

University General Education Committee
Minutes from April 14, 2023, meeting in JUB 100

Voting members present: Keith Gamble, Amy Sayward, Scott McDaniel, Ann McCullough, Warner Cribb, Leon Alligood (via Zoom), Virginia Hemby-Grubb (via Zoom), Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Rachel Kirk, Nita Brooks, Janet Colson, Terry Goodin, Cheyenne Sweeley

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

Guests: Emily Baran, Suzanne Sutherland, Kate Pantelides, Brady Holley, Kari Neely (Faculty Senate Observer), Betsy Dalton (Faculty Senate Observer), Laura Cochrane, Andrew Wyatt, Will Leggett, Kate Pantelides, Christopher Weedman, John Zamora, Jeremy Aber, Katie Foss, Robb McDaniel, Casie Higginbotham, Brielle Campos, Matthew Duncan, Ginger Rowell, Jason Lee Pettigrew

Implementation Team: Tammy Melton, Kristen West, Elizabeth Wright,
True Blue Core: Christina Cobb, Angie Parrish, Thomas Hudson

Introductory matters

Keith Gamble, the Chair of the University General Education Committee (UGEC) called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. Given the committee's full agenda for its last meeting of the academic year, he urged the committee to get started, beginning with approval of the minutes. The UGEC Secretary had requested additional time to complete the minutes from the February 24th minutes, which were now before the committee. There being no comments or questions, the minutes were considered approved. There were no comments or questions about the minutes from the March 17th meeting, so those were also considered approved. He then thanked the Secretary for doing an "amazing job with minutes in an important year"; the comment was followed by applause. He concluded that the minutes both documented the committee's progress and rich discussions as well as documenting the committee's careful process, which can guide future iterations of this committee.

The next item on the agenda was the Outstanding General Education Teaching Award. Christina Cobb announced that Katie Gruber from Communications Studies had won the award; applause followed. Cobb then thanked the committee for its rankings. Susan Myers-Shirk, the General Education Director, reminded all voting members to sign in and everyone present to "get cookies."

Course proposals

Kari Neely started the discussion by asking the rationale for the order of course proposals on the agenda and asking whether UGEC was likely to be able to cover all of the course proposals on the agenda during its meeting time. Gamble responded that he, as chair, set the agenda with the goal of promoting efficiency by grouping the proposals in a way that would hopefully allow the committee to move forward quickly. He also tended to leave proposals that he anticipated would need more in-depth discussion toward the end. Neely then asked what might happen with courses on the agenda that were not considered at this meeting. Gamble stated that the committee could meet over the summer and had in the previous year. His primary goal was to keep to the timeline of launching the True Blue Core in the Fall of 2024. To that end, the committee could consider extending the meeting and/or having a

summer meeting to consider course proposals—but that decision would only be made, if needed, at the end of the meeting. Neely asked if all committee rules—including the need for a quorum—would apply if the meeting was extended or a summer meeting was called, and Gamble assured her that they would apply. Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand asked how many courses were still in process that were not on the agenda, and Gamble replied that none were.

Creativity and Cultural Expression

Gamble then moved to the first category of courses--Creativity and Cultural Expression. Kate Goodwin from the Department of Theater and Dance was present to answer questions about DANC 1000, which was a Disciplinary Knowledge/legacy course for this category. Sayward asked how the assessment of “empathy and openness” (one of the three categories in the rubric for this category) would be assessed. She said that she imagined it might be assessed through discussion and exposure to diverse dance forms. Goodwin stated that she would explore that issue with the course developer. There being no further questions or comments, the committee voted 13-0-0 to approve the course for the True Blue Core.

The next courses under consideration were the History Department’s surveys of Western and World civilization (HIST 1010, 1020, 1110, and 1120). Emily Baran, Suzanne Sutherland, and Brady Holley were present to answer questions about the courses, which were developed by nine different faculty in the department. Sayward stated that the History Department had had a hard year in 2021-22, and she was proud to see how her department had responded to the structural changes with great creativity and energy. Gamble averred the sentiment. The committee then voted on this set of courses, approving them by a vote of 13-0-0.

