

## University General Education Committee

September 9, 2022 at 2:00 p.m. in JUB 100

**Voting members in attendance:** Keith Gamble (chair), Janet Colson, Warner Cribb, Rebecca Fischer, Sydney Fischer, Mark Frame, Terry Goodin, Jenna Gray Hildenbrand, Yi Gu, Virginia Hemby-Grubb (via Zoom), Rachel Kirk, Sungyoon Lee, Ann McCullough, Scott McDaniel, Keely O'Brien, Amy Sayward, and Cheyenne Sweeley.

**Voting members absent:** Leon Alligood, Nita Brooks, and Angie Hooser.

**Ex Officio:** Amy Aldridge Sanford, Jeff Gibson, Susan Myers-Shirk, Christopher Brewer

**Others in attendance:** Anne Anderson, Emily Baran, Christina Cobb, Betsy Dalton, Christabel Devadoss (via Zoom), Anna Kate Holt, Tammy Melton, Deb Perry, and Kristen West.

### **Introductory matters:**

Chair of the University General Education Committee (UGEC) Keith Gamble welcomed all in attendance promptly at 2 p.m. to the General Education/True Blue Core Committee. He then introduced Amy Aldridge-Sanford, the Vice Provost for Academic Programs. She briefly introduced herself, explaining that the work of this committee is near and dear to my heart, since as junior faculty member she had undertaken similar work at Texas A&M, Corpus Christi. She thanked all of the committee members for their time-consuming but rewarding and impactful service to the university campus. She then read the charge of the committee from Policy 32, section 8:

Review the University's general education mission; all general education courses, syllabi, learning outcomes; data related to the achievement of the goals; and provide University-wide leadership for the ongoing assessment of the general education program.

Aldridge-Sanford stressed that the lines of communication between the committee and the Provost's office were open and frequent. She also welcomed suggestions for revisions to Policy 32, which is up for review this year. Gamble then asked everyone in the room to briefly introduce themselves.

### **Procedural issues:**

Gamble pointed out that a needed revision of Policy 32 was now before the committee. He pointed out that a third member of the College of Education (COE) had just been added to the committee, which is required under Policy 32. However, that addition also requires an exception to Policy 32, which states that no two voting members can come from the same department, because the COE only has two departments. Therefore, Gamble asked for committee input on the best way to accommodate this contradiction in the policy. Mark Frame stated that he was worried about the perception that this change could create—that one department has undue influence on the General Education curriculum. Ann McCullough also shared that concern. But Aldridge-Sanford stated that if the committee wants to have equal representation by college that three representatives from the COE seemed needed.

Anne Anderson, an observer from the Faculty Senate, stated that the Faculty Senate—specifically the Committee on Committees—intends to address this and other issues related to Policy 32. She stated that UGEC would have to choose one or the other option under the policy (either 3 representatives from COE or no more than one representative per department). Gamble agreed and asked the UGEC to approve an exception for this academic year to Policy 32's requirement that no more than one voting member come from any department. McCullough asked if there had been three representatives from COE before, and Gamble affirmed that there had been and expressed his hope that this contradiction would be corrected in the near future. Scott McDaniel pointed out that University Studies has only one department, but Gamble reminded UGEC that University Studies was in a cohort with the Library and College of Media and Entertainment for determining UGEC representatives. Anderson—and Rachel Kirk who is also on the Committee on Committees--welcomed UGEC input on Policy 32, which the Faculty Senate would take up starting on Monday. Gamble then deferred a final committee decision on the COE exception to elect UGEC officers for the year.

