

**General Education Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes for September 13, 2019**

**Committee members attending:** Janis Brickey, Lando Carter, Ryan Korstange, Kevin Krahenbuhl, Melissa Lobegeier, Aliou Ly, Tammy Melton, Deana Raffo, Karen Reed, Lee Sarver, Patricia Wall, Laura White, John Zamoru

**Ex-officio members attending:** Peter Cunningham, Leah Lyons, Susan Myers-Shirk, Steve Severn

**General Education Design Team members attending:** Keith Gamble, Soraya Noquerva

**SGA student representatives attending:** Preston George

**Guests attending:** None

- **Call to order.** Aliou Ly called the meeting to order, and explained that he is serving as chair of the committee this year. He asked everyone to introduce themselves to the committee.
- **Committee charge.** Peter Cunningham read the committee charge. There were no questions regarding the charge from the committee members.
- **Election of officers.** Karen Reed volunteered to serve as Secretary for the academic year and was unanimously approved. Ryan Korstange was nominated to serve as Vice-Chair for the academic year and was unanimously approved.
- **Discussion of committee duties.** Susan Myers-Shirk discussed the typical duties of the committee, and directed members to the list of meeting dates posted at [https://www.mtsu.edu/gen\\_ed/committee.php](https://www.mtsu.edu/gen_ed/committee.php). She said she would try to send out calendar reminders in Outlook along with agendas ahead of each meeting.
- **Scheduled competency assessment reports.** Susan explained that one of the committee's duties is to review annual reports from three areas: English, Communication Studies, and Math. She explained the current schedule by which the reports would be delivered to the committee:
  - English report on October 11, delivered by Dr. Aleka Blackwell
  - Communication Studies report on October 25, delivered by Dr. Andrew Dix
  - Mathematical Sciences Report on November 8, delivered by Dr. Ping Zhang

Susan said she would try to reschedule the Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> report because this was an optional meeting date for the committee. Susan currently has the English report and will forward it out soon.

Susan also explained some of the problems with the California Critical Thinking test: it has not been particularly effective at measuring students' critical thinking skills. Our students score well above the national average in Philosophy and Computer Science. We do not know if these high

scores are a function of the General Education curriculum or their individual majors. Susan explained that we need to consider alternatives to the California Critical Thinking test because this test does not really assess General Education as a whole.

- **Discussion of Outstanding Gen Ed Teaching Award.** Susan explained that last year there were some concerns about the process of how nominees should present their supporting documents. Suggestions included: elimination of some supporting documents on the basis of redundancy; giving nominees a copy of the scoring rubric used by the committee; changing the rule regarding eligibility (currently a past winner may not be nominated again for the award). After much discussion, Aliou suggested the committee continue the discussion at the next meeting.
- **Update on redesign.** Susan gave a Powerpoint presentation on the Gen Ed redesign, tentatively called True Blue Core. The strategic plan for the project was released the first week of the Fall 2019 semester. This strategic plan is intended as a starting point and is expected to evolve over time. It is not a plan for implementation, but only a plan for the redesign. We want to move away from the language of Gen Ed and towards Core. We want to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century Core, as our current structure is based on an outdated menu-based, discipline-driven model. The redesign is contingent upon the money needed to support the change. We must engage the campus and inform the public about this redesign. We want to give our students choices, as well as relevant and innovative content. Susan discussed the history of the redesign process: when we broke off from TBR, the Provost encouraged the committee to utilize the opportunity to redesign Gen Ed. The committee sponsored faculty learning committees, 13 faculty/staff focus groups, student surveys (in which 1300 responses were collected), interviews with key stakeholders, strategic planning, and finally the design team was sent to the AAC&U Institute on General Education and Assessment. The design team has no decision-making power; they are there to facilitate the process. There are four components we can consider as we put our model together: freshman seminar, university core minors (pathways), capstone, and e-portfolio. There are also four qualities we may want to consider: communicator, problem-solver, leader, and explorer. We have been informed by a larger national movement, and have consulted with peer institutions in Tennessee (UTK, UTC, and Austin Peay). We hosted a summit with THEC institutions in August 2019. We do not yet know what the new core will look like as no decisions have been made. We will make decisions based on an iterative process of feedback including the design team, Faculty Advisory Council, a Student Advisory Council, Gen Ed committee, and university community through town halls, surveys, and interviews. In November 2019 we will schedule two public forums for Q&A. The final responsibility for making recommendations to the Provost regarding any curriculum changes rests in the hands of this committee. By spring 2020, we hope to make a preliminary design decision, circulate the proposed plan, we make final decisions about structure based on university feedback.
- **NEH grant.** Susan stated that she and Katherine Brackett were finishing up the writing of a NEH grant which supports curricular revision. Susan and Katherine's grant proposal would support the planning of the Pathways, and is in the amount of \$36,000. The grant money would pay for faculty stipends so that they could have planning time to discuss how to implement Pathways. We won't know if we're getting the grant until April 30<sup>th</sup>. Several committee members expressed concerns that this grant gives the impression that Pathways are a done deal, rather than one option under consideration. There was much discussion regarding the ethical considerations of applying for the grant at this time, with its focus on Pathways implementation. Susan called for a secret ballot to answer: Do you believe that continuing with the grant

proposal will give the appearance of undermine the process going forward (yes I think it gives the appearance, no I don't) Results were: 9 yes and 7 no. Susan said she would talk to Katherine to see if there's a way to change the grant to something more general, so to avoid the appearance of impropriety.

- ***Discussion regarding whether to accept new course proposals for Gen Ed.*** Susan and Aliou discussed the pros and cons of accepting new course proposals for General Education, in the midst of our Gen Ed redesign project. Several committee members expressed their thoughts before a vote was taken. 13 members voted to continue accepting course proposals, 2 members voted against, and one abstained.
- ***New business.*** There was no new business to discuss.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:06 PM.