The next course considered was Introduction to Music (MUS 1030). No one from the School of Music was present to answer questions or to receive Gamble’s comment on how intriguing the sample assignment was, which was based on the golden record sent in Voyager spaceship. The committee voted to approve the proposal 13-0-0.

The next two courses under consideration were ART 1030 (Art Appreciation) and ART 1920 (Survey of Western Art I). Laura Cochrane from the Department of Art and Design was present to answer the committee’s questions. Gray-Hildenbrand stated that Steve Severn had inquired whether the antlered display in the Faculty Senate chambers qualified as art; Cochrane stated uncatagorically that it was. Nonetheless, the committee approved both classes by a vote of 13-0-0.

The next course under consideration was ANTH 2210 (Introduction to World Prehistory). Andrew Wyatt from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology was present to answer questions about the course proposal. Sayward stated that she thought that it might be difficult to assess Intercultural Understanding using short-answer questions. The committee approved the course 13-0-0.

The last courses in this category were literature courses—ENGL 2020 (Themes in Literature) and ENGL 2030 (The Experience of Literature)—and Steve Severn, Kate Pantelides, and Chris Weedman were present to answer questions about those proposals. There being no questions, the committee moved to a vote and approved the course 13-0-0.

History and Civic Learning

Shifting to a new student learning outcome (History and Civic Learning) with its accompanying rubric, the committee then turned its attention to the five legacy courses connected with this learning outcome: HIST 2010 and 2020 (the surveys of United States History), HIST 2030 (Tennessee History), and HIST 2040 and 2050 (the surveys of African American History). The same History Department representatives were available to answer questions about these courses. There being none, the committee voted 13-0-0 to approve these five courses.

Scientific Literacy

The committee then turned to the Scientific Literacy category, with its student learning outcome of Inquiry and Analysis. The committee started with four legacy Biology courses (BIOL 1030/1031—Exploring Life, BIOL 1110/1111—General Biology I, BIOL 2010/2011—Human Anatomy and Physiology I, and BIOL 2020/2021—Human Anatomy and Physiology II), all of which had a lab. John Zamora, a BIOL 1030 instructor and lab coordinator was present to answer questions about these courses. Sayward noted that BIOL 2010 and 2020 (with their corresponding labs) are designed specifically for a set of majors (Health and Nursing majors), which could raise the question of whether it is broad enough to serve as a General Education course. Gamble noted that all of these courses would still have to assess the same Inquiry and Analysis skills and that General Education courses can be helpful for specific careers. Sayward agreed that it could be a good General Education course, especially noting the sample assignment on osteoporosis. There being no further questions or comments, the committee voted to approve the course by a vote of 13-0-0.

The next set of legacy courses came from the Geosciences Department—Intro to Earth Science (GEOL 1030/1031) and Physical Geography (PGEO 1030). Warner Cribb (a UGEC member) and Jeremy Aber (on Zoom) were available to answer questions about the proposals. After checking that PGEO 1030 is a four-hour course that incorporates the lab under a single course number, rather than the lab having a separate course number, the committee discussed the courses. Sayward said that she specifically appreciated the section of the course proposal entitled “Why this assessment will be effective” and its accompanying citations. She hoped it might serve as a model for other course proposals. The committee approved the course by a vote of 13-0-0.

The next three legacy courses--Exploring the Universe (ASTR 1030/1031); Physics Problems Lab I (PHYS 2010/2011); and Calculus-Based Physics Lab I (PHYS 2110/2111)—are all from the Department of Physics. A representative was not present, but any questions or comments could be forwarded to the department. UGEC voted to approve the courses by a vote of 13-0-0.

