

University General Studies Committee meeting minutes, September 3, 2021

In Attendance: Susan Myers-Shirk, Lando Carter, Keith Gamble, Becky Milliken, Rachel Kirk, Warner Cribb, Laura White, Jeff Gibson, Sungyoon Lee, Ryan Otter, Terry Goodin, Keely O'Brien, Amy Sayward, Sydney Fischer, Virginia Hemby-Grubb, Mark Frame, Scott McDaniel, Janet Colson, Rebecca Fischer, Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Deana Raffo

Non-voting Attendees: Nita Brooks, Jeff Gibson, David Carleton, Kate Holt, Katie Brackett, Chris Brewer, Brian Frank, Christabel Devadoss, Kristen West

Introductions:

University General Studies Committee chair Lando Carter opened the meeting by calling on members to introduce themselves. Then Susan Myers-Shirk, the General Studies Director, explained that the committee this year would be assessing the English, Communication, and Mathematics areas, selecting the Outstanding General Studies Instructor, and moving the process of General Education Redesign forward.

Interim Vice Provost for Academic Programs Nita Brooks read the committee's charge. Myers-Shirk also spoke to the different types of people on the committee, including faculty, students, members of the General Education design team (non-voting), and ex officio members from the Provost's Office, Chairs Council, Dean's Council (non-voting), and Institutional Effectiveness office. There are twenty voting members in total, and all committee meetings will either be on Zoom or have a Zoom option over the course of the academic year. She also urged members of the committee to attend the public meetings with the Vice Provost candidates that are starting next week, and the person who fills this position will be important to the future of the General Education Redesign process.

Nominations:

The floor was opened for nominations for Vice Chair of the committee, with responsibilities for attending executive committee meetings, serving in place of the chair when needed, and serving as the chair of the committee next year. Keith Gamble volunteered to serve in this capacity. Warner Cribb nominated him, Carter seconded, and the vote was unanimous in favor. Amy Sayward volunteered to service as the committee's secretary, which is part of the executive committee and has primary responsibility for keeping the minutes of the committee, which are posted to the committee's website for transparency. There being no other nominations, the vote was unanimous in favor.

Meeting Time:

Carter asked if there were any corrections to the minutes from the April 2021 meeting; there being none, the minutes were approved. This was followed by a short discussion about whether the time of the meeting might be shifted earlier to either 1:00 or 1:30 p.m. Some members expressed concerns about obligations prior to the 2 p.m. timeframe and others about commitments at or shortly after 4 p.m. Mark Frame expressed the belief that if that meeting start

time was pushed back to 1:30 p.m. that it was likely that it would still run up to 4 p.m. Jenna Grey-Hildenbrand did note that the last meeting had adjourned after two hours and thirteen minutes. The vote was not unanimous (two voted against), and therefore the motion failed; meetings over the course of the academic year will be start at 2:00 p.m.

Reviewing Assessment Reports:

The question before the committee was whether it wanted to postpone its fall review of the assessment reports from English and Mathematics (Communications is traditionally reviewed in the Spring semester). Myers-Shirk pointed out that the English Department's transition from evaluating ENGL 1010 to ENGL 1020 and the Mathematics Department's reorganization of its assessment makes them both amenable to such a change. In response to a question from Gamble, Myers-Shirk explained that the SACS requirement is continuous improvement, which would not be impaired by the postponement. There being no further discussion, the vote was unanimous to postpone the review of these assessments until the Spring 2022 semester.

Updates:

Myers-Shirk provided an update on the committee's work since it approved the new General Education outcomes at the end of the 2020-21 academic year. In June, Myers-Shirk, Katie Brackett, Lisa Bass (Institutional Effectiveness), Carter, Cribb, and Gamble (who replaced Ryan Korstange who had taken a position with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, THEC) attended an assessment institute sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). This was the follow-up from the committee's decision on the new General Education program outcomes.

Committee's Goals:

Faculty data gathered during the 2020-21 academic year regarding the models of the new General Education program and its components have not yet been discussed and decided upon by the committee, so that will be work that this year's committee will pick up. In addition, this year's committee will also revise the assessment plan, strategize implementation, and decide on the proposal process.

Discussion followed about whether the plan to discuss program models and components is a natural progression from last year's decision on outcomes or whether the next step should be to have departments propose new courses based on the outcomes (and then decide on the model based on that input). Carter summarized the discussion as "We have the outcomes in place. What model/vehicle and course application process gets us there?" Gamble summarized it as "We have to decide how to use the departmental information, the design team will bring us suggestions on how to move forward, and this committee will move forward [toward course proposals] and backward [on models and components] from the outcomes." Carter also said that it might be useful to build prototypes of what the course proposals might look like under the different models considered by the committee, an idea that Cribb thought would be helpful. In the subsequent discussion about what data will be available to the committee on September 17th to have this conversation, it was decided that the assessment team, design team, and executive

team would meet in the interim to determine that. The committee expressed openness to receiving models from the design team and/or working through the proposals in breakout rooms as part of the committee's next meeting—whatever is needed to move forward.

Myers-Shirk summarized the goal of the committee is to decide how to use the data already gathered to evaluate the models under consideration, so that we can move forward on course proposal plans and assessment. The design, assessment, and executive committees will work together ahead of this to do some strategic planning for this conversation. She said that the goal is to develop a General Studies program that reflects the values of the faculty and the needs of students and that she hopes that this open discussion will move everyone toward that goal, which was the same process that led to a unanimous committee decision on the program outcomes.

New Business:

Myers-Shirk introduced the question of whether the committee wanted to continue the moratorium on new course proposals for addition to the current General Studies program. She did mention that the committee had voted to briefly admit new proposals last year, although she thought it might not be best to do that again this year. Gamble expressed the idea that with the adoption of new General Education outcomes, there no longer is a program to which they could be added. Gray-Hildenbrand provided an example of one course that might be considered that would solve a persistent transfer-pathway challenge that the Philosophy Department was experiencing. Cribb made a motion to continue the moratorium for the current year; it was seconded by Deanna Raffo. Laura White clarified that in the previous year the committee had briefly accepted new course proposals before it passed the new outcomes. The vote to continue the moratorium for the current academic year passed with 94% in support and 6% opposed. Gamble concluded the discussion by saying that hates the moratorium but voted yes, but if the committee gets its work done, we can get proposals next year with the right outcomes, model, and process.

Myers-Shirk and Carter thanked the committee for its commitment and work before adjourning the meeting at 3:51 p.m. CDT.