

**General Education Committee
Meeting Minutes for February 21, 2020**

Committee members attending: Janis Brickey, Lando Carter, Ryan Korstange, Kevin Krahenbuhl, Steve Lewis, Melissa Lobegeier, Aliou Ly, Tammy Melton, Greg Nagel, Ryan Otter, Karen Reed, Connie Schmidt, Laura White

Ex-officio members attending: Peter Cunningham, Leah Lyons, Steve Severn

General Education Design Team members attending: Michelle Boyer-Pennington, Katie Brackett, Brian Frank, Keith Gamble, Soraya Nogueira

SGA student representatives attending: Samuel Blumer, Preston George

Guests attending: None

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 2:04 PM by Aliou Ly.

Approval of Minutes: In approving the minutes for the meeting of February 07, 2020, Janis Brickey noted a small error. Minutes were approved pending the correction.

Announcements & Reminders: Susan Myers-Shirk, Director of General Education

- Susan shared a memo from Betty Dandridge Johnson, Chief Academic Officer with THEC. This memo was in response to a question which had come up months earlier: are we legally obligated to 41 hours at lower division? Johnson's memo stated that we have autonomy as long as we comply with SACS and continue to honor the transfer pathways. The lowest possible number of Gen Ed credit hours (to maintain the transfer pathways) is 30; however our peer institutions continue to have 41 Gen Ed credit hours and UTK even increased theirs to 44. Therefore Susan does not recommend that we start over or cut credit hours. At the same time, this also means that we do not have to worry about all of our categories adding up to 41.

Susan asked the committee for comments. Tammy Melton asked whether a student who transfers without the Gen Ed block (for example, the History requirement) would be protected? Susan said yes: if they've met the requirements for that block at their prior institution, then they would be covered when they transferred here. Peter Cunningham stated that this policy protects students both ways: if they completed their science block here and for some reason it totaled 4 hours, then if they transferred to a different state public institution requiring an 8-hour block, they would have to accept our student.

Tammy asked about students who are at an institution where they mix up a block (for example, math and science in the same block). Peter replied yes, and gave the example of what MTSU calls “quantitative reasoning”, Motlow calls “math”.

Tammy asked a question about some of the proposed models which have a Connections block, and are not traditional blocks such as science or communications. Susan responded that one would have to drill down to the outcomes of that block. She stated that this would require conversations with our peer institutions and community colleges. Peter explained that we already have course equivalencies for hundreds of institutions. He said that although SACS requires at least 30 hours, this is just a floor and institutions can demand more.

There was some discussion regarding concerns that going beyond 41 credit hours would take away from the course major. Katie Brackett clarified that when UTK added additional hours, these were upper division courses that already existed within the majors (such as writing within the discipline). Steve Severn asked how this would work for a student with an associate’s degree who transferred to UTK: would they be exempt from all Gen Ed requirements, including the upper division class? Peter said the student would be exempt from all Gen Ed requirements, but if a course was required in the major then they would still have to take it.

- Susan turned the discussion to outcomes writing. Kevin Krahenbuhl and Lando Carter have been running the workshops on outcomes writing, and would give a report today. Kevin stated that the ten workshops took the values generated from last year’s focus groups and attempted to set outcomes regarding what students should demonstrate. The workshops produced a massive amount of data. Lando started out with eight values and found that some could be merged (perhaps down to five). Susan stated that there was some confusion by workshop attendees who thought we were actually at the point of writing the outcomes; however the goal was to turn the values into outcomes. There were some very good discussions, however others were frustrated by the process. Susan is consulting with other faculty to figure out how to accommodate these feelings, and for people to feel that they are being heard. Susan asked Steve to comment on campus sentiments. Steve said it would be helpful if, after each step in the process when there were outcomes (such as after the models were created), it could be opened up for public comment instead of waiting until the end. He also said that chairs have concerns about practical things such as staffing and finding classroom space. Connie Schmidt said it would be helpful if departments had an impact statement regarding changes to faculty lines, etc. in the long term, because the redesign would cause a lot of departmental restructuring.

Discussion of Revisions to General Education Redesign Models:

- Susan stated that since the last committee meeting, the design team had revised the five models down to three. Today we would work in groups of four to examine the three models.

- **Group 1: Brian Frank.** This group had lots of support for Model A. The student committee felt this model aligns with their values.
- **Group 2: Michelle Boyer-Pennington.** Students do not like capstones or e-portfolios: they do not see the purpose. Freshman seminar was preferred. The group discussed the need to maximize flexibility, and expressed some concerns about Gen Ed courses in an online format (particularly the sciences).
- **Group 3: Soraya Nogueira.** For **Model A**, they liked the structure (the hierarchy between Explorations and Connections) and for foreign language to be within global competencies and awareness. They had concerns about students being able to navigate this model; they also felt it did not make meaningful change. For **Model B**, they had a lot of questions (such as: how many courses in pathways? How many pathways? Clarify outcomes driven distributions). For **Model C** they wanted to use the word “track” instead of “pathways”. They liked the flexibility, however they thought it would confuse students because students prefer a menu-driven, not exploratory, mission. They thought an advantage of Model C was that it was different than what is offered in community college. They were strongly against the green section, i.e. “no more than one class per discipline in a pathway”. They did not like Humans & Society, and offered Societal Literacy as an alternative.
- **Group 4: Keith Gamble.** For **Model A**: Laura liked that it articulates what the first year seminars will do (such as the interdisciplinary aspect of first year seminars, rather than rebranding an existing course). So FYS untied to existing courses. Ryan was also interested in something interdisciplinary; advocated for a 3-credit FYS for the logistics. Keith said that FYS would be designed as having a smaller class size. Melissa said that one thing that needs to be sorted out is the outcomes, because we don’t know what FYS is for yet. Melissa said she would be interested in changing a few things and doing them really well rather than an overhaul and mess up. Keith discussed aspects of Model A, that it is a conservative model but the Connections are new. Group’s takeaways on Model A: they would like to see FYS that are 3 credit and are taught out of workload; rooted or based out of one discipline but interdisciplinary in that the discipline puts its spin on it. Connections classes: this aligns us with integrative course design but it presents a whole new set of classes. So how do we maintain currency or relevancy? Keith said that he imagined many different courses coming out of this, possibly cross-listed classes that will count for this. Connections is just the structure.

Model B takeaways: Grand Challenge makes the connections at the end; it provides an assessment measure at the end as well as one at the beginning with FYS. Discussion of what’s optional versus not; Ryan suggested should be a fixed part of the model.

Model C: Melissa was concerned that we are just renaming existing classes, and there is less innovation of creating new classes. Ryan was also concerned that it’s repackaging.

Karen thought that this model preserves foundational courses (for example, AP credits being brought in) but also gives the pathways choices; it isn't too radical of a departure.

Adjournment 3:56 PM