

## University General Education Committee meeting minutes

24 February 2023 in JUB 100

**Voting members present:** Keith Gamble (chair), Leon Alligood (via Zoom), Nita Brooks, Janet Colson, Warner Cribb, Rebecca Fischer, Mark Frame, Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Angela Hooser, Rachel Kirk, Ann McCullough, Scott McDaniel, Amy Sayward

**Voting members absent:** Sydney Fischer, Terry Goodin, Yi Gu, Virginia Hemby-Grubb, Angela Hooser, Sungyoon Lee, Keely O'Brien, Cheyenne Sweeley

**Ex officio:** Jeff Gibson, Susan Myers-Shirk, Amy Aldridge Sanford

**Others in attendance:** Emily Baran, Rebecca Calahan, Brielle Campos, Christina Cobb, Betsy Dalton, Christabel Devadoss (via Zoom), Stuart Fowler, Thomas Hudson, Rebecca King (via Zoom), Tammy Melton, Deb Perry, Michael Roach, Suzanne Sutherland, Brandon Wallace, Kristen West, Elizabeth Wright

### **Introductory matters:**

Keith Gamble, chair of the University General Education Committee (UGEC), opened the meeting by requesting any edits or corrections to the minutes. Amy Sayward, UGEC secretary, stated that Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand had requested the addition of an apostrophe to the phrase "ladies' agreement" in the minutes, which she would make. There being no further edits, the minutes were considered approved.

Susan Myers-Shirk, the General Education Director, provided an update. The previous Friday, she had hosted a university-wide update via Zoom, which was attended by more than one hundred people. That presentation was also recorded, so it continues to be available to the university community via the General Education Redesign webpage: <https://mtsu.edu/genedredesign/>. She also pointed out that this webpage is where all of the approved courses are now listed.

Mark Frame reminded Myers-Shirk that his college, Behavioral and Health Sciences, had asked about the assessment of dual-enrollment classes, specifically whether and how their assessable assignments would be assessed. Myers-Shirk stated that those courses would be treated like all other General Education classes—they would be assessed, those assessable assignments do not have to be in D2L, and they would be collected by the True Blue Center.

### **Consideration of ECON 2110/FIN 2010: Personal Finance:**

As the committee turned its attention to the first course proposal on the agenda, Gamble stated that he had asked UGEC vice chair Anne McCullough (and she had agreed) to lead the discussion at the suggestion of another UGEC member.

McCullough resumed the committee's previous conversation about this course proposal. Frame reminded his colleagues that following the last meeting that there was going to be a meeting in the Provost's office with the Dean of the College of Business to better understand his reservations about the course, since his non-approval had been noted in Curriculum. And Warner Cribb stated that he had

asked for more information about the assessable assignment, which had gone out by email from Gamble to all UGEC members (although it was not yet in Curriculum).

McCullough stated that she would like to have more information on the specific mathematics functions that the students will be asked to move through in the course as a whole. She had no question that this is an excellent course that students would benefit from. McDaniel averred that he would also like to see more information on these specific mathematics functions. Cribb thanked Gamble for the additional information, which he thought was very helpful in understanding what students are doing in the class, but he also thought that more information about the specific math functions being used in the course, especially since it is a new course. Cribb expressed his opinion that it was not a disciplinary knowledge course, but there is no explorations area for this category. He concluded his comments by stating that he thought that it was important that UGEC make sure that the expectations for all courses in this category are the same.