Foundational Skills: Quantitative Literacy

Shifting to the Quantitative Literacy category, the committee considered the D1 student learning outcome that has students “demonstrate the ability to interpret, represent, calculate, apply, and analyze numerical data in a variety of settings” and “make assumptions and communicate those assumptions based on quantitative information.” Ginger Rowell was again joining the UGEC meeting, this time to address the course proposals for MATH 1710 (College Algebra) and MAT 1810 (Applied Calculus I), both of which were legacy courses. Sayward again stated her preference for some of the

activities listed in the course proposal—rather than multiple-choice questions—as the primary means of assessing students’ learning, but she stated that she did recognize this as a valid assessment method. Gamble stated that he expected that a number of departments might shift their methods as part of a self-reflection process after the first True Blue Core assessment cycle. At this point, the threshold for approval is whether the outcome can be assessed; improvement in assessment methods should take place subsequently. Rowell stated that Rebecca Callahan has already started that reassessment process for assessment methods in her department. There being no further questions, the committee voted to approve these courses by a vote of 13-0-0.

Foundational Skills: Written Communication and Information Literacy

The next set of courses both came from the Department of English, but each of them was addressing a different True Blue rubric. Expository Writing (ENGL 1010) proposes to address learning outcome A1 (Students will communicate effectively through writing in terms of context and purpose, content development, genre and disciplinary conventions, sources and evidence, and syntax and mechanics). Research and Argumentative Writing (ENGL 1020) proposes to address learning outcome D1 (Students will demonstrate competence in information literacy by determining what information they need, where to access it, how to evaluate information they encounter, and how to use information effectively and ethically).

Sayward suggested a change in language in both proposals so that they do not identify each course as first or second “in a two-semester composition sequence,” since other courses might be added into this category. Kate Pantelides stated that the language came from the previous structure. Rachel Kirk asked if it is a committee issue if one course is listed as a prerequisite for the other. Gamble said that in his view, students have to complete six hours in this area, one of which meets the written communication rubric and one of which meets the information literacy rubric outcomes. Therefore, when the committee approved the structure, it was up to the course proposers to figure out how to fit their courses into the structure. Future proposers may also develop courses that fit within this structure. Therefore he thought the question before the committee was whether these courses fit into the structure approved by UGEC, which he thought it did. There being no further discussion, the committee voted 13-0-0 to approve both courses.

Human Society and Social Relationships

Shifting to another learning outcome and set of courses, Gamble asked if there were any questions about the Cultural Anthropology course (ANTH 2010), which was a legacy course in this category that would go into the Disciplinary Knowledge category. Gamble noted that the department had proposed multiple sample assignments, but it would be his recommendation that all departments focus on one assignment, which would aid the self-reflection process. Sayward disagreed, stating that she imagined that other departments (including her own) would be submitting multiple kinds of assignments to demonstrate student attainment of the learning outcomes. Gamble stated that this would mean more work for the assessment team, but this was fine as the university community starts this new assessment method. Myers-Shirk pointed out that this course also lists a secondary outcome of Intercultural Understanding. Will Leggett, from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, appreciated Gamble’s concern about the challenges of assessment and would consider paring the number of assignments. Sayward stated that she believed that the History Department would have multiple

assignments and would be resistant to limiting instructors' academic freedom. Gamble said that this will make it more difficult for the assessment team, but this would be something that would have to be tackled in the future. There being no further discussion, UGEC approved ANTH 2010 by a vote of 13-0-0.

JOUR 1020 (Introduction to Media and Entertainment—which is also cross-listed with EMC 1020 and RIM 1020) was represented by Katie Foss, who pointed out that this course draw from across the college. Sayward suggested a reorganization of the course proposal, since the sample assignment was only included in the sample syllabus, not in the proposal. Foss stated that she also had a video and long assignment description that might be helpful. There being no further questions or comments, the course (including the cross-listings) was approved 13-0-0.

