

**General Education Committee  
Meeting Minutes for February 9, 2018**

**Committee members attending:** Amy Sayward, Charles Chusuei, Dovie Kimmins, Deana Raffo, Justin Gardner, Mike Boyle, Karen Reed, Virginia Hemby, Teresa Davis, Phil Loubere, Kate Pantelides, Geeta Maharaj

**Ex-officio members attending:** Susan Myers-Shirk, Dawn McCormack, Peter Cunningham, Jeff Gibson

**Guest attending:** Jill Austin, Tony Johnston

**Business:**

- **Call to order.** Amy Sayward called the meeting to order.
- **Approval of Minutes.** Meeting minutes from the November 17, 2017 meeting were approved: moved by Mike Boyle, seconded by Justin Gardner. The minutes carried unanimously with no changes.
- **Presentation of two proposals:**
  1. **ABAS 2010 by Tony Johnston.**
    - Introduction to the proposal: Tony passed out a handout regarding the topics for the class. He stressed the relevance of the subject matter to current geopolitical events; he also said that past students have noted that the course made them think about the subject in new ways. Tony stated that although this subject can be a very controversial topic, the department is not trying to present the content in a controversial manner.
    - Question from Zaf Khan: What are your thoughts on GMOs? Tony responded: if we did not have GMOs in the way I understand them, then we wouldn't be here today. We have driven the development of plants and animals to meet our needs.
    - Question from Teresa Davis: Could you give us an example of some of the service learning projects? Tony responded: organizations that provide food to the less fortunate, the Food Bank in Nashville, Feed the Children. We have a food pantry here on campus. Most people aren't aware that there are USDA food distributions each month. There are opportunities all over to understand food insecurity. This is no longer esoteric: there is a human face associated. Beyond food distribution, students can go work for organizations that are trying to get grants to help. One time when I taught the class, my students decided to do a fundraiser for an organization that buys farm animals for the needy in underdeveloped countries.

- Question from Amy Sayward: If you have a larger group, are the volunteer opportunities scalable? Will they be provided with a list of volunteer organizations? Tony responded: yes.
- Question from Amy Sayward: Could a faculty member from outside the Agriculture dept. teach the class? Tony responded: Yes because the course is cross-departmental, which is an asset because different faculty bring a different angle to the topics.
- Remark from Peter Cunningham: The problem with having other faculty members teach it is from the SACS accreditation standpoint: faculty must have earned 18 graduate hours in the discipline. Family/Consumer Sciences faculty might be a possibility. Tony agreed. Susan Myers-Shirk asked: Is there a way to write this in on the front end? Peter responded: I can see someone in Sociology wanting to teach the course. If you cross list it under ABAS and SOC, both of these would count in the same area under General Education. I'm just concerned about creating a General Education course that can only be taught each fall.
- Question from Dawn McCormack: What makes this a social/behavioral sciences class? Tony responded: Food motivates us to behave in certain ways, in response to our hunger. We can be manipulated by our hunger. Dawn responded: I'm looking for data analysis that has been done in social and behavioral sciences. Justin Gardner responded: One of the things on the list is Agricultural Price Supports; this falls under economics, which would fall under behavioral sciences.
- Question from Phil Loubere: I'm concerned by the long list of topics: would they be taught the same way by different faculty members? There was some general discussion and crosstalk from committee members that this is a problem everywhere; someone also said that the outcomes are the outcomes, regardless of who teaches the course.
- Remark from Amy Sayward: The distribution of grades listed is probably something that should be removed.
- Question from Charles Chusuei: So in a typical semester would you cover all of these topics? Tony responded: Yes. It does require outside readings.
- Question from Kate Pantelides: What's the coherent piece then? A consistent way to look at the ideas, or a method? Tony responded: The lens is the food itself, how food is affecting how we behave.
- Geeta Maharaj pointed out the clear tie between the class and sociology.
- Remark from Amy Sayward: One other comment, under Summary of Course Descriptions: I think some stronger verbs for students are needed. Maybe more higher-order thinking skills type of verbs would probably be helpful. You also need to clarify the objectives for whoever would teach it.
- Amy thanked Tony for coming.

