes time, benefits can be had if the outcome could be used as a close-the-loop activity to get messages communicated across the university. She went on to state that she feels strongly that in addition to a Diversity Photovoice gallery being placed in the library, similar information should be placed in every building on campus inhabited by faculty and students. Mr. Knecht suggested that assessment monies could be used to help encourage people to be involved in future Photovoice projects. Dr. Comer suggested possibly creating a required course that would essentially require students to participate in diversity assessment since the Photovoice researchers had so much difficulty recruiting subjects. Such a course could also be a way to fulfill the I-designation requirement. Dr. Johnson asked what would happen if instructors were given the option of a Photovoice-like assignment instead of the usual written artifacts. If instructors were able to opt for a Photovoice project in lieu of a several-page written assignment, rating the projects may make it difficult to find enough reviewers capable of coding qualitative materials.

Although there are some qualitative properties to the current rating system, Dr. Miller stated that all university faculty should have the skill set necessary to review standard written artifacts with the rubrics in the current system. Dr. Comer believes that reviewers could be trained to assess Photovoice-type artifacts. Dr. Gelder added that one of the characteristics that is looked for in diversity artifacts is student opinion, which is sometimes the most difficult to ascertain in current artifacts. Asking a student to choose a meaningful picture and write about it would definitely make student opinion easier to assess. Dr. Comer agreed, saying this may be a way to fill in the gaps missing from regular artifacts. He added that a decision has to be made before the 2018-19 school year. Mr. Knecht reminded the group that if they want this sort of system to be instituted for D courses, it should be done sooner rather than later so that every instructor requesting a D designation from this point forward would be aware of it. Instructors who already have the D designation also would have to be contacted. Ironically,

requiring such a project could result in the participation of less diverse populations than that of the original Photovoice project, but it could give balancing student views on the whole. Everyone seemed to come away from the discussion liking the idea to incorporate such changes into the assessment process. Dr. Miller suggested that for the 2017-2018 school year, workshops could be developed and delivered for current D-course instructors interested in this new way of creating diversity artifacts. She believes that faculty would respond favorably because they are always looking for a new, creative ways to teach aside from assigning papers. Dr. Comer expressed certainty that one or more of the four researchers who participated in the Photovoice project would be interested in leading the workshops.

Dr. Gelder asked if a stipend would be available for those who attend and/or lead a workshop. Mr. Knecht responded that the Provost Workshops—for which stipends were given—are currently on hold. Dr. Johnson suggested that the workshops be videoed and make the video available after the fact for those faculty who cannot attend. Dr. Comer believes the picture with an expanded narrative idea should be presented to GEAC, especially for the I and D designations. Due to the fact that focus groups were a major part of the Photovoice project, Dr. Johnson suggested that instructors could hold a focus group or discussions in class and present notes or audio recording from the focus groups/discussions as part of the “artifact collection process.” Dr. Gelder pointed out that just listening to audio (similar to NPR) can be powerful. Dr. Johnson envisions larger classes breaking into smaller teams/groups. The teams would be responsible for recording and writing up what happens in the discussion. Dr. Miller added that, especially for smaller travel classes, a sense of security is created by spending so much time together, which may make the students more comfortable sharing their ideas than if they were to walk into a focus group setting with total strangers. Dr. Johnson agreed that students in courses that have teams that work together consistently throughout the semester would have the same rapport. Dr. Miller suggested that students could present on their photos, have a discussion with the other students, and then write a reflection on what the group experience was, a process that could have a lot of potential. Dr. Gelder believe that those types of experiences are what really cause changes in behavior and creates an understanding of diversity. Dr. Johnson agreed, as just having students experience this process could change outcomes. Dr. Comer asked that all of these ideas be shared at the next AAIC meeting in response for the council’s request for suggestions. He also asked Dr. Miller (who agreed) to take their ideas to the next GEAC meeting in an attempt to persuade them to modify the I and D writing requirements so this new idea could be put forward as a possible option for newly designated courses this next school year, and possibly also retroactively as an alternative assessment tool for those courses that already have a I or D designation.

**Minutes from February’s meeting.** The minutes were presented and approved with a small edit (“Dr.” Beier should be Ms. Beier). Dr. Comer moved for approval, and Dr. Gelder seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Identify potential 2017 Gen Ed Assessment Reviewers for Written Communication and Critical Thinking.** Mr. Knecht has compiled a list of everyone who participated as a reviewer in 2014. He will send a list of reviewers still present at the university to both Gen Ed Assessment Coordinators – Dr. Miller and Dr. Wilber. Each coordinator will need to recruit 6 reviewers. Dr. Miller said she had spoken with Dr. Sarah Gordon and was given a list of potential reviewers by Dr. Gordon. Mr. Knecht asked for suggestions from CAGE members regarding positive or negative experiences with past reviewers to facilitate choosing the best slate of reviewers possible.

**Potential NSSE/BSSE Modules for 2017-18 Gen Ed Assessment.** Mr. Knecht presented the slate of NSSE survey modules available for 2017-2018. CAGE members reached a consensus that the following three modules should be recommended to AAIC: *Experiences with Information Literacy*, *Global Learning*, and *Inclusiveness and Engagement with Cultural Diversity*. AAIC will choose two out of the three modules.

**Draft 2016 Diversity Gen Ed Report.** Mr. Knecht has begun working on the draft of the 2016 Diversity Gen Ed Report. He will send the first part of it to CAGE members by March 17<sup>th</sup> for suggestion, additions and/or changes.

**Gen Ed Assessment Updates.** None.

**Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.