The committee then considered PS 1010 (Introduction to Global Politics), and Rob McDaniel from the Department of Political Science and International Relations was present to answer questions, though Moses Tesi had prepared the sample assignment. Sayward asked whether course covered topics before the 1970s. McDaniel stated that the course was not primarily historical but rather focused on conceptual ideas, comparative politics, and international relations, and as such it primarily focused on contemporary politics. Sayward thanked McDaniel for the clarification before the committee approved the course by a vote of 13-0-0.

UGEC members then considered WGST 2100 (Introduction to Women's Studies), which was unique in its interdisciplinarity. When Gamble asked if there was a representative who could speak to the course proposal, Jeff Gibson, Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Steve Severn, and Katie Foss—all of whom have taught in the program—were ready to answer questions and field comments. Sayward stated that she appreciated that this course also had a secondary outcome of Intercultural Awareness. UGEC approved the course by a vote of 13-0-0.

Casey Higgenbotham was present from the Department of Health and Human Performance to answer questions about the proposal for legacy course HLTH 1530/1531 (Health and Wellness and its lab). There being no questions, the course and lab were approved by a vote of 13-0-0.

The committee next considered the legacy General Psychology course (PSY 1410). Although there was some consideration of deferring discussion of the course until a summer meeting when UGEC member Mark Frame could be present, the course proposal ultimately passed by a vote of 12-1-0, with the non-unanimous vote being blamed on Frame's absence from the meeting.

UGEC then turned its attention to an existing course (UNIV 1010-University Seminar) being proposed for inclusion in this category as an Explorations course. Matthew Duncan and Brielle Campos were present to answer questions about the proposal. Tammie Melton asked if the course had previously been part of General Education, and the answer was that it had not. Sayward said that she appreciated the critical thinking criteria listed in the course proposal for evaluating the ePortfolio. Gray-Hildenbrand questioned whether this course really explored the social and behavioral sciences, though she recognized how it addressed the critical thinking component in the rubric. She wondered aloud whether the course might better fit in the Writing, Human Relationships, or even Civic Learning categories based on the content of the course.

Campos said that she could make an argument for its inclusion in most any skill category; it is writing heavy, it is meant to help students develop relationships, it encourages students to be reflective about their own learning, and it asks students to evaluate their use of sources. However, ultimately the instructors of the course believed it fit best with the critical thinking rubric, as this skill is woven through the entire course. Duncan did state that many of the underpinnings of the course were in knowledge of psychology, including motivation, goal-setting, interactions between people, personality development and theory, and emotions. Kirk asked if the course discussed these theoretical concepts or just the applications of them. Campos stated that they discussed how the brain stores material, retains information, and becomes elastic and decays as well as different strategies for note-taking, how skills fit with personality, and career assessments.

Gamble agreed that the course was different from some others in the category, much like the Philosophy course approved by UGEC, which was critical thinking about critical thinking. He stated that in this case he saw UNIV 1010 students critically thinking about themselves as college students. He thought that the course best fit in this category as well. Warner Cribb asked why this was being proposed as an Explorations course rather than a Foundations course. Gray-Hildenbrand questioned the sequencing—since this was a course primarily taken by first-semester freshmen, they would not be “exploring” a discipline (Social Sciences) that they had not yet learned about. Instead of being exploratory, she thought that it was foundational to the university experience, reinforcing Cribb’s point. Severn thought that it might better fit as a Disciplinary Knowledge course within the Human Society and Social Relationships category rather than as an Explorations course. However, Myers-Shirk reiterated that the committee had decided that only legacy courses could become Disciplinary Knowledge courses at this initial point in the development of the True Blue Core. Cribb agreed with Severn’s suggestion but recognized the constraints that UGEC had put on what courses could go into what categories at this point. Gray-Hildenbrand reiterated her belief that it fit better as a Foundational writing course, but Duncan pointed out that although there is a lot of writing in the course, the ePortfolio is not a class essay.