Gamble stated that the additional documentation he had already provided—as requested by the committee—had aimed at showing how the assessable assignment fit the rubric and how it might be assessed by the True Blue Core Center. He conceived of this as guidance to the instructor; the Assessment Team—and not these guidelines—would be responsible for assessing the assignment in terms of its mandate. Therefore Gamble had not showed the specific math functions used in the course nor listed all of the places where quantitative literacy is furthered and developed in the course. Gamble then asked what specifically members wanted to see about the course that had not been provided. Cribb stated that Gamble’s materials showed that the assessable assignment meets the rubric and reiterated that the General Education category is not Mathematics but Quantitative Literacy. Cribb asked what types of mathematical functions—toward meeting the Quantitative Literacy outcomes—students are specifically doing in, for example, calculating monthly payments. Gamble explained that the calculations are not simply mathematical in evaluating credit card debt, interest rates, and terms of payment, but the calculations do involve Algebra and Algebra II (exponent variable) knowledge and practice. Students are specifically taught how a financial situation is represented in mathematical form and how to use mathematical tools to calculate those equations.

Gamble then returned to the question raised by Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand’s in the previous UGEC meeting about prescribed courses, and he provided an update on that. He, Myers-Shirk, the chairs of University Studies and the Department of Mathematical Sciences, and Tyler Henson had met since the last UGEC meeting. The Department of Mathematical Sciences had a clear vision of the issue, which is supported by MTSU Policy 306. The result of the meeting was a clear consensus that if this ECON/FIN course was approved that its prerequisite would be the same as the MATH courses—two high school algebra courses and a specific ACT score. This will ensure consistency, and all courses in the Quantitative Reasoning section of the Foundational Skills category (except prescribed courses) will have the same prerequisites moving forward.

McCullough returned to discussion of the course at hand and stated that the additional detail that Gamble had provided about the course, which she characterized as very nuanced but which had not been included in the original course proposal, had satisfied her concerns. Rebecca Calahan, the liaison for the Department of Mathematical Sciences, expressed her opinion that it was a good course that would be important to students. However, she did not think it was a good fit for disciplinary knowledge in this Foundational category, since it applies mathematics rather than helping students learn and practice

techniques in mathematics. For example, she pointed out that a Mathematics course would teach linear optimization as a technique of optimization, while an application of linear optimization would be to use it to compute maximum levels of production to meet maximum profit. Cribb provided another example, explaining that studying the natural phenomena requires multivariate problem-solving. He uses linear algebra and calculus to understand geological processes, but when mathematicians discuss these issues, they are doing so theoretically rather than in an applied nature. He thought that it therefore made sense to have Math professors teach math courses using a disciplinary approach to math. Gray-Hildenbrand said that fieldwork in her field of Religious Studies uses statistical analysis, which was another form of applied mathematics.

Calahan defined the distinction as mathematicians teaching the “why” of mathematics, while other disciplines primarily teach the “how” of mathematics (how to use or do the mathematics in that specific field). She said that teaching the “how” is still very important, however she thought that the learning outcomes might be confined to courses that primarily focused on the “why.” Frame stated that he saw the Foundations section as building the tools of the field, while explorations sections (in other categories) are where the tools learned in the Foundations courses are used. He saw a distinction between the nuts and bolts of the reciprocal qualities of mathematics vs. applying those qualities to personal or small-business finance. Frame asked Gamble how he decided what area to submit this course to. Gamble explained that after UGEC agreed to the outcomes and the curriculum model, he looked across the rubrics and thought that it best fit the Quantitative Literacy outcomes. He explained that this course appears in different areas in different General Education curricula across the country. Matthew Duncan, chair of University Studies, stated that while this course is in General Studies in the Quantitative Literacy area at Illinois State, that curriculum had both a math course requirement and then an additional quantitative literacy category (similar to the disciplinary knowledge and explorations pairing that characterizes many other categories of MTSU’s redesigned General Education curriculum).

McCullough, in her first year on UGEC, asked whether, when the rubric was established, if there was discussion about creating a distinction between disciplinary knowledge in mathematics on the one hand and explorations in quantitative literacy on the other. Myers-Shirk replied that although there was extensive discussion of the outcomes and the descriptors that went into that outcome, there had not been discussion about distinguishing between applied and disciplinary mathematics. McCullough responded that, lacking that precision, she thought that the definition of this category should be quite broad. She did mention that the committee had the option of tabling the motion as part of or before the vote, and she did indicate that she appreciated the additional information that Gamble was currently providing to the committee orally. Cribb stated his opinion that the UGEC conversation raised the question of assessment in the future, as he thought that non-legacy courses should be given the opportunity to be successful through the assessment process; because all courses in the category have to go through the same assessment process to determine whether or not it is successful in helping students meet the outcome. Myers-Shirk stated that this was exactly the purpose of the document that Gamble had provided.

