

**MTSU University General Education Meeting
Minutes for April 23, 2021**

Committee members attending: Samuel Blumer, Janis Brickey, Lando Carter, Warner Cribb, Mark Frame, Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Terry Goodin, Virginia Hemby-Grub, Rachel Kirk, Ryan Korstange (Chair), Kevin Krahenbuhl, Aliou Ly, Tammy Melton, Greg Nagel, Ryan Otter, James Piekarski, Deana Raffo, John Sanborn, Laura White

Ex-officio members attending: Chris Brewer, Jeff Gibson, Susan Myers-Shirk (Director), Steve Severn

Design team members attending: Michelle Boyer-Pennington, Katherine Brackett, Kristen West, Cristabell Devadoss

Guests Attending: Meredith Funderbunk (GA)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 pm by Ryan Korstange, Chair.

Roll Call

Deana Raffo, Recording Secretary, called roll with 17 voting members present at the start of the meeting. (2 members joined later)

Introductory Remarks – Susan Myers-Shirk, Director

Susan Myers-Shirk reminded members that they received a document with outcomes feedback from emails, Q&A sessions with links to recordings of the sessions, a link to the outcomes document, and information on how we will proceed today.

Susan said that she and the executive team worked on changes to consider in response to the feedback and she shared a redline version of the outcomes document. She emphasized that the redline version is intended as conversation starters to facilitate the discussion process and that the committee can take all or none of the changes. She said that decisions will come from the committee, and emphasized that the suggestions should not impede decisions.

Susan shared that in the Q&A sessions, some people asked about the structure. She responded to these questions by explaining that the outcomes will work with the structure that we ultimately choose. Discussions about structure will happen next year.

Susan announced that she received acceptance today for a gen ed team to go the AAC&U assessment institute this summer. They will work out an assessment plan based on the outcomes that are ultimately approved.

Review of Procedure - Ryan Korstange, Chair

Ryan Korstange explained that we will follow Robert Rules of Order more carefully than we have in the past to maintain order and transparency.

Ryan said that we will start with a motion to accept the outcomes as written and that we will need a second. Discussion of that motion will progress by entertaining a number of changes to address the comments from the review period. We will address these changes as amendments. We will do this formally – some may be easy changes and some will be more involved.

At the end of the entire document, we will vote on the outcomes with the amended changes. A two-thirds vote is needed to carry the amendment. There are 19 voting members of the gen ed committee which means 13 votes are needed for approval.

Ryan explained that we have some flexibility with making changes via the amendments. However, if there are extensive changes, the outcomes document may need to go out again for public comment. At any point, if the committee thinks that the changes are becoming significant, we can pursue another round of public comment.

Aliou Ly Q: Do we have a time limit for each discussion point? Ryan A: No, but we will center the discussion around changes. Ryan said he will commit to moving us along as expeditiously as possible, but we want to be sure each amendment is discussed as long as needed for everyone to make comments or ask questions.

Ryan explained that Katie Brackett will alter the text in the shared document so that everyone can see the suggested changes in real time. Deana Raffo, recording secretary, will read each amendment before the vote.

Ryan said that we will have a Zoom poll to vote on each amendment, then asked for questions about the process. Katie asked for clarification that she is to make changes to the redline version, and that she will accept the changes once they are voted on and approved. Ryan confirmed.

Mark Frame Q: How did the Q&A sessions go? Susan Myers-Shirk A: The sessions were good. They consistently had 5-7 people participate over the course of the 7 Q&A meetings. Some people came to the sessions thinking we were also talking about the models. Participants typically had a particular issue in mind that they wanted to address. In general, the feedback was that the sessions were helpful. Steve Severn participated in the meetings and said that some people wanted a broad overview.

Warner Cribb called a point of order. The agenda was not distributed to the committee prior to the meeting. Susan apologized and said that the executive team received the agenda. Warner stated that Ryan needs to accept it for the record and he did.

Discussion of University Community Comments on Proposed Program-level Student Learning Outcomes

Ryan Korstange asked for a motion to accept the current outcomes to begin the discussion process.

Rachel Kirk made the motion that we consider on the outcomes that were circulated publicly. Aliou Ly seconded. Warner Cribb made a friendly amendment that we “accept” rather than “consider” the outcomes that were circulated publicly. Rachel and Aliou agreed to the friendly amendment.

John Sanborn asked for clarification that the blue lettering reflects the suggested changes and that a line through the text means that it is to be deleted. Ryan confirmed.

Ryan said that we will discuss each of the 4 objectives, one at a time. Ryan suggested that we begin the process with Objective D1 since there is less feedback to address.

Objective D1: Quantitative Literacy

Ryan shared the suggestions made in Objective D1 and asked for points of discussion. No discussion.

