

## University General Education Committee

March 17, 2023, in JUB 100

### Meeting minutes

**Voting members present:** Keith Gamble (chair), Leon Alligood, Nita Brooks, Janet Colson, Warner Cribb, Terry Goodin, Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Yi Gu, Mark Frame, Virginia Hemby-Grubb (via Zoom), Rachel Kirk, Sungyoon Lee, Ann McCullough, Scott McDaniel, Keely O'Brien, Amy Sayward, Cheyenne Sweeley

**Voting Members Absent:** Rebecca Fischer, Sydney Fischer, Angela Hooser

**Ex-Officio:** Jeff Gibson, Susan Myers-Shirk, Stephen Severn

**Others present:** Rebecca Calahan, Christina Cobb, Betsy Dalton, Christabel Devadoss (via Zoom), Matt Duncan, Thomas Hudson, Robb McDaniel, Tammy Melton, Joseph Morgan, Kari Neely, Michael Roach, Gregory Slack, Kristen West (via Zoom)

#### Introductory matters:

Keith Gamble, chair of the University General Education Committee (UGEC), convened the meeting at 12:30 p.m., welcoming all in attendance. He reviewed the committee's procedures, which included meeting in person (with accommodations provided for those who have to attend via Zoom) with a focus on discussing the course proposals submitted—a key part of the committee's charge. He encouraged voting members of the committee to feel free to make and second motions, making their voices heard. The committee's culture has been that all motions will be discussed. He commented that the committee's process for reviewing course proposals has improved with practice and focuses appropriately on whether the course allows students to meet the outcomes on the rubric. He then asked if there were any questions on procedure.

Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand asked if there was a quorum of voting members present. A count found that twelve voting members were present, which Gamble stated was a quorum.

Susan Myers-Shirk informed the committee that Debbie Perry's last day had been Wednesday and that the True Blue Core Center's new executive aide, Angela Parish, would be starting on Monday. She had prior experience at MTSU and is coming from work in the dean's office at Motlow State Community College.

The committee then turned to the minutes. Amy Sayward, UGEC secretary, apologized for not completing the minutes from the February meeting ahead of this meeting and asked for an opportunity to recast the minutes that Myers-Shirk had completed in the breach so that they would better fit her goal of providing a clear communication of the committee's work to the university community. Gamble spoke of the importance of the minutes, especially from the May meeting, in informing the on-going work of the committee. There was consensus that this would be appropriate, and so approval of the February minutes was tabled until the next meeting.

**Consideration of courses in the category of Creative and Cultural Expression:**

Gamble referred to the committee's agenda; it would start with consideration of two legacy courses to be considered for the "disciplinary knowledge" area and one new course to be considered for the "explorations" area of the creative and cultural expression category of the new, redesigned curriculum. Courses in this category meet the C1 outcome (Students will demonstrate intercultural understanding by building knowledge, self-awareness, and conceptions of global and intercultural perspectives, values, systems, and attitudes.). Myers-Shirk encouraged UGEC members to go to the agenda in Curriculog to review the courses.

The committee first considered HUM 2610: World Literatures. Kari Neely from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures was present to answer the committee's questions, and Anne McCullough, vice chair of UGEC, was the course originator. There being no questions about the course proposal, the committee voted to approve this course 16-0-0.

Gamble then called the committee's attention to the proposal for MUHL 1610: The World of Music, which would be a course in the disciplinary knowledge area of the creative and cultural expression category. Joseph Morgan from the School of Music was present to answer committee questions. There being no questions, the committee voted 16-0-0 to approve this course.

Gamble then pointed to the next course proposal, which was a new course that would be potentially be added to the "explorations" area of the creative and cultural expression category--FL 1000: Intersections of Language and Culture. Kary Neely was also present to answer questions on this course. There being now questions, the committee approved the course 16-0-0.

**Consideration of courses in the Scientific Literacy category:**

Gamble then moved the committee to focus on courses in the scientific literacy category, which meet the B2 learning outcome of inquiry and analysis (Students will systematically explore issues, problems, objects, and works through the collection and analysis of evidence, identification of informed conclusions, and analysis of complex topics by breaking them down.). He also clarified that all of the courses under consideration had corequisite labs, although those labs were noted in different ways for the different courses in Curriculog. Myers-Shirk informed the committee that she had a meeting scheduled with Mitzi Brandon, the Curriculum Specialist in the Provost's Office, on Monday to clarify the wording to make it clear that the lab and course are to be considered a single unit by UGEC, probably by clarifying the wording in Curriculog and requesting that the lab course number be included. Gamble stated that since the committee was using Curriculog in a new way, it is not surprising that there will be some bugs and some questions from the course originators.