At this point in the deliberations, Amy Aldridge-Sanford of the Provost’s office pointed out that there was no motion on the floor. Gamble states that since the charge of the committee was to review course proposals and since these were on the agenda that there was an understood motion. Aldridge-Sanford asked if it was an understood motion and second, and Gamble replied that it was functionally; as the committee the votes and had voted on whether or not to approve the course proposals that had come

before the committee. Aldridge-Sanford worried that no one could call the question because there was not a motion on the floor. Myers-Shirk stated that any UGEC member could make a motion to vote. Aldridge-Sanford asked if all UGEC members understood that they could move to vote or move to table the understood motion, which met with silence. Cribb explained that the committee had used a general form of Robert's Rules on and off for three years; Aldridge-Sanford said that she just wanted to ensure that committee members felt empowered to call the question or move to vote.

Rachel Kirk then moved to table the proposal, stating that she did not believe that it was foundational enough to help students further their MTSU careers; Frame seconded the motion. Cribb asked if there were other applied mathematics courses. Sayward replied that UGEC had approved Applied Statistics in its previous meeting. Cribb stated that it would be helpful to understand if there was a difference between the applied statistics course and this course. McCullough stated that she believed that the category was open given the vagueness of the rubric as approved by the previous committee. Cribb stated that he saw this course as an applied quantitative literacy course, and Frame asked if the rubric was the same for Foundational and explorations courses in this category. Tammy Melton reminded him that there were not two different areas for the Quantitative Literacy category, and Myers-Shirk reminded the committee that in those categories with both disciplinary knowledge and explorations areas that they do have the same rubric for assessment. Cribb stated that he thought his previous comment about applied statistics had not been interpreted correctly. His point was that since there is already an applied mathematics course in the Foundational category that the door is open for any applied courses that meet the quantitative literacy rubric.

Aldridge-Sanford then interrupted the discussion, stating that the motion to table the motion should have ended all discussion. McCullough asked when discussion would take place if it could not come before or after the motion, since the work of the committee was deliberative. Cribb stated that if there is a move to approve the course that there can be discussion, and he asked Kirk to withdraw her motion so that the committee could discuss the proposal. Gamble stated that it is in the charge of the committee, not just on the agenda, that it should consider all course proposals. Aldridge-Sanford asked whether the previous discussion was part of the discussion about the understood motion, and if so, then after the motion to table, the vote should have immediately followed. She then stated that she felt as if she was imposing rules on the committee's practice. Gamble stated that he understood Robert's Rules but pointed out that they are often applied incorrectly and with the goal of limiting discussion. This committee's practice had been to have all motions that have been seconded to be discussed (including motions to table). Aldridge-Sanford stated that she was worried that this practice was dismissive of Kirk's motion to table. The motion to table consideration of ECON 2110/FIN 210: Personal Finance passed 7-4-0. Gamble affirmed that a quorum of eleven of the twenty voting members was present.

McCullough stated that it was her understanding that if a course was voted down that the committee's reason has to be in writing. Gamble stated that he did not believe that reasons were required for tabling a motion/course.

#### **Consideration of MATH 1720: Plane Trigonometry:**

Gamble reiterated that the committee's charge was to review course proposals and that the committee is moving toward a vote on approving this course. He reminded the committee that its central consideration is whether it provides students with the opportunity to learn the outcomes laid out in the rubric—and if it is not a legacy course, the committee should ask whether it meets the SACSCOC

definition of a General Education course and whether it fits the category. John Schmidt, the representative of the Department of Mathematical Sciences, was present to answer questions about this course. Cribb asked if this course was required for any degree in Mathematics, and Schmidt and Calahan replied that it was not. There being no further questions or comments, the committee voted to approve the course 12-0-0.