## **2. LEAD 2000 by Jill Austin.**

- It was noted that Deana Raffo, a member of the committee, was also present to answer any questions about the course proposal.
- Introduction to the proposal: Jill Austin stated that this course was developed to help students understand what leadership is and how to apply it. Leadership now is very much about working together to accomplish a task. The point is to help students learn how to apply leadership skills. There will be some service learning projects to help them apply the content.
- Deana Raffo stated: I teach a 3000-level course right now. The perception of leadership among the students is that of directing others rather than collaboration. This class can help students think more globally.
- Question from Amy Sayward: I noticed that there was a longer list of faculty who can teach this class. Do you imagine this class would only be taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty? Jill responded: No, an adjunct could teach it. Deana responded: Team teaching is an effective approach. Jill agreed.
- Question from Dawn McCormack: Is there a theoretical basis in social or behavioral sciences for this course? Deana responded: Yes, psychology and sociology are behind this course
- Question from Amy Sayward: Under “Activities Required”, there is a list of other possibilities – do you imagine anything beyond the readings will be required for the course? Deana responded: There would have to be some sort of team or community project included. I would think that the team piece in particular would be part of the class. Amy responded: I wasn’t sure if all of the activities would be required of all the instructors.
- Question from Zaf Khan: Will this course have a focus that would have a universal design that would go across different areas and fields, or would you specify it to a specific discipline? Jill responded: It would have a broad focus to fit each student’s discipline. It would hit all the discipline areas.
- Question from Kate Pantelides: It seems like a really nice fit with MT Engage. Do you want it to fit with both MT Engage and EXL? There’s a lot of overlap, but I would clarify which one. Jill responded: They’re kind of related, it could fit either way. Kate responded: I would clarify.
- Question from Teresa Davis: Would every student have a chance to have a leadership role/experience? Deana responded: The way I teach it, yes, because depending on the activity or project, the leadership role would roll.
- Question from Amy Sayward: I had a question – under D4 – the discrepancy between the assignment and the outcomes assessed. Deana responded: we would have to expand this assessment plan (it only has 2, but needs 4).

### **3. Discussion and voting on the proposals.**

- Susan Myers-Shirk reiterated that the committee would be voting simply on whether to move the proposals up to the University community for feedback.
- The group first discussed ABAS 2010. Phil Loubere mentioned the concern regarding having enough faculty to teach the course. Kate Pantelides said that the course seemed very broad, as there are 23 topics listed. She said that there appeared to be no underlying theoretical basis behind the course. She also stated that the proposal needs more specificity so that multiple people could teach.
- The voting members of the committee used paper ballots to vote on ABAS 2010. The final vote was 13 votes for yes, 0 for no.
- The group next discussed LEAD 2000. There were no concerns raised. The voting members of the committee used paper ballots to vote on LEAD 2000. The final vote was 11 votes for yes, 2 for no.
- For both proposals, Amy Sayward stated that if anyone had edits or concerns regarding the proposals, they should email her.

### **4. Update on SACSCOC requirements.**

- Susan Myers-Shirk stated that the committee does the competency assessments; those were the reports that we heard in the fall. In addition, the committee does course assessments: for these, the General Education courses are assessed to see the degree to which students are meeting the requirements. The trend now is away from course assessment and to program assessment – no more than 5 assessments, and we would assess these across the entire General Education program rather than the particular courses. This is how SACS is going. We are coming up on a 5-year midterm review (we're 3 years out from that), and then for the next review we'll have to have program assessments in place. Susan encouraged the committee to think about General Education program goals, objectives, and outcomes.

### **5. Assignment of subcommittee duties for the March 2018 meeting.**

- The Assessment subcommittee will review only three course assessments: two math classes and a women's study class are complete.
- The Teaching subcommittee: there are nine nominees for Outstanding Teaching; those individuals have been notified and are preparing their packets. There is a scoring rubric to use for this process.
- The following assignments to subcommittees were made:
  - Assessment subcommittee: Virginia, Mike, Dovie, Deana, Teresa, Phil
  - Teaching subcommittee: Zaf, Justin, Kate, Charles, Geeta, Amy
  - An email will go out to each of the subcommittees to review their materials. The Monday after Spring Break will be when both subcommittees have their documents.

**6. *New business.***

- The committee discussed currently proposed state legislature impacting General Education. One bill is in regard to a Civics exam: students would have to pass an exam equivalent to the one administered to those becoming US naturalized citizens. The other bill states that students must take 3 hours of Economics as a General Education requirement; the bill further states that students can only count 6 hours of humanities toward their General Education requirements.

**7. *The meeting adjourned at 3:15 PM.***