Gamble then asked if there was a representative from Chemistry as the committee moved to consider its courses. Tammy Melton, UGEC Implementation Team, stated that she was prepared to answer questions about those courses as well as the Topics in Physical Science course proposal. Gamble asked if there were any questions about CHEM 1010: Introductory General Chemistry, which is a legacy course

that would be in the disciplinary knowledge area of the Scientific Inquiry category. He pointed out that the assessable assignment for this course takes place in the lab. There being no questions, the committee voted to approve CHEM 1010 by a vote of 17-0-0.

Gamble then moved to consideration of CHEM 1030: Chemistry for Consumers, which was also a legacy course that would become part of the disciplinary knowledge area of the Scientific Inquiry category. Myers-Shirk stated that she would like to take this course. There being no further comments or questions, the committee voted to approve the course 17-0-0.

The committee then considered PSCI 1030/1031: Topics in Physical Science, which was also a legacy course being considered for the disciplinary knowledge area. There being no questions, the committee voted to approve the course 17-0-0.

In considering, CHEM 1110: General Chemistry I, the committee also had no questions and voted to approve the course 17-0-0.

The last of the courses proposed for the scientific literacy category was GEOL 1040/1041: Physical Geology. Warner Cribb, UGEC voting member, was the representative from the Department of Geosciences. Gamble expressed his appreciation for the assessable assignment, which required students to use the most recent earthquake data, a data set that is always changing and therefore changing our understanding of this phenomenon. Cribb explained that the course also requires students to use real-time volcano and climate data, which means that every student gets different data based on when they pulled the data. Gamble said that he loved that our students would be using these unique data sets, and he said that when he looked at the assignments, he could clearly imagine being able to score the assignment against the inquiry and analysis rubric. There being no further comments or questions, the committee voted to approve the course 17-0-0.

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

Before Gamble moved to consideration of the courses being proposed, he explained that there had been an error in the committee's previous consideration of ECON 2420: Principles of Economics, Microeconomics. The agenda called for consideration of ECON 2420, but Curriculog's agenda had ECON 2410 (Principles of Economics, Macroeconomics). Myers-Shirk explained that some UGEC members who worked through the committee folders reviewed ECON 2420, while those working through Curriculog reviewed ECON 2410. These are different courses with different assessable assignments, so to eliminate any confusion and to provide clarity, the committee is going to reconsider ECON 2420 (Microeconomics) and is going to consider ECON 2410 (Macroeconomics). She also explained that committee members are being urged to work through the agenda function in Curriculog to help avoid such a problem does not recur in the future. Gamble also stated that the committee would consider them separately, one at a time, in order to ensure clarity for all committee members.

Michael Roach, the course originator for both courses from the Department of Economics and Finance, was present to answer questions about the courses. These courses were both legacy courses being considered for the disciplinary knowledge area of the Human Society and Relationships category, which

meets critical thinking student learning outcome B1 (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.). There being no questions about ECON 2410: Principles of Economics, Macroeconomics, the committee voted to approve the course 17-0-0. There being no questions or comments about the proposal for ECON 2420: Principles of Economics, Microeconomics, the committee voted to approve the course 17-0-0.

The next course being considered the Human Society and Social Relationships category was PS 1005: Introduction to American Politics, which was also a legacy course being considered for the disciplinary knowledge area. Rob McDaniel, the course originator and the representative from the Department of Political Science and International Relations, was present to answer questions. He stated that this was the department's most popular introductory course. Myers-Shirk commented that she was really excited that the department had chosen to include a secondary outcome for this course (which was civic learning). She explained that although there will not be assessment of secondary outcomes in the first round of assessment to follow the launch, many departments have been hesitant to include a secondary outcome, which would likely be assessed in the future. There being no further comments or questions, the committee voted 17-0-0 in favor of the proposal.

