

## General Education Committee Meeting Minutes

**Date:** Friday November 1, 2013

**In Attendance:** Jeff Gibson, Aimee Holt, Jan Leone, Nancy McCormick, Peg McCree, Jazmin Mercer, Keri Neely, Sheila Otto, Andrew Owusu, Nate Phillips, Deana Raffo, Georganne Ross, Tom Strawman, Blake Taylor, Douglas Timmons, Rachel Wilson, & John Zamora

### Notes:

1. Approval of minutes from meeting 9/27/13
2. 2012-2013 General Education Assessment Reports:
  - Sheila Otto presented a brief history of General Education Assessment at MTSU
    - She explained that both SACS and the TBR require annual assessment of student learning outcomes for Math, Written and Oral Communication as well as Critical Thinking.
    - Sheila noted that the two most important aspects of these reports were (a) how programs used the previous student outcome data to improve courses (i.e., assessment report question 7), and (b) what strategies programs plan to implement to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the current assessment (i.e., assessment report question 6)
  - Peg McCree presented the Oral Communication Assessment: COMM 2200 report.
    - Peg first reported on the *5 student learning outcomes*: A random sample of students had their informative speech outlines and persuasive oral presentations evaluated using a scoring rubric.
      - *Outcome 1*: Regarding student outlines, 73% of those evaluated contained an appropriate purpose statement; this was down from the previous year (82%). However, 99% of those evaluated were able to communicate a primary purpose in their speech at the satisfactory level or higher, which was an increase from the previous year (92%).
      - *Outcome 2*: 93% of those evaluated were able to appropriately organize their persuasive speech at the satisfactory level or higher; this was an increase from the previous year (77%).
      - *Outcome 3*: 82% of the written outlines that were evaluated contained main points that were fully developed at the satisfactory or higher level. Additionally, 97% of the speeches that were evaluated contained appropriate supporting details at the satisfactory level or higher; this was an increase from the previous year (76%)
      - *Outcome 4*: Regarding student outlines, 98% of those evaluated were grammatically correct at the satisfactory or higher level. Additionally, 84% of the outlines that were evaluated contained appropriate and clear language at the satisfactory level or higher. For the speeches that were evaluated, 99% of them contained appropriate and reasonable language at the satisfactory or higher level.
      - *Outcome 5*: Regarding the outlines that were evaluated, 67% contained a bibliography that was rated as satisfactory or higher; this was an increase from the previous year (64%).
    - Peg then reported on efforts to improve based on the *use of the previous year's data*:
      - Based on last year's General Education committee recommendations, inter-rater reliability was calculated and found to be acceptable. For the 2013 evaluation, all six evaluators received 3 hours of training in order to achieve greater inter-rater reliability.
      - COMM 2200 sections were capped at a 25:1 student/faculty ratio, which is the ratio recommended by the National Communication Association.
      - In the fall of 2012 the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Art of Public Speaking* was adopted; this text included a web-based supplemental platform (Connect 2.0) that was customized. Specifically, several pages were added to the custom edition of the text that specifically

addressed outcomes I, III, IV and V. This may account, in part, for the improvements noted from the previous year.