Greg Nagel made a motion to accept the changes shown in D1. Mark Frame seconded.

Deana Raffo read the D1 amendment as follows:

- Interpretation: Understands and provides accurate explanations of numerical data. Makes inferences based on that information.
- Application/Analysis: Uses the quantitative analysis of data as the basis for thoughtful judgments, drawing qualified conclusions. Understands the relationships among quantities.

The committee unanimously approved the amendment with 18 votes.

Objective D2: Information Literacy

Ryan Korstange shared the suggestions made in section D2 and asked for points of discussion.

Rachel Kirk said that “evidence” is “information,” therefore is it necessary to state them separately? Ryan explained that this feedback came from faculty in natural sciences where evidence is more of a signifier than information. Tammy Melton said that the difference was not clear to her and that she saw no reason to include “and/or evidence.”

With no further discussion, the suggestion was deleted and no changes were made to this section.

Objective B: Critical Thinking, Inquiry, & Analysis – Text Section

Ryan Korstange shared that the feedback from the Mathematics Department was that “issue” is narrow and that “problems” is preferred as a broader term.

Steve Severn suggested “concept” instead of “problem.” Tammy Melton suggested “questions.” Greg Nagel pointed out that “issue/problem” is the language used in the table.

Aliou Ly made a motion to amend Objective B to add “problems.” Greg Nagel seconded.

Deana Raffo read the amendment as follows:

- The motion is that in the 3 sections of the category description under “Analysis”, “B1” say “issues and problems” and “B2” be changed to “issues, problems.”

John Sanborn made a friendly amendment that it read “issues/problems.” Aliou and Greg accepted the friendly amendment.

The committee unanimously approved the amendment with 18 votes.

Objective B: Critical Thinking, Inquiry, & Analysis - Tables

Ryan noted that the suggested changes came from the feedback.

Tammy Melton said that “verifiable solution” is odd language. Warner Cribb said that perhaps it means verifiable models.

No changes were made to the B1 and B2 table content.

Objective A: Communication

Ryan shared feedback that many faculty in the Communication Department wanted to include “oral” in this section.

Greg Nagel noted a typo that the word communication is included twice in the second bullet. (Katie Brackett corrected it).

John Sanborn said that the faculty appeared to have problem with “public” and asked for clarification of public communication in this context. Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand said that the word “oral” may not be inclusive for individuals with hearing/speaking challenges. Jenna suggested changing “public” communication to “human” communication to be inclusive.

Mark Frame said the essence of this discussion is modalities versus goals - oral is a modality (as is written), public and human are goals. He suggested “interpersonal communication” to cover a variety of communication modalities.

Tammy Melton said that she no problem with “oral and public communication” and stated that the many comments in the comm department are that they want it to be returned to oral

communication. She said that their opinion should be taken into consideration in our discussion.

John Sanborn echoed Marks suggestion for “interpersonal.”

Warner Cribb suggested “oral or other forms of interpersonal communication.”

Tammy noted that there are individuals who have math disability. This does not mean that there are no math objectives, rather an accommodation is made, for example substituting a logics class.

Steve Severn said that “non-written” encompasses oral and other forms of communication

Laura White suggested using “non-written” for this objective.

Ryan summarized that it appears we have three options 1) written and non-written, 2) rename the second category to interpersonal communication; 3) just have one category of communication only. Ryan stated that the discussion has not risen to a motion and that he was not sure there is consensus among the committee.

Steve suggested tabling this outcome and come up with different options and revisit it at the next meeting.

John asked Susan her thoughts. Susan said that she wondered if we could try to make a motion, temporarily table it, go on to the next objective, and come back to it.

Laura White made a motion that Objective A2 “Public Communication” be changed to “Non-written Communication.” Samuel Blumer seconded.

Tammy Melton asked if non-written communication includes forms such as interpretive dance? Laura said that “mediated formats” includes interpretive dance. Mediated formats are inclusive. Susan commented that the objectives and outcomes are intended to be inclusive. Warner Cribb said that “embodied expression” is defined as art of relating unique self into the world.

Steve Severn commented that all classes will include some form of communication. The question in the future will be how much the focus of the class is on communication, and that he suspected few classes will have this as the primary focus.

Janice Brickey said that “non-written communication” may open up more opportunities for courses.

Deana Raffo read the amendment that Objective A2: “Public Communication” be changed to “Non-written Communication.”

John asked for clarification that the vote is just this one thing and not the other language below it. Ryan confirmed.

The motion passed with 17 in favor of the amendment, and 1 opposed.

Ryan stated that since Objective A is now “written communication and non-written communication,” we need to consider changes in the text portion of the objective to reflect this.