Gamble pointed out that the next course on the committee's agenda, PHIL 2110: Elementary Logic and Critical Thinking, was a new course proposal, which was being considered for the explorations area of the Human Society and Social Relationships category. Greg Slack from the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies was present (again) to answer any questions about the course, though he stated that Ron Bombardi, who primarily teaches the course, regretted not being able to attend. Gamble commented that this course was different from the others in the category insofar as it entails critical thinking about critical thinking; therefore it meets the rubric differently than the rest of the courses. He commented that the questions drew him in, as they were intriguing. Slack accepted this characterization of the course on behalf of Bombardi. There being no further comments or questions, the committee approved the course by a vote of 17-0-0.

#### **Consideration of course proposals in the Quantitative Literacy category:**

Gamble then moved to the last category of courses being considered, Quantitative Literacy, which meets the D1 outcome (Students will demonstrate the ability to interpret, represent, calculate, apply, and analyze numerical data in a variety of settings, and will make assumptions and communicate those assumptions based on quantitative information.). The first course to be considered was MATH 1630: College Mathematics for Managerial, Social, and Life Sciences. Jen Lovett, the course originator, and Rebecca Calahan, the departmental liaison for the Department of Mathematical Sciences, were both present to answer questions about the course. Gray-Hildenbrand asked if this was a legacy course, which Gamble affirmed it was.

Sayward asked, since this course was required by specific majors, whether it was broad enough to be included as a General Education course, since this was a question that the committee has asked of other courses. Gamble stated that this course does provide a foundation in quantitative literacy that was particularly helpful for students in the managerial sciences but that the course was not so narrow that it

should be excluded from General Education. Calahan stated that the course included a mix of college algebra, linear algebra, probability, and statistics and that most of the examples are primarily drawn from those disciplines. Rachel Kirk asked if the course designers had consulted with other departments, colleges, and faculty. Calahan said that they did reach out to faculty in the College of Business regularly to make sure the course is meeting its students' needs, and Myers-Shirk said that this course might be particularly well positioned for a future "blueprint" of General Education courses that are related to one another that students could choose for their affinity. Sayward then revisited Kirk's question, asking if the course designers similarly consulted with faculty in the social and life sciences, such as Sociology and Biology. Calahan said that she believed that the exercises in the course also addressed the social and life sciences.

Anne McCullough said that the title of the course gave her pause, given that it is a General Education course, but she did not find the course proposal to be problematic. Calahan replied that as she and her department were working on the proposals for the eight MATH courses, they decided to keep them as they were, except for meeting the new learning proposals. Scott McDaniel pointed out that there was a section in the course that dealt with Finance, but that the course as a whole extends beyond the financial applications. Gray-Hildenbrand said that when Calahan had last visited the committee, she had talked about using "why" and "how" as a way to understand the potential difference between a MATH course that explained to a student why the mathematical equations worked as they did and an applied course that would explain how to use mathematical equations to solve a particular type of problem. In other words, especially given that the redesigned General Education curriculum does not include an explorations area for the Foundational Skills category (due to the limited number of hours in General Education), she wanted to know from the MATH faculty members present how this course, that is focused on a set of disciplines, is different from applied work.

Calahan responded that she believed that the course did both, explaining the math that is used behind the applications—for example, both being able to make a graph (understanding the why) and being able to read a graph (understanding the how). It teaches the basics of mathematics first and then the applications. She also explained that this course likely has more applications than most of the others. Gray-Hildenbrand expressed the belief that this type of function is what the explorations area does in other categories; it takes the applications of the disciplinary knowledge and explores ways of applying it to other areas. Calahan stated that perhaps this course was a better fit for an explorations area, but Myers-Shirk reminded the committee that the Foundational Skills category in the redesign did not add additional hours to what was a three-hour bloc in the legacy Math category. Gray-Hildenbrand asked what the committee should do with courses that might seem to fit more into an explorations area than a disciplinary knowledge area when there was no explorations area.

Mark Frame added that having a number of courses in the Quantitative Literacy category, all of which might not prepare a student well for an upper-division statistics or mathematics requirement would increase the challenges for students and advisors in choosing the best General Education course to prepare them for their major. Myers-Shirk stated that redesign did not create this challenge. Majors cannot require—but only recommend—a General Education course, that there has to be room in the major for additional required courses—i.e., all majors have to be able to be completed by a student within 120 hours, regardless of the student's General Education courses. Frame countered that the

redesigned General Education course, with more and more courses, would make it harder for students and advisors to find their way forward. He did not believe that this problem was specific to this course, but he thought it a good time to raise his general concern.