#### **UGEC Officers:**

Gamble reminded the committee that he had been elected Vice Chair last year and therefore was now serving as UGEC chair; he said that his primary goal was to keep to the timeline to implement the new model and learning outcomes through adoption of assessment and course-approval processes. He stated that he had received one nomination for UGEC Secretary (Amy Sayward) and two nominations for Vice Chair (Nita Brooks, who declined, and Ann McCullough). The Vice Chair will serve as Chair in the coming academic year and serve as Chair this year if the Chair is absent; they will also attend executive committee meetings ahead of each UGEC meeting along with the secretary and Gen Ed Director. Gamble asked if there were any other nominations. **The nominated UGEC members were approved** unanimously (with one abstention) by the committee, and Gamble thanked them for their willingness to serve the committee.

#### **Approval of minutes:**

Gamble then moved to approval of the minutes from the May 20, 2022 meeting and thanked Sayward for her service to the committee last year as Secretary. He asked if there were any issues with the minutes. Lacking any concerns, **the minutes were considered approved.**

#### **Award announcement:**

Susan Myers-Shirk then announced that Gamble had won the Association of General and Liberal Studies' Gaff Award as an emerging campus leader who has exhibited outstanding leadership in the area of general studies. Gamble received a round of applause from those in attendance. He stated that his continued service was largely tied to Myers-Shirk's vision and innovation in building change from the ground up by engaging a broad range of stakeholders, developing community, relying on common values, and engaging in a slow and deliberate redesign process. He stated that in attending three national conferences on general education that it was clear that Susan was following and/or establishing best practices as we have progressed, and he thanked her for her leadership of the redesign effort.

#### **Committee procedures:**

Gamble then returned to the committee's procedures for the year, basing the conversation on the previous committee's procedures document, which was circulated ahead of the meeting. He stressed

that this year's committee could craft and/or adopt different procedures. He then focused on a series of key issues within those procedures:

Gamble started with the committee's quorum, which is currently defined as a majority of voting members. He recommended maintaining that policy and elaborated that since there are currently 20 voting members, a quorum would be 11 of those voting members. Janet Colson asked if being present via Zoom counted toward establishing the quorum; Gamble affirmed that this was the fact and pointed to Virginia Hemby-Grubb's Zoom participation today as an example—she counted toward establishing the quorum, because she was present and had a university accommodation to attend remotely. There was some discussion of whether attendance via Zoom without a university accommodation would count toward establishing the quorum, since Jeff Gibson pointed out that in the past it had sometimes been difficult for the committee to establish a quorum. Gamble stated that he hoped that would not be an issue with this year's committee. **The committee voted unanimously to define a quorum as a majority of all voting members present, which included being present via Zoom.**

Gamble then moved on to secret ballot availability, which was previously available via request by any one voting member of the committee. He stated that the General Education Director was prepared with a stack of paper ballots and pens. He explained that those attending via Zoom would email or text the chair directly, which was fine with Hemby-Grubb. Answering a question from Sayward, he explained that the Chair and Secretary would count the ballots, as they are charged with keeping the records of the committee, but that any voting member could count the ballots if desired. **The committee voted unanimously to maintain the option of a secret ballot at the request of any voting member of the committee.**

Gamble then turned to the question of absentee and proxy voting, which was not allowed in the previous procedure, and recommended keeping that policy since the committee's work is very much tied to discussion. McCullough thought that this issue is contingent on the policy that an absence counts as a "no" vote. Mark Frame added that the committee now has an attendance policy—that if a voting member misses three meetings then they are no longer considered a member of the committee, which in turn lowers the voting threshold for a majority or 2/3 vote (the latter required for structural changes). Although both Gamble and McCullough admitted that attendance had been an issue in the past, Gamble thought this issue best discussed as part of the next part of the conversation about what counted as structural vs. course-related changes and the associated vote required. Gamble explained that he believed the UGEC policy previously adopted was not consistent with the Policy 32 definition of structural change (which requires a 2/3 vote). Warner Cribb added that the previous committee's policy defined "Program Change" vs. the language in Policy 32 about "structural" or "course" change, and he suggested that the Implementation Team might draft a new policy separating those two types of change out. Cribb agreed that course-level change should not require a 2/3 vote.

