University General Education Committee meeting minutes
8 April 2022 via Zoom

Present: Lando Carter, Keith Gamble, Virginia Hemby-Grubb, Leon Alligood, Mark Frame, Deana Raffo, Rachel Kirk, Sungyoon Lee, Scott McDaniel, Ryan Otter, Laura White, Janet Colson, Amy Sayward, Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Keely O'Brien, Rebecca Fischer, Terry Goodin

Ex Officio Susan Myers-Shirk, Chris Brewer, Amy Aldridge Sanford, Jeff Gibson, David Carleton

Guests: Katie Brackett, Kate Holt, Brian Frank, Beth Wright, Kari Neely, Kristen West, Christabel Devadoss,

Introductory matters:
Lando Carter, committee chair, welcomed the members. He asked if there were any edits or questions about the minutes from the previous meeting, which had been circulated in advance. There being no questions or concerns, the minutes were considered approved.

University comment:
Susan Myers-Shirk, General Education Director, then explained that the university comment period would end on Monday, but that she thought it appropriate to continue it slightly beyond that to allow additional input from the Faculty Senate, which would be meeting to discuss redesign on Monday afternoon. Hearing no objections, she moved to summarize some of the content from the university comment period, including clear evidence that members of the History Department were clearly distressed. She pointed out that this departmental letter as well as the questions from the Chairs Council and the statement from the College of Liberal Arts Chairs could all be found in the comment folder that all committee members can access. She also explained that the resolution from the Chairs Council had prompted the meeting of the committee with the Provost, the Chairs, and the Deans that has been scheduled for Tuesday, April 12th at 2 p.m. Depending on the Provost and the Chairs Council, the meeting may be able to be recorded so that University General Education Committee (UGEC) members unable to attend can learn more about what was covered.

In terms of the six town halls held during the comment period, they were well attended, and committee members can view the recordings for any of the sessions that they were not able to attend in person. She summarized that they had served their purpose of allowing an open forum for faculty members to voice their criticisms and to offer suggestions. She hoped that the university committee heard that the committee has a range of views on the models presented and the issues that they raise. At the next regularly scheduled University General Education Committee meeting, the committee will discuss how best to respond to the body of university comment in terms of the models proposed and possible revisions.

In terms of student feedback, Myers-Shirk explained that the proposed models had not yet been sent to students across campus, because it was feared that they would assume that these were the models that had been approved. However, she would be meeting with the Student Government Association (SGA) on April 18th, and in preparation for that meeting, she and Kathryn Brackett had created some student-facing materials about the proposed models and would be seeking SGA feedback.

Myers-Shirk said that the Design Team had also started imagining possible responses to the university feedback, including further work on the current curriculum. As part of this, they had created a document that shoed the current catalog information that students see with the ways in which the current categories are designed and constrained, which she shared with the committee. She asked that committee members familiarize themselves with the current curriculum ahead of the next meeting.

The focus of today's meeting will be to complete the committee's work on the annual assessment reports from COMM 2200 and ENGL 1010 and 1020 and to advance the work of the other subcommittees. She asked all committee members to please review the campus comment folder ahead of the next meeting on April 15th.

Myers-Shirk pointed out that most of the participation in the survey came from the College of Liberal Arts, and especially from the History Department. The campus comment folder is available at: https://mtmailmtsu-my.sharepoint.com/personal/kfialka_mtsu_edu/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fkfialka%5Fmtsu%5Fedu%2FDocuments%2FGen%20Ed%2FGen%20Ed%20Shared%20Documents%2F2022%5FSpring%20Semester%20Redesign%2FGen%20Ed%20Committee%2DSpring%202022%2FCampus%20Comment&ga=1

Kathryn Brackett explained that there were more than one hundred responses received so far through the website, the survey, and emails. Rachel Kirk asked how the committee will group, address, and sort the totality of the university comment. Myers-Shirk said that some responses were similar and that it would be important to incorporate responses with due diligence. Keith Gamble encouraged all UGEC members to review the university comments on their own time to start digesting that content so that the new model will embody the committee's response to that feedback. Mark Frame suggested that the best way to do this is to identify common themes among the responses and then list the more specific feedback under those themes. Brackett agreed that there are some visible patterns emerging already.