**Consideration of courses in Creative and Cultural Experiences category:**

Gamble explained that the next set of courses under consideration fall into the explorations area of the Creative and Cultural Experiences category, which meet student learning outcome C1 (Students demonstrate intercultural understanding by building knowledge, self-awareness, and conceptions of global and intercultural perspectives, values, systems, and attitudes.). The first course under consideration was RS 1030: Introduction to World Religions. Rebecca King from the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies was present to answer committee questions. There being no comments or questions, the committee approved the course 11-0-0.

The next courses being considered were very similar proposals meeting the same rubric, HIST 1015: Themes in Western Civilization and HIST 1115: Themes in World Civilization. Therefore Gamble proposed discussing and voting on them together. Emily Baran, chair of the History Department and representing Chairs Council in Steve Severn's absence, was present to answer questions about the courses as was Suzanne Sutherland, the department's liaison. Myers-Shirk also plugged the upcoming workshop at the Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technology Committee (LT&ITC) that the History Department was hosting on putting together themed courses like the ones that the committee was considering. Cribb asked if these courses were replacing the existing World and Western Civilization courses, and Baran replied that they were not. Cribb asked if they were existing courses. Baran explained that they were not. The History Department, attempting to emulate the English Department's use of themed Explorations in Literature courses, had tried to amend its course proposal, but that was rejected. Therefore the department was creating new, themed courses to accompany each of the legacy History courses that are in General Education; the new courses will meet cover the same geographical and chronological boundaries as the existing courses. She also noted that these courses were being included in the explorations area because they are new courses. Gamble applauded the History Department's innovation with these courses, crafting courses that will be new and interesting for students and faculty. He also noted that these new courses had moved efficiently through the entire curriculum approval process. Baran did point out that these new course will not meet the state law. Although the new themed American history courses could potentially meet the state statute's requirements, the department had chosen not to complicate the advising process, so only HIST 2010, 2020, and 2030 will meet the state statute's requirement.

Myers-Shirk pointed out that the proposal called for these courses to be taught this summer. Baran asked the committee for the ability to pilot these courses this summer in order to gauge student interest and averred that the faculty were ready to teach these courses. Conversation followed about whether these courses, if taught before the launch of the True Blue Core in Fall 2024, would count as General Education courses or would simply be lower-division electives. Baran stated that she was concerned that if they were taught ahead of the launch but did not count that students would still assume that they would count toward their General Education requirements. Cribb stated that he was excited to see these courses developed within the explorations area, but he did not support offering them ahead of

the True Blue Core launch. Aldridge-Sanford pointed out that the courses were approved for an explorations area that does not exist until the True Blue Core is launched, although it might be possible to have students count such courses toward their degree requirements retroactively. Myers-Shirk explained that she was in discussions with Mary Hoffschwelle in the Provost's Office, who had expressed concern that a significant percentage of change in the current General Education program now could trigger SACSCOC review and that the confusion might be harmful to students. Myers-Shirk did explain that the True Blue Center had started to post the courses that had been approved as part of its on-going effort to be transparent and forthcoming with students and faculty about what is going to constitute the True Blue Core. Gamble pointed out that the committee's charge is to make recommendations to the administration and that the catalog deadline had already passed for this committee to change what would and would not be part of General Education requirements for the next catalog year.

Cribb stated that he was unquestionably voting in favor of these courses, but he wondered about whether students transferring were likely to have these courses approved/counted at their new institution. Myers-Shirk explained that the True Blue Core staff was in the midst of planning a May Transfer Summit to explain the new True Blue Core requirements and courses to all of the state's public colleges and universities. Baran explained that the History Department had chosen the course numbers for these courses with the goal of signaling to other colleges and universities their close relationship to the legacy courses that are broadly known. Jeff Gibson explained that all public colleges and universities are inclined to count course toward a student's graduation requirements, an inclination that Aldridge-Sanford reiterated. But she reminded the committee that complete transfer is only guaranteed if students complete the core/General Education curriculum. Gamble also added that the Tennessee Board of Regents has been present at the same conferences that the MTSU Redesign has been attending and that they are well aware of MTSU's progress in this area.