- At the beginning of the fall 2013 semester, a joint workshop was held for the Gen. Ed faculty teaching courses in the Communication Core (Engl. 1010, Engl. 1020 and COMM 2200.) During the workshop, information was shared about course content in each of the gen. ed. courses and then an opportunity was provided for instructors from both disciplines to identify common instructional goals and course content.
- Finally, Peg reported on *plans for improvement based on this year's data*:
  - A fall and spring workshop will continue to be held for all COMM 2200 instructors. A portion of the spring 2014 workshop will be dedicated to reviewing the assessment outcomes for 2013 and discussing ways to improve all the outcomes. Particular emphasis will be placed on improving outcomes on the informative speech outlines, with special emphasis on improving Outcome I and Outcome V.
    - A review of additional supplemental materials will be conducted at the spring 2014 workshop in order to identify additional materials that should be added to the custom version of the text to improve outcomes in all areas.
  - Increased student assistance:
    - The coordinator will continue to work closely with the writing center to provide materials that will assist their consultants in assisting COMM 2200 students who may be referred to the writing center for assistance with outlines.
    - Faculty are working towards establishing a speaking center on campus that will provide additional assistance to students as they prepare for their various speaking assignments. Currently, two tutor positions have been approved.
  - *Committee Recommendations*: The committee voted to approve the report. The committee suggested that in the future, the report should contain a column in the table of data presented for question 4 that indicates for each learning objective whether or not improvement occurred from the previous year's assessment to assist with interpretation of the data being presented.
- Nancy McCormick presented the Mathematics Assessment: MATH 1710 report for Don Nelson
  - Nancy first reported on the *5 student learning outcomes*: Students learning outcomes are assessed using a common final exam for all students in MATH 1710: College Algebra.
    - *Outcome 1*: Regarding the ability to solve math problems, 72.5% of students performed in the satisfactory range or higher on the Math 1710 posttest, which was a decrease from last year (7.7% increase in unsatisfactory performance).
    - *Outcome 2*: On the Math 1710 posttest, 62.3% of the students performed in the satisfactory range or higher related to their ability to solve real life problems; this was a decrease from last year (11.5% increase in unsatisfactory performance).
    - *Outcome 3*: The same items used for learning outcome 2 were used to assess learning outcome 3, the ability to make connections between math concepts and other disciplines and therefore the results were the same as noted above.
    - *Outcome 4*: On the Math 1710 posttest, 71.6% of the students performed in the satisfactory range or higher on items assessing the students' ability to use technology to solve math problems, which was a decrease for the previous year (1.9% increase in unsatisfactory performance).
    - *Outcome 5*: Regarding the ability to apply math principles to analyzing data and graphs, 80.5% of the students performed in the satisfactory or higher range on the post-test. This was a decrease from the previous year (1.2% increase in unsatisfactory performance).

- The assessment report noted that the average ACT Math score of College Algebra students in fall 2012 was 19.9 and in spring 2013 it dropped to 18.4. Additionally, 40% of the students had ACT Math scores less than 19. ACT asserts that a student must earn at least 22 on the ACT Math exam in order to have a 50% change of earning a C or better in College Algebra; only 23.5% (less than a quarter) presented an ACT Math score of at least 22. In the analysis of the assessment data in the report, Don Nelson concluded that despite the drop in performance on the learning objectives, MTSU MATH 1710 instructors surpassed the ACT projection for student success.
- Nancy then reported on efforts to improve based on the *use of the previous year's data*:
  - In order to insure greater uniformity in syllabi, grading, and learning expectations, all instructors were required to have common information on syllabi and to use the same grading scale ranges.
  - Student Assistance:
    - Free tutoring labs were provided for students in Math 1710: College Algebra. These labs were open as many hours as tutoring staff were available.
      - Several tenured/tenure-track faculty members were given one-hour workload assignments to support the Department's tutoring labs.
    - Academic Intervention in Mathematics (AIM) was offered to promote success for those students that are repeating prescribed General Education mathematics courses.
    - Instructors intervened (e.g., use phone calls, emails, and Advisor Alerts to contact students) when any student was not making adequate progressing.
- Finally, Nancy reported on *plans for improvement based on this year's data*:
  - The Department of Mathematical Sciences appointed a Coordinator of General Education beginning fall 2013.
  - The Service Course Committee recommended an improvement in the sophistication and breadth of assessments for MATH 1710, including examinations that consist of different types of questions, not solely multiple-choice items.
  - The Department will continue to make efforts to more closely monitor all FTTs, GTAs, and Adjuncts teaching MATH 1710
    - The Department is working to improve oversight and supervision of GTAs in the Ph.D. program by reassigning faculty workload for that purpose beginning in spring 2014.
- *Committee Recommendations*: The committee voted to approve the report. In light of the high number of students taking MATH 1710 with ACT scores below the recommended level for success in college algebra (i.e. 22), the General Education Committee recommended that the assessment for this course be administered as a pre and post assessment. This would allow for an evaluation of gain scores among the students taking MATH 170, which would provide a more accurate picture of student learning during this course.
- Tom Strawman presented the Writing Assessment: ENGL 1020 report for Allison Smith
  - Tom first reported on the *5 TBR student learning outcomes*: 100% of instructors turned in papers for this assessment. Papers were selected for evaluation based on computer-generated randomizer. Scoring rubrics were used to assess 5.98% of the total sample of essays. Inter-rated reliability was found to range from 57% to 74%.
    - *Outcome 1*: Regarding students' ability to distill a primary argument into a single compelling statement, 64% of the essays evaluated were rated as satisfactory or higher; this was an increase from last year.

