

## October 6, 2023 True Blue Core Committee Meeting Minutes

**Voting members in attendance:** Leon Alligood, Nita Brooks, Laura Cochrane, Janet Colson, Teresa Davis, Rebecca Fischer, Natalie Griffin, Yi Gu, Sungyoon Lee, Suzanne Mangram, Ann McCullough, Scott McDaniel, Stephen Salter, Amy Sayward, Jorge Vargas

Voting members absent: Keith Gamble, Angela Hooser, Giselle Noelle, Keely O'Brien, Kera Reynolds.

Ex Officio in attendance Amy Aldridge Sanford, Amy Atchison, Christopher Brewer, Jeff Gibson, Susan Myers-Shirk

Guests: Christabel Devadoss, Tammy Melton, Kristen West, Kari Neely, Christina Cobb, Angie Parrish, Thomas Hudson, Ginny Bogle, Lisa Shepherd, Michael Federici, Robb McDaniel, Mary Beth Asbury, Cathy McElderry

Quorum was checked and met.

Minutes from the last meeting:

Motion to accept: Minutes were passed, one abstention Amy Sayward.

### Update from Susan:

Powerpoint presentation – review of the basics before the TBC Committee votes on course proposals

**Slide 1:** True Blue Core Requirements

41 hours

12 hours in Foundational Skills

29 hours in the 4 Knowledge Domains

No requirement about the prefix requirement. It has been eliminated in this new iteration of the core.

**Slide 2:** Visual of the breakdown of the different categories.

Disciplinary knowledge is now called DISCOVERY in each of the 4 Knowledge Domains

**Slide 3:** Comparison slide

Shows where the old gen ed maps onto the new TBC

Last year's committee decided to move the old program into the discovery sections and then open up the exploration subcategory to new courses.

**Slide 4:** Student learning outcomes. Assessed in a 3-year cycle. Explanation of primary and secondary outcomes. Secondary outcomes are not being assessed but they are being tracked to demonstrate engagement with the outcomes across the curriculum.

Do I need to evaluate the 2<sup>nd</sup> outcome and can that derail the approval of the course in question? No, we can ask them to review that choice, but we probably shouldn't vote down a

course due to the 2<sup>nd</sup> outcome. But as we move forward, we might want to think about the 2<sup>nd</sup> outcome.

Ann: If a course has a secondary outcome and the program gets too heavy in one outcome, could the 2<sup>nd</sup> outcome help them move to another category?

Susan: Don't know right now, it would be up to the committee to decide.

**Slide 5:** Red categories are where the SACS categories are met.

**Slide 6:** We are in the process of developing Blueprints. The departmental liaisons are working on that. Hope to develop the blueprints soon. Working on study abroad in the core. An FLC is exploring the logistics

Core Scholars: if students do a project or research project in the core, we will give them a cord. But cord wars over color are a thing.

True Blue Core Center: It was approved/recommended by UGEC in May 2022. Susan and Christina have drafted a proposal with the details which is at the Provost's Office now. We hope to get it finalized and approved soon.

**Slide 7:** When TBC considers course proposals

- 1) align with a category,
- 2) have an assessable assignment,
- 3) contribute to breadth of knowledge,
- 4) support a coherent rationale for general education,
- 5) align with the category or topic.

**Slide 8:**

1. Can the department guarantee the faculty needed to teach the course in consistent rotation? Encouraging that the courses in the core are taught by Full Time faculty and not adjuncts. So, this includes TT and FTT. Susan doesn't support the exploitation of adjuncts.

Is the course appropriate for the core: Doesn't focus too narrowly on the skills or a specific occupation. Career classes are not eligible due to this SACS requirements. If something is too narrow or too technical, the committee should discuss this.

2. Is the course purposely built for the core and will the course benefit any student who takes it, regardless of major? We want the students to be able to take the courses that they want to take and still graduate in 120 hours.
3. Avoid core packing = hiding courses in the core so it frees up hours for their majors and helps them finish their program early.

