

**General Education Committee
Meeting Minutes for November 17, 2017**

Committee members attending: Geeta Maharaj, Virginia Hemby, Theresa McBreen, Charles Chusuei, Zaf Khan, Kate Pantelides, Dovie Kimmins, Deana Raffo, Phil Loubere, Karen Reed, Teresa Davis, Amy Sayward, Mike Boyle

Ex-officio members attending: Susan Myers-Shirk, Peter Cunningham, Jeff Gibson, Dawn McCormack, Chris Brewer

Guest attending: Rebecca Calahan

Business:

- **Call to order.** Amy Sayward called the meeting to order.
- **Approval of Minutes.** Meeting minutes from the Sept. 8, 2017 meeting were approved: moved by Mike Boyle, seconded by Deana Raffo. The minutes carried unanimously with no changes. Meeting minutes from the Oct. 6, 2017 meeting were approved: moved by Virginia Hemby, seconded by Teresa McBreen. The minutes carried with no changes; three members abstained.
- **Presentation of competency assessment report by Dr. Rebecca Calahan.** Rebecca Calahan reported the results of MATH 1710 and 1710K, College Algebra. Assessment was conducted using the same methods as the prior years, namely a multiple-choice assessment instrument. Results were fairly consistent over the time period. Although there was a new final exam this year (first used during Spring 2017), the assessment process was the same. The new final exam questions were developed in response to strong evidence that the answers to the prior version of the exam had been compromised. Amy Sayward noted results from page 4, which indicated no significant difference in results between K and non-K sections; she stated that this reflects the extra work by faculty to remediate students needing additional help. Zaf Khan noted that for outcomes 2 and 3, the data has not changed over the time period; he asked if there was an explanation for this finding. Rebecca Calahan stated that they had tried to add components to the class in order to help students. Zaf Khan pointed out the percentage of students scoring Unsatisfactory, and asked if the data for those outcomes could be disaggregated so that possible areas of improvement could be identified. Rebecca Calahan stated that she would have a discussion with her colleagues over how to better address those areas. She stated that those are the more difficult, higher-order thinking areas, and she agreed that the number of students scoring Unsatisfactory was fairly high.
- **Discussion of COMM 2200.** Susan Myers-Shirk discussed a proposal for COMM 2200, Fundamentals of Communication. She stated that the Communication Studies program as a whole is going through a massive overhaul of their program, however the proposed changes to the course as a General Education class are purely cosmetic: one line of the course description was being removed in order to make it more specific. Susan Myers-Shirk therefore

recommended the change. Motion was made by Mike Boyle, seconded by Kate Pantelides; the motion carried unanimously.

- **ABAS 2010.** Susan Myers-Shirk stated that this proposal will be discussed at the February 2018 meeting.
- **SACSCOC Fifth-Year Interim Report.** Susan Myers-Shirk stated that if we make any changes to assessment this year (especially changes to the competency skills), then we need to implement them next year so that there will be 3 years of data available for the SACSCOC 5th year interim report. She stated that we have to demonstrate the consistency of our evaluation process with our mission statement.
- **Update on the brainstorming workshop.** Susan Myers-Shirk stated that she can pay a stipend to this group for Spring 2018. The group will be reading Cathy Davidson's "The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux". The goal of the brainstorming group is to think about the next steps for General Education at MTSU. Peter Cunningham recommended the committee also look at what other universities do for their General Education.
- **New Business.**
 - Susan Myers-Shirk suggested the committee move their meetings from 2 PM to 1 PM, in keeping with the UCC's recent change. Several committee members could not accommodate this change, therefore the meeting time was left unchanged.
 - Susan Myers-Shirk discussed MTSU's most recent scores on the California Critical Thinking Test, which is the undergraduate students' exit exam upon graduating. She stated that our scores are still right around the national average, however the national average went down a whole point from the prior year. Susan Myers-Shirk speculated as to possible reasons for this decline, such as possible changes to the test.
 - The committee next began a discussion of an issue raised during the October 6, 2017 meeting. Kate Pantelides asked whether there is an expectation that departments implement the committee's recommendations regarding the competency assessment reports. Amy Sayward responded that this committee offers constructive feedback. Kate Pantelides stated that there are clear expectations of what students are expected to do in ENGL 1010 and 1020; she was concerned that the October 6, 2017 minutes reflected disagreements between the English faculty members regarding the teaching of these classes. Kate Pantelides described the deliverables for ENGL 1020, including a final project which can include some digital components. Kate Pantelides said that ENGL 1020 was updated in the last 2 years to bring the course up to national standards. She stated that the biggest change to the class is that students now do some sort of spoken presentation for their research. Kate Pantelides stated that the assessment for this committee is meant to assess the written work. She said that there are 80+ sections for ENGL 1020 and therefore there are many approaches to assessment for this course. Kate Pantelides stated that many of the ENGL 1020 courses use a trifold poster as part

of the final project deliverable, and that students speak about the content of their posters as part of their assessment for the assignment. Kate Pantelides stated that all sections of ENGL 1020 are meeting the same outcomes, regardless of their individual deliverables and assessments. Phil Loubere asked how the faculty could evaluate the ENGL 1020 students on the same scale, given their different course deliverables; he also asked how making a poster fits into the course's mission of teaching students to write well. Kate Pantelides responded that writing today is not just writing a broad essay. She stated that some of the recommendations made by the committee do not represent an understanding of the class, and that the committee needed to take into account the credentials of the English faculty. Phil Loubere stated that the committee's concern is that the ENGL 1020 assignment overlaps with other areas, and questioned whether the English department should be teaching visual presentation. Susan Myers-Shirk stated that this discussion went to the heart of General Education in its goal of teaching these very interdisciplinary 21st Century skills. She stated that one overriding question is: "How do we best teach these skills that students need in a way that respects the expertise of the various disciplines?" Phil Loubere stated that he was concerned that someone teaching the same material know what they're talking about. Geeta Maharaj stated that she had students in her program who did not know how to write, and that she was having to expend class time in teaching these writing skills. She asked whether she should expect them to learn how to write in ENGL 1020, or if she was being unfair to the students by expecting them to learn these skills in ENGL 1020. Kate Pantelides responded that in ENGL 1010 and 1020, the students write essays. She stated that everyone who teaches ENGL 1010 and 1020 has some background in writing but a different expertise. She said that the English faculty were moving toward an understanding that writing in the 21st century is broad. Geeta Maharaj stated that even at the Master's level of her program, she has found that some of her students lack proficiency and therefore she has to teach them writing and punctuation skills. Kate Pantelides responded that the research shows that students who know how to write in one context, but move to another context, often have an inability to write in that new context. She also suggested that because MTSU receives a lot of transfer students, these students may not have taken ENGL 1010 and 1020 and therefore lack the writing skills developed during those courses.