UGEC Subcommittee Reports:
Carter then explained that the next part of the meeting would be divided into the work of the subcommittees, which would report back to the whole committee after thirty minutes. UGEC members then moved into their subcommittee break-out rooms. Following the thirty-minute subcommittee meetings, Carter called for reports.

Beth Wright reported for the Assessment Development Committee. She explained that the subcommittee plans to primarily recommend the AAC&U (American Association of Colleges & Universities) rubrics and outcomes, which will affect the Course Approval Subcommittee. Carter affirmed that those two subcommittees would be working together later in the meeting.

Kirk reported for the subcommittee considering assessment of the current General Education outcomes. The subcommittee was very pleased with the work of COMM 2200 and ENGL 1010 and 1020 in their assessment and thought that some of their methods could be adapted and used for the new redesigned curriculum. She especially highlighted how these reports had taken into consideration those courses that were taught in hybrid, face-to-face, prescribed, and MT Engage formats. The subcommittee had also spoken in depth about the need for a clear infrastructure of assessment to be created with the new redesigned General Education curriculum that could undertake similar types of assessment across multiple categories. She said that the subcommittee is "hanging its hat" on a True Blue Center that can development the appropriate infrastructure of assessment and adopt some of the best practices already developed in these programs, including good norming practices that utilize faculty who are provided with stipends for their work.

Myers-Shirk explained that there was currently not a report from on the Math assessment, because the pandemic had necessitated a different type of assessment that did not produce the data needed to conduct its traditional assessment. However, MTSU's accreditation requires some report; a narrative report is expected sometime in mid to late May.

Laura White then reported for the subcommittee on the Outstanding Teaching Award in General Education. She summarized that the subcommittee was in awe of the amazing thing that our faculty are doing. The subcommittee was able to reach consensus on the highest scoring candidate; that award will be made at the Fall Faculty meeting. There were also suggestions from the subcommittee on how to improve the quality of student input (rather than relying solely on student course evaluations that are completed at lower rates now) and to make the process more streamlined and clearer.

Gamble reported for the Course Approval Subcommittee, summarizing that a primary goal is to get UGEC out of the catalog-management business, which is the proper work of the University Curriculum Committee (UCC), so that UGEC can focus solely on whether an approved course should or should not be part of the General Education curriculum. To that end, he suggested working with the Faculty Senate to eliminate language in Policy 32 (which is being reviewed this year) on courses that are no longer part of the General Education curriculum having to be reapproved by the UCC, as no new courses will be approved by UGEC rather than the UCC.

Gamble also explained the subcommittee's goal of simplifying the course-approval process by eliminating the need for college approval as part of the UGEC process and by adopting a single course-approval form (rather than the several category-based approval forms that exist in the current model). Structural changes, by policy, require a UGEC majority vote, two-week

university comment period, and 2/3 vote of the committee. However, non-structural changes (such as course-name changes) should be the purview of the UCC and not require a two-step UGEC approval and university comment period. And the subcommittee recommends a course-approval process that requires only a simple majority of the committee members present. Further work on the course-approval form requires knowing what model will be adopted and how assessment will work, as assessment will be central in the new course-adoption process.

Myers-Shirk asked about what would happen for courses that were being proposed specifically as General Education courses. Gamble said that question had also come up in subcommittee discussions and that simultaneous or contingent approvals could address that concern—i.e., the UCC could approve a course contingent on it being accepted as a General Education course. Carter stated that he thought the goal of clarity and simplicity made sense, especially in light of the response at the town hall meetings. Amy Sayward added that she had heard in the town halls a repeated call for a more functional course-approval process for General Education. Myers-Shirk said that she would also be in conversation with the Vice Provost for Academic Programs about the relationship between UCC and UGEC.