- *Outcome 2:* 55% of the essays that were evaluated were found to be organized at the satisfactory level or higher, which was a decrease from the previous year.
  - *Outcome 3:* Regarding the ability to develop ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns, 71% of the essays were evaluated at the satisfactory level or higher; this was an increase from last year.
  - *Outcome 4:* 61.5% of the essays were evaluated as having satisfactory or higher levels of correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.
  - *Outcome 5:* 57% of the essays had satisfactory or higher ratings for the ability to manage and coordinate information from multiple sources. This was an increase from the previous year's evaluation.
- Tom then reported on efforts to improve based on the *use of the previous year's data:*
    - Formalized the requirement for all English 1020 instructors to take their classes to the library for at least one class period for a librarian-led introduction on conducting research.
    - Reviewed ENGL 1010 and 1020 syllabi and meticulously noted how each syllabus (for GTAs, adjuncts, and instructors) represented and fulfilled the Course Objectives. The results were given to each instructor with a request to revise any deficiencies. This syllabus review will continue.
    - Created two new web pages—General Education Faculty Resources and Lower Division FAQs—that include the course objectives, teaching and learning objectives, sample syllabi and assignments, general information for General Education faculty, and specific assistance with grading, developing effective assignments, and judging written work in GE courses.
    - Selected new textbooks for ENGL 1020 that had a Writing Across the Curriculum focus and that better supported the General Education Learning Outcomes.
    - Selected new handbooks for both ENGL 1010 and 1020 that emphasized the distinctions between the two courses.
    - In 2012-2013, four grants totaling \$1694 were given to support general education teaching and professional development. All four recipients were FTT's and all four attended the Conference on College Composition and Communication: Kevin Brown, Matthew Brown, Ethan Castelo, and Lisa Williams.
  - Finally, Tom reported on *plans for improvement based on this year's data:*
    - Will actively encourage tenure-track and tenured faculty to include ENGL 1020 on their requests for either fall or spring semester teaching.
    - Will investigate the role departmental grade inflation may play in less than adequate scores
    - Continue the restructuring of the English 1020 course into a research and argumentative course that focuses on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), rather than on one that focuses on literary analysis, to stimulate more student interest and more student experience in research and argumentation.
    - Continue working on a new project that will send general education faculty into area high schools to learn about the kinds of writing our students do before they come to us.
    - Continue to study how Common Core, the new standards for K-12 education, present opportunities to rethink the TBR learning outcomes for general education courses
  - *Committee Recommendations:* The committee voted to approve the report.
- Sheila Otto presented the Critical Thinking Assessment: CCTST report

- Sheila reported that the University ( $M = 17.1$ ) continued to exceed the national average ( $M = 16.7$ ) on the California Critical Thinking Skills Test.
- *Committee Recommendations:* The committee voted to approve the report.

3. Additional information presented:

- Chair, Kari Neely, announced that the next meeting would be Nov 22, 2013 at 2:00 pm in the Library room 475.
  - Dr. Brad Bartel, Provost, will speak to the committee regarding the university's retention efforts. The emphasis will be on steps that General Education courses can/are taking to reduce D, F, W rates.