Kirk did express a specific concern with the course, stating that she did not believe there was a close fit between the course and the needs of those in the social and life sciences. She believed that there should be a closer fit, perhaps more focus on demographics. Nita Brooks noted that the course seemed (based on a scan of the catalog) to be a prerequisite for Physics, Engineering, and Agriculture as well as the College of Business. Myers-Shirk interjected that moving this Math course out of the Foundational Knowledge category at this point was ill-advised and suggested that the issue might be revisited in future years, after the redesigned curriculum is launched. Gray-Hildenbrand said that she was not thinking about excluding this course so much as how it relates to the Finance course that the committee has also been considering.

Steve Severn, representing Chairs Council, moved beyond the specific course at hand to express his and the chairs' concerns about how adding additional courses to General Education would complicate advising. This was why the Chairs Council had not wanted to see a dramatic restructuring of General Education. While he acknowledged that advising was not under the purview of UGEC, the work of committee would absolutely impact advising. He expressed concerns about both advisors and students making the best choices within the redesigned General Education curriculum. Gamble asked Myers-Shirk to share her pre-launch plans for working intensively with the advisors. McCullough interjected her concern that this committee becomes the dumping ground for all sorts of problems across the university; but advising is not the purview of the committee.

Sayward moved that the committee consider both MATH 1630 and FIN 2010 as a package, since both had raised similar questions. There was no second to the motion. Kirk stated that her concern was about the breadth of both courses, since the D1 outcome called for students to use "numerical data in a variety of settings." She thought the MATH 1630 course could be improved by including an assignment that addresses demographics, although she admitted that this might not prepare students for sociology and anthropology. Scott McDaniel stated that the course used basic probability, modeling situations on the normal curve, and basic statistics applied to a variety of settings.

Gamble stated that Severn had brought up a good point in noting that the redesign of General Education will change advising. Therefore he wanted the committee to know that Myers-Shirk was working on this. Myers-Shirk explained that she had met with the advising managers the previous week, and they had spoken about what the True Blue Core would look like in Degree Works. She was also involved in on-going conversations with Tyler Henson and Teresa Thomas about how to integrate this curriculum into Banner, Pipeline, and other university mechanisms. Another meeting with the advisors has been scheduled with the advisors to develop a plan for the upcoming year of the launch with a special focus on how to help students make choices that align with their interests. Severn reiterated that the committee needs to be cognizant of advising issues, though it could not fix them. Frame stated that although advising did not fall within the committee's purview that it similarly could not act as if it were in a silo.

Frame called the question on MATH 1630. A majority (15-2-1) voted in favor of the proposal.

Gamble then asked Myers-Shirk to share the discussion that the Implementation Team had had about ways of thinking about courses in the Foundational categories. Based on this conversation (which resulted in an even division among members of the Implementation Team) and the conversations of UGEC, she had summarized two different perspectives, meant to offer guidance to committee members as they thought about their votes on new courses in Foundational Skills both today and moving forward. The first perspective/philosophy thought that Foundational courses should prepare students for future courses and their majors and that therefore there were likely to be a limited number of courses in these Foundational categories. The second perspective/philosophy held that Foundational courses should prepare students primarily for life through real-world examples; this philosophy would likely result in more courses being added to the Foundational categories. Frame asked if SACSCOC took one of these perspectives when it came to General Education courses. Myers-Shirk said no and stated that the redesigned structure, especially with its disciplinary knowledge areas, would meet SACSCOC requirements. Warner Cribb stated that in reading the statutory requirements, there is no requirement for specific disciplines, such as MATH or ENGL, in General Education. Myers-Shirk added that for SACSCOC, natural science and mathematics are considered a unit. Cribb expanded that the state statute requires the transfer of General Education courses as a bloc; it does not say that a specific MATH courses offered at one college or university has to be offered at another university.

Cribb then stated that there was not statutory bar to the FIN course being in the Quantitative Literacy category. Kirk states that she believed that the FIN course best fit with the Information Literacy rubric, which has not yet been discussed by the committee. Severn asked if the committee could reassign a course to another area of the curriculum. Myers-Shirk said that it could suggest resubmission under a different area of the redesigned curriculum. McCullough said that the committee has to decide whether a course, its outcomes, and its assessable assignment fits the rubric or not.