**Slide 9:** Benefits of the core. 4 benefits

These should be a part of the courses that we are considering for our Core.

**Q&A**

Scott M: There is not a clear spot on the form that talks about adjuncts.

Susan M-S: we might need to tweak our application form going forward. There is a place to identify staffing but not to give you the breakdown by rank.

Scott M: is there a threshold for the adjunct numbers?

Susan M-S: No. There is a dashboard now where we can track all of that.

Scott M: You know it when you see it.

Susan:M-S: Yeah, but we probably need to talk about it

Amy S: When we go through assessment, then if we don't see the kinds of metrics that we want from that course, and also see that there are a lot of adjuncts teaching the course, then we could bring that up and say, this is one method that we could maybe correct. These two data points (low assessments and high adjuncts) might suggest a correlation.

Tammy M: What constitutes regular rotation?

Susan M-S: They don't have to offer large numbers of sections. If they can only field one section of a course, but offer it consistently, that is okay. What we don't want is a lot of "dead wood". We don't want a lot of courses on the books that students want but can't take. This can be refined as we proceed.

## Discussion on SACSCOC Requirement of Breadth of Knowledge:

The committee had an extensive discussion about the meaning of breadth of knowledge as required by MTSU's accrediting body, SACSCOC, focusing specifically on this question: **How many hours in any one program/department/discipline should an individual student be permitted to complete as part of the True Blue Core requirement?** This question was framed both in terms of percentages and credit hours and in terms of what constituted "too much" and thus countered the spirit of the requirement. After much vigorous debate, the committee concluded that it would like to limit the number of hours a student can take in a single program but did not want to put the burden on students and advisors to track whether students had exceeded the allowed amount.

As an alternative, a motion was proposed that the Core, when considering course proposals, impose a limit of no more than twelve (12) hours from a single program and that those courses from a single program may be represented in no more than three (3) categories. [Categories here are defined as the four (4) skills categories in Foundational Skills and the four (4) Knowledge Domains]

As part of the discussion, the committee agreed that an individual program could propose multiple courses in a single category because the way Core is structured, students would not be able to exceed the 12 hour per program cap.

Vote: 12/12 yes

**[SUMMARY:** No configuration in which a student could take more than 12 credit hours from a single program in the Core curriculum will be allowed, and no program may be represented in more than 3 categories. A program may propose multiple courses within a single category as long as doing so does not permit students to take more than 12 hours in that program.]

## Course Proposals for the True Blue Core

### COMM 2560 Intercultural communication

Mary Beth Asbury, chair and department representative

#### Discussion

Discussion of the proposal included questions from the committee about whether the class included a global perspective and whether adjuncts would teach any of the sections.

Vote: 13/13

### NFS 2220 Nutrition for the Health Sciences

Ginny Bogle, Lisa Shepherd, departmental representatives

#### Discussion

Discussion of the proposal included concerns that the course was not designed as a general education course and that the course was not conceptualized broadly enough to belong in the Human Society and Social Relationships category. The proposal initiator offered to foreground the True Blue Core requirements.

Vote: 11 yes; 2 no; 11/13

Ann M: Asked for the indulgence of the committee to extend the meeting past 2:00 pm and everyone agreed.

### PS 1015 Introduction to Political Theory

Robb McDaniel and Michael Federici, department representatives

#### Discussion

Discussion of the proposal included concerns that the course might fit better in Human Society and Social Relationships rather than its proposed category, Creativity and Cultural Expression. Representatives of the department argued that political theory is a subfield of the humanities and that the course rightly belongs in the proposed category.

Vote: 12/12

### SW 2000 Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Cathy McElderry, chair and department representative

#### Discussion

Discussion of the proposal included concerns about whether the course as designed with a scaffolded research assignment might really belong in Information Literacy rather than History & Civic Learning category. Ex officio member, Susan Myers-Shirk, pointed out that the course aligns perfectly with the civic learning outcome and had recommended this category to Prof. McElderry.

Vote: 10 yes; 2 no; 10/12