Joint Assessment and Course-Approval Subcommittee Discussion:
At this point, the UGEC meeting as a whole ended, but the course-approval and assessment subcommittees remained in order to talk about the conjunction between the work of the two subcommittees. Gamble asked what would be needed for assessment, because that is what needs to be included in the course-approval process. Mark Frame responded that the short answer was a General Education Center. Ryan Otter responded that he agreed entirely. The subcommittee had focused on the AAC&U framework, which is robust, a larger governing body, universal across topics and content, and includes good video resources to help faculty understand the assessment process. Connecting that framework to the current outcomes should not be hard.

Brackett added that there is on-going discussion on whether there should be only embedded or only UGEC assessment methods, and that decision will impact how faculty apply for course approval. A possibility, like MT Engage and Experiential Learning (EXL), is to have faculty choose which markers they are assessing with a specific assignment, but those conversations and decisions are in the future. Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand said that when she looks at institutions using the AAC&U rubrics that she has not seen any requiring one type of measure. They seem to offer examples but do not require one type of measure. She thought the most important thing was to assess the outcome from the start, in the middle, and at the end—not just at the end. These are the types of information that the Center can gather and track over time. Frame explained that the Assessment Subcommittee needs to give the Course-Approval Subcommittee a means of evaluating the degree to which the courses (and faculty who teach them) are meeting the assessment criteria. Gamble added that having attended three general education conferences, he has learned that the AAC&U rubrics are amazing, having been refined through multiple iterations. He believed strongly that there needs to be an

independent assessor using those rubrics; faculty assessment of their students' own work (beyond course requirements for a grade, which is also important) is not likely to yield quality results helpful for assessing the General Education curriculum as a whole. Whether we are able to evaluate every student at the beginning and end of a course will depend on the resources of the Center, which will be doing the hard work of assessment independently. Wright and Gray-Hildenbrand explained that the tweaks they had discussed were minor, primarily to align the language with the outcomes.

Otter stated that the General Education Center is vital to the entire process of general education redesign. He is working on developing a conceptual model of how this will work—assessment and course approval are significant pieces of that puzzle, but the General Education Center is central and should be part of how UGEC begins talking about redesign to the Provost and across campus. Other key components include the Provost's office, UCC, and UGEC. Carter and Gamble both agreed that this type of mapping would be important to the work and communications of the UGEC moving forward. Gray-Hildenbrand said that she had not heard any negative comments from the town halls about the Center beyond concerns about how it would be funded. Gamble said that he thought that the Center was essential for working beyond the departments to handle assessment and "close the loop." Gray-HIldenbrand said that she believed that the Center would be better able to incentivize faculty, give them resources and support to make them better able to meet the learning outcomes.

Frame suggested that perhaps a good way to proceed—after the models, rubrics, and course-approval process have been set—would be to take one of the large general education courses from each of the colleges (like "Introduction to Psychology") and have UGEC field test it, pilot all the processes before a complete roll-out, which would give UGEC concrete answers about what the process would mean. Otter described this as a runway toward full transition to redesign. This might allow the departments and UGEC a year to work together to develop the new redesigned courses and make the overall redesign process more efficient. The timing of this would depend on the launch date, the teach-out period, and the model ultimately approved. Communication will be key, and members of the committee could travel to departments/colleges (like with Digital Measures) to communicate the vision and methods of course approval. And having a longer roll-out could mean a better set of new course proposals at the beginning of the process, rather than receiving and rejecting proposals at the front end. Frame elaborated that he did not think that an MT Engage-like process across all university General Education courses was likely to provide consistent data on the outcomes. The clearer and more specific guidance that UGEC can provide to departments in the course-approval process, the better. It would also be better to have a lot of solid submissions in year two that are easier to process and approve—and that are prepared to assess the outcomes—than to rush the process. Carter stated that he thought that piloting assessment in the first year is a great idea.

The subcommittees' joint meeting adjourned at 3:59 p.m.