Cribb reiterated that Gamble had submitted the course as a Foundational Skills, Quantitative Literacy, course, so the committee needed to vote on whether or not it fits that outcome; Gamble averred. Cribb stated that if the committee voted not to add it to this category that a member of the committee could make a motion about suggesting alternative placement in the General Education curriculum. However, he felt strongly that the committee needed to move forward and make a decision in light of the additional information that Gamble had provided for his proposed course, deciding whether it fits the outcomes and the rubric for this category. Brooks objected that the originator of this course had been asked by the committee to provide so much more documentation than any of the other courses in the category. Sayward responded that she believed that this course, which had been one of the first that UGEC considered, had been the focus of the committee's process of defining its role and its method in approving courses, which had unfortunately resulted in a more elaborate process for this course.

Gamble then turned out chairing of the meeting to McCullough while the committee discussed the course that he had originated, FIN 2010/ECON 2110: Personal Financial Planning. Frame stated that he appreciated the documentation from the Implementation Team that helped him better understand the other perspective. He believed that 90% of all courses taught would fit under Perspective 2. Terry Goodin asked whether there was not a way to see a course bridging the two philosophies. Sayward said

that certainly a course could prepare a student for success in future courses and in situations beyond the university. Goodin averred that he believed that the document created an artificial divide between success at the university and in “real life” and that students are trying to figure out both. He believed that a lot of the courses that the committee had considered already spanned both perspectives.

Gray-Hildenbrand asked her colleagues in Mathematics if they might assess the additional materials provided by the Department of Economics and Finance that Cribb had requested in the previous meeting. She stated that this was a lot of additional information that the committee had not requested from other courses in the Quantitative Literacy category. Cribb stated he was satisfied after looking through all of the materials that a student who completes this course has the opportunity to achieve success in the Quantitative Literacy outcome. He stated that he defines answering this question as the purview of the committee and that Gamble had done a good job of answering that question with the additional documentations.

McDaniel stated that all of the applications of mathematics in the course are specifically related to finance. There is a broad array of problems posed by the course, but they all relate to Finance. However, the assessable assignment is applicable to the Quantitative Literacy rubric, the outcomes can be measured, and they can be rated. They did, however, seem a little narrow in scope and specific. McDaniel wondered out loud how transferable the skills learned in this class would be, because it was not clear to him how the equations used in the course would be utilized by students.

Frame asked if there had been any change in support from the College of Business and the Department of Economics and Finance. Gamble affirmed that the course has and has had unanimous departmental support. The Dean of the College of Business had not approved the course, which had not stopped the process of it advancing for consideration by UGEC. Frame asked whether UGEC should approve something that the college’s dean had not. McCullough stated that the role of the dean was to review, not approve courses for General Education. She averred that UGEC has the right, power, and authority to approve a course for inclusion in the General Education curriculum. Frame pushed back and asked if UGEC should approve a course that the department had not approved, simply at the initiative of a single faculty member. McCullough stated that the committee would consider the reasons for non-approval. Myers-Shirk stated that the reasons that the Dean of the College of Business had not approved this course for inclusion in the General Education curriculum were tied to the legacy—rather than the redesigned--model of General Education: the ability to offer a large number of sections of the course and the statement that this was not a MATH course. Conversation continued about what level of departmental and college support should be required before UGEC considers a course for inclusion in the curriculum.

Sayward then called the question for a vote on FIN 2010/ECON 2110. The course was approved by the committee by a vote of 14-2-0. Calahan asked that the new materials also be included in Curriculog, and Gamble stated that he would certainly do that.

Cribb closed the meeting by reflecting on the redesign process—from both the committee member and course originator perspective. He stated that originating a course required him to think about the complexities of designing an assessable assignment that could be assessed by non-specialists in the True



Blue Core Center. He stated that he had not realized how challenging this would be when the committee was writing the outcomes. Then he spoke as a representative of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences (CBAS), stating that he thought that there was a problem in the wording of the outcome of the Quantitative Literacy category that has significantly broadened the category. In retrospect, he stated that he wished that members of his college had been more engaged with the redesign process. He stated that the categories will ultimately be defined by the courses that UGEC accepts into each category. He thought that the broadening of courses within the Scientific Inquiry category was unlikely to affect CBAS students significantly, but it is likely to affect CBAS faculty. He concluded that the university community should pay a lot more attention to the work of this committee. Myers-Shirk stated that everyone should keep in mind that this General Education redesign process is not a static process. The assessment of courses is meant to understand what courses are—and potentially are not—helping students to meet the required outcomes. She imagined this as a reflective process rather than a compliance process.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.