There being no further comments or questions, the committee voted to approve HIST 1015: Themes in Western Civilization and HIST 1115: Themes in World Civilization by a vote of 12-0-0.

**Consideration of courses in the Civic Learning category:**

Gamble pointed the committee to the next set of four courses being considered, all of which were similar and all of which were designed to meet the Civic Learning, C2 outcome (Students will demonstrate civic learning by using knowledge, information, and understanding to comprehend civic identity and civic obligations in local and global contexts.). The courses being considered were HIST 2015: Themes in Early United States History, HIST 2025: Themes in Modern United States History, HIST 2035: Themes in Tennessee History, and HIST 2045: Themes in African American History. Asked about the difference between these courses and the legacy courses, Baran explained that they were on the same model as the previous themed courses described. She also explained that for courses with smaller enrollment that the History Department would offer fewer sections. Gray-Hildenbrand then called the question, and the committee voted in favor of all four courses 12-0-0.

**Consideration of courses in the Human Society and Social Relationships category:**

The committee then turned its attention to SOC 1010: Introduction to Sociology, which is a legacy course in that would fall within the disciplinary knowledge area of the Human Society and Social Relationships category, which has the B1 student learning outcome (Students will think critically by explaining issues/problems, selecting and using evidence, considering context and assumptions, and

representing their position and conclusions logically and effectively.). Brandon Wallace, chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, was present to field committee questions. Gamble stated that he hoped that Wallace was enjoying his visit to the committee, to which Wallace responded tongue-in-cheek that he now knew how to punish faculty he did not like. There being no further questions or comments, the committee voted to approve SOC 1010: Introduction to Sociology by a vote of 12-0-0.

Another legacy course being considered for inclusion in the disciplinary knowledge area of the Human Society and Social Relationships category was ECON 2420: Principles of Economics, Microeconomics. Stu Fowler, the chair of the Department of Economics and Finance, and Michael Roach, also in the department, were present to answer questions. Cribb asked why they did not submit the course for consideration under the rubric of quantitative reasoning instead of critical thinking. Roach replied that the course does look at economic models that are representational and graphic representations of mathematical functions, but given the course's legacy status, submission in this category seemed to make the most sense. Gray-Hildenbrand indicated her desire to vote in favor of something from Gamble's department. There being no further questions or comments, the committee voted in favor of the proposal 12-0-0.

The final course on the committee's agenda, which falls in the explorations section of this category of Human Society and Social Relationships was NFS 1240: Introduction to Nutrition and Wellness. Janet Colson, a voting member of the committee, was the course originator and welcomed any questions about the course. Cribb asked if there had been any thought about submitting this course in the Scientific Literacy category as a lab course. Colson replied that this is an introductory-level course that would not fit within that category, but a different course might be proposed for the explorations area of Scientific Literacy at a future date. Gamble stated that this was the type of new course that he had hoped would come from the explorations areas and that he believed it would both excite students and advance the interests of General Education. Gray-Hildenbrand called the question, and the committee voted in favor of the course by a vote of 12-0-0.

#### **Further discussion of ECON 2110/FIN 2010: Personal Finance:**

As there was time remaining in the meeting, Cribb then returned to the question of what kinds of materials those who had voted to table the ECON 2110/FIN 2010: Personal Finance course needed to see in order to vote on the proposal at the next meeting. Discussion ensued about what would be helpful, and Sayward thanked Cribb for returning to the issue. She was otherwise concerned that the committee had inadvertently created a method for preventing a course from moving forward without providing its specific reasons, which would have run contrary to the discussions and stated intentions of the committee throughout the redesign process.

The meeting adjourned at 2 p.m.