Gamble then moved to the question of UGEC meeting times in the spring semester. He stated that there was a strong preference among the committee for an earlier meeting time on Fridays and suggested two alternatives: 8:30-10 a.m. or 12:30-2 p.m. Cribb and Sayward expressed a strong preference for the afternoon time period, since they both regularly teach at the earlier hour. Although some members have taught at the earlier afternoon time, it was recognized that this earlier time is

more convenient for members with school-age children. The committee expressed a unanimous preference for the 12:30-2:00 p.m. time slot for the spring semester meetings, which will take place on January 27, February 10 & 24, March 17, and April 14 in JUB 100.

Gamble then returned to the question about previous committee policy about definitions of structural vs. course-related changes. Rachel Kirk suggested that program-level changes should still require a 2/3 majority of voting members but that course-related changes should require a simple majority of the voting members. Gamble was concerned about the word “elements” in the previous policy, which was very vague and still called for a 2/3 majority. Myers-Shirk stated that when the previous policy was written, “elements” were envisioned as things like adding a first-year seminar or capstone course to the structure. Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand raised an associated question related to Policy 32’s statement in section 6 that UGEC functions as the curriculum committee for General Education, which would run counter to Gamble’s intention that the University Curriculum Committee (UCC)—and not UGEC—handle issues related to courses, such as course-title changes. Gamble stated that he thought this was a procedural rather than a policy issue, that courses requesting a title change would be routed by the Provost’s office to the UCC rather than UGEC and that new courses wishing to be added to the General Education Committee would be routed to UGEC. Aldridge-Sanford agreed that this routing made the most sense and that a Provost’s memorandum could achieve this clarity for new General Education course proposals until the policy can be reviewed, changes commented upon, and approved.

Gamble returned to the language about structural changes--changes to assessment, student learning outcomes, and non-course elements—requiring a 2/3 majority while course-related changes require only a simple majority. McCullough clarified that adding a new course to a category is not a category change but a course-related change. Gamble also clarified that this simple majority presumed that a quorum was present. Emily Baran, observing on behalf of the Chairs Council, added that this was a significant lowering of the bar for adding more courses to a category and could fuel campus concerns that there will be “millions” of new General Education courses added to the curriculum. She urged caution in not over-correcting from the past practice of only rarely adding new courses. Frame quantified that the number of votes required to add a new course would change under the proposed policy from 14 to a minimum of 6 (if only a bare quorum is present). A variety of compromises were suggested (2/3 of those voting members in attendance, more than 50% of those voting members in attendance, a simple majority of the voting members on the committee), and committee members discussed the related issues of attendance and proxy or alternate votes or on course proposals. Gamble and Frame argued against proxy or alternate votes, as they are outside of the discursive nature of the committee and potentially violate Policy 32 by giving one person/department two votes. Gamble moved that **a simple majority of voting members present be the threshold for approving non-structural and course-related questions before the committee**, with no proxy voting. The motion passed by a vote of 9-4-1.

Gamble then moved that **the committee would not allow proxy or alternate voting**, which passed by a vote of 12-1.

Gamble then moved that the committee allow for this academic year an exception to the policy requirement that no department have more than one voting member for the College of Education. The motion passed unanimously.

**Preview of next meeting:**

Gamble wound up the meeting by stating that he would strive to get materials out at least a week in advance and therefore expected committee members to be ready to discuss those documents at each meeting. Myers-Shirk explained that the Working Category Definitions and Course Approval Procedures documents (circulated ahead of this meeting and the focus of the upcoming meeting) were a revision of the documents circulated at the retreat that sought to integrate the issues identified by the committee at that retreat. She hoped that the Assessment Plan would also be revised in like manner and ready for the next UGEC meeting in two weeks and hoped that these three documents could be decided on by UGEC by mid-October so that a call for course proposals could be issued to the campus community. Frame also asked that the next meeting vote on whether or not to change the name of the committee.

*The meeting adjourned promptly at 3:30 p.m.*