John Sanborn made a motion to change the A2 text to reflect this change. Mark Frame and Samuel Blumer simultaneously seconded. Warner Cribb made a friendly amendment to change the second bullet to reflect the change. The friendly amendment was accepted.

Deana Raffo read the amendment as:

- A2: Students will communicate effectively through oral, embodied, or other mediated formats, considering organization, language (or other forms of expression), delivery, supporting material, a cogent central message, and audience.
- Non-written communication is the development and expression of ideas through oral, embodied, or other mediated formats. It is designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the audiences’ attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

The motion passed unanimously with 19 in favor of the amendment.

Objective A2 Table

Ryan Korstange stated that the table heading needs to reflect the change made earlier to “Non-written communication.”

Susan Myers-Shirk said that additional feedback from the Q&A sessions led to suggested changes that took out the idea of presentation to use communication more generally. “Presentation” leans toward a speech or oral communication, so the proposed language is intended to be more inclusive. It is up to the committee to make these changes or not.

Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand made a motion to change the title of the table to “non-written communication.” Aliou Ly seconded. Laura White made a friendly amendment to change “presentation” to “communication.” The friendly amendment was accepted.

John Sanborn asked about including “informal/informal” language. Susan answered that it makes it parallel to written communication, and makes it more inclusive, but may be redundant with other changes made.

Steve Severn suggested changing “observable” to “demonstrated” or “recognizable.”

Kevin Krahenbuhl made a friendly amendment to “Organizational pattern is clear and consistent.” The friendly amendment was accepted.

Deana Raffo read the amendment as follows:

- Organization: Organizational pattern is clear and consistent.
- Language and/or Embodied Expression: Language choice and/or expression are engaging and enhance the effectiveness of the communication. Content is appropriate to audience.
- Delivery & Message: Delivery techniques make the communication compelling. Central message is clear and consistent.
- Supporting Material (where relevant): Supporting materials make appropriate reference to information or analysis that generally supports the communication or establishes the communicator’s credibility on the topic.

The motion passed with 18 in favor of the amendment and none opposed.

Intercultural Understanding and Civic Awareness

Ryan stated that he was concerned about time remaining and if we do not finish, we can table the discussion to the next meeting. Mark Frame suggested that we should see where we are at the end and perhaps vote to power through to finish.

Ryan shared that the suggested changes moves away from activist language. Mark stated that he’s not sure that engagement equals activist.

Susan shared background information that this area was one of the significant changes that came from all the discussions from the past couple of years. The suggested language does not close off the possibility of “engagement” or EXL activities in the community. Rather, it says that awareness is the first step, then a class may build on the foundational awareness. In other words, it does not preclude engagement. Furthermore, the suggested changes better align with the other objectives to be more foundational.

Tammy Melton shared that a number of people told her emphatically that they do not like the “engagement” language. Furthermore, they were concerned that they could not share this concern anonymously. She said that there is a lot of negative opinion about this, but faculty did not want to publicly state this.

John Sanborn said that change is scary and people should want to share their ideas publicly. He feels this area represents necessary change and thinks we should use “engagement.”

Steve Severn said that he wanted to share the chairs’ perspective – they are in favor of “awareness” or “literacy” because “engagement” requires activity which can be a logistical challenge and we do not have the infrastructure to support it. Awareness or literacy allows for engagement, but does not require it.

Samuel Blumer stated that he likes “awareness” and “literacy” and said that there could be a concern that faculty are going to tell students what to think. He suggested that it might be beneficial to add language in this section that the objective is not about telling students what to think, but encouraging them to be active.

Mark Frame suggested that “understanding” may be a good middle ground, that it may be at a deeper level than awareness or literacy. He said that organizational change in this area may need to be incremental.

Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand said that she would support “civic literacy,” as it appears to be a term that is commonly used. A quick internet search indicates that it conveys understanding, but with a pedagogical foundation.

John stated that every gen ed class does not need to meet all gen ed objectives. He thinks that we can have courses that engage students. Steve said while every class will not use every outcome, every section in the class will need to be the same.

Janice Brickey said she like “literacy” because it goes beyond awareness to take students to the next level to engage/apply later.

Tammy Melton said that untenured faculty were afraid to speak up. Susan said that that the “public comment period” was intended to be public, but understands those concerns, especially for faculty who are untenured or in a contingent position and appreciated Tammy making this point.

Mark Frame make a motion to change “Civic Engagement” to “Civic Literacy” for Objective C2. Jenna Gray-Hildebrand seconded.

Tammy Melton stated that we are at 4 minutes after 4:00. She made a motion to table the remaining work in this section and instructed the executive team to make a set of suggestions based on the discussion. Aliou Ly seconded.

The motion to table remaining work to next week’s meeting carried with 16 votes in favor.

With no new business, the meeting adjourned at 4:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Deana Raffo, Recording Secretary