At this point in the discussion, Gamble suggested that although he supports the proposal as is, it might make sense for the department to consider the ideas expressed by committee members over the summer and resubmit the proposal in the fall, when there would still be time to have it approved for the launch of the True Blue Core. Gray-Hildenbrand asked if the department could change the proposal after the committee had voted on it. Gamble stated that next year’s committee could consider it either as is or in altered form (if the department decided to do that). Cribb stated that if he voted against the proposal it would be because it does not see it as an Explorations course, not because he didn’t think it was a good and important course. Gray-Hildenbrand stated that she believed in the integrity and beauty of the Gen Ed Core. Severn stated that next year’s committee might loosen some of the constraints to allow for movement of courses. Kirk stated that the committee’s choice to make all legacy courses Disciplinary Knowledge served the goals of the committee at that time but may not hold over time. Gamble stated that the approval of courses will help to further define the categories. There being no further discussion, the committee voted on the proposal as written, which passed by a vote of 8-3-1.

Foundational Skills: Non-Written Communication

The committee then shifted to consideration of the introductory foreign language courses (which are not legacy courses) that had been proposed for this category: ARAB / CHIN / FREN / GERM / ITAL / JAPN / LATN / PORT / RUSS / SPAN – 1010; ARAB / CHIN / FREN / GERM / ITAL / JAPN / LATN / PORT / RUSS / SPAN – 1020; ARAB / CHIN / FREN / GERM / ITAL / JAPN / LATN / PORT / RUSS / SPAN – 2010; ARAB / CHIN / FREN / GERM / ITAL / JAPN / LATN / PORT / RUSS / SPAN - 2020

Gray-Hildenbrand stated that she was excited by this proposal and was glad to see it in the Foundations section of the Core. She then asked Jeff Gibson what he thought about assessing Latin, since it is not a spoken language. Gibson stated that the College of Liberal Arts' Curriculum Committee had raised this issue, but Ann McCullough stated that the assessment of Latin—like the other languages—would also be in the form of an oral presentation. Gamble stated that the expectations for COMM 2200 were different, but in many ways, he thought that this assessment—having students answer questions in an interview format in a different language—was more challenging. McCullough stated that she anticipated that these interviews would be video-recorded in order to capture the embodied elements of this type of communication. Virginia Hemby-Grubb agreed, stating that the nonverbal elements would otherwise be lost.

Conversation then shifted to how testing out of a foreign language might impact assessment of this student learning outcome. Gray-Hildenbrand wanted confirmation that a student who tested out of a foreign-language requirement would not avoid assessment of this student learning outcome. Myers-Shirk said that this is a separate requirement. Cribb expressed his happiness to see World Languages back in the General Education curriculum; he thought that the oral examination portion of the proposal was outstanding but would be a huge amount of work. McCullough stated that some students have never had foreign language instruction in high school due to a shortage of teachers. Jeff Gibson averred that the committee had answered the questions raised by the college curriculum committee, especially the perception of Latin as an exclusively written language and the expectation that students in their first semester could express an appropriate level of proficiency (although it will not be the same level of proficiency as students in COMM 2200). Severn reiterated that students who test into a higher-level course have to take that course in order to receive credit—they can't just test out. Cribb called the question and the courses were approved by a vote of 12-0-0.

The committee finished its formal work at 1:56 p.m. At this point, Myers-Shirk thanked the members of the committee for their level of commitment and investment in General Education. She thanked them for being willing to have difficult decisions and keep coming back to the table. She also thanked the departmental liaisons for their amazing work. She also expressed her excitement for the work next year on Blueprints and adding study abroad courses to the core. Melton asked Myers-Shirk to notify the departments that had courses on the agenda but no representatives present. Gamble stated that these courses would be approved by him (on behalf of the committee), Myers-Shirk, and the Provost's Office, which would serve to notify the departments. The committee officially adjourned at 2:00 p.m.