

Minutes: General Education Meeting, 10.25.2019

In Attendance

Members: Aliou Ly, Steve Lewis, Melissa Lobegeier, Theresa McBreen, Greg Nagle, Kevin Krahenbuhl, Lando Carter, Laura White, Deana Raffo, John Zamora, Connie Schmidt, Jim Piekarski, Ryan Korstange, Tammy Melton, Stephen Lewis, Joey Gray
Guests: Andrew Dix, Kari Neely, Jason Pettigrew, Ann McCullough,
Design Team Members: Soraya Nogueira, Michelle Boyer-Pennington
Ex-officio: Susan Myers-Shirk, Katie Brackett, Peter Cunningham.

Meeting Called to order by Aliou Ly @ 2:05
Introduction of members and guests.

Approval of minutes

April 5 – approved unanimously.
Sept 13 – approved unanimously.
Sept 27 – approved unanimously.

Competency Assessment Report: COMM 2200 – Dr. Andrew Dix

1. Data collection
 - a. Data collected in fundamentals of communication – COMM 2200.
 - b. Live in-class assessments of persuasive speeches by trained evaluators.
 - c. Used stratified sampling.
 - i. Morning classes: 8-12:25
 - ii. Afternoon: 12:25pm- 5:30pm
 - iii. Evening: 6:00pm and after.
 - iv. Online/Dual Enrollment

*No dual enrollment sections were randomly selected.
18 sections selected, 282 speeches evaluated.
2. Results
 - a. Outcome 1: Introduction - 94.3% of students received fair or higher. 4.1 mean on 5.0 scale. Moderately up from 2018. Students do the introduction well.
 - b. Outcome 2: Persuasive organizational pattern. 95.29% of students = fair or higher. 4.25 on 5.0 scale.
 - c. Outcome 3: Use of supporting materials. 93.26% = fair or higher. Overall mean 4.26 on 5.0 scale.
 - d. Outcome 4: Appropriate language (grammar, diction, syntax). 96.81% = fair or higher. Mean 4.12 on 5.0 scale.
 - e. Outcome 5: gathering and using multiple sources. 86.47% of students score fair or higher. Mean 4.02 on 5.0 scale.
 - f. Outcome 6: closing section. Mean 3.96 on 5.0 scale.
 - g. Outcome 7: eye contact: Mean 3.79 on 5.0 scale
 - h. Outcome 8: nonverbal behavior. 4.14 on 5.0 scale.
 - i. *Note:* Outcomes 6-8 are new this year, so no historical data.

3. Interpretations
 - a. Good results.
 - b. One evaluator was more lenient in evaluation, which impacts historical trajectory of the data.
 - c. Partnership with the library likely benefits the results – specifically outcomes 3 and 5.
 - d. Improvements –
 - i. New system of securing evaluators.
 - ii. Implementation of a speaking center on campus.
4. Questions/Comments
 - a. One of the pieces of the SACS requirement is to demonstrate improvement, or effort at improvement. So – what is COMM doing to close the loop and make effort towards improvement?
 - i. Answer: In spring – data is analyzed by instructor. Gives them a chance to see where their scores vs. the aggregate. Then instructors can identify how they are doing in comparison to other instructors and adjust teaching accordingly.
 - ii. Follow up: Lobbying for speaking center is also part of the improvement process.
 - b. Do students receive assessment results?
 - i. Answer: The assessment results are not shared with the students. The observations are intended to be as unobtrusive as possible.
 - c. Are you considering adjusting the rubric to give better information?
 - i. Answer: Now that we are out from under the TBR we have more flexibility to adjust the outcomes and the rubric.
 - d. Evaluator selection and training specifically regarding inter-rater reliability?
 - i. Answer: Selection of reviewers – solicitation of volunteers. Paid \$625 which equals about \$4 per speech.
 - ii. Reviewers are MTSU faculty members.
 1. But – they are FTT's and adjuncts, not TT faculty.
 - iii. Training: reviewers rate sample videos and discuss differences in score. No formal tracking of inner-coder reliability yet.
5. Next steps:
 - a. Minutes will be forwarded to Dr. Dix for review.

Discussion of proposal for FL 1000: Ann McCullough & Kari Neely

1. Goal: Language used to be a part of gen ed, but is no longer a part of it. And with more BS degrees offered, students don't come into contact with language at all. This proposal is to allow students to have contact with the impact of language in society.
 - a. Hits a lot of 21st century skills. E.g., Critical thinking, info literacy, tech literacy, collaboration, social skills.
 - b. Emphasis on quantitative analysis:

- i. Background – department faculty are trained as cultural historians (including discourse analysis) and language scholars. Others are trained as ELL scholars.
 - ii. Project in the proposal includes discourse analysis information. Students wouldn't have to know foreign languages, but would look at frequency of words in foreign language publications.
 - iii. Either historical or Contemporary sources.
 - iv. Partnership in place with the library already.
 - c. Why now?
 - i. First – students need contact with the idea of language early in gen ed. Early contact would benefit students who are learning languages.
 - ii. This class also allows for a potential grounding for a global diversity pathway – if that is part of the redesign that is approved.
2. Questions:
- a. Regarding pathways: You know pathways are not approved at this point?
 - i. Yes – but it could fit with that part of the redesign.
 - ii. The course is both good now, and ready for change.
 - b. Proposal talks about MT Engage, could you talk about those connections?
 - i. Course would be a part of a departmental MT Engage major pathway. This would be an early course, that could help to establish entry and progression in a major pathway.
 - ii. MT Engage helps with assessment as well because of the common assignments.
 - iii. Follow up: What are the activities the students might do?
 - 1. Cultural excursions out of the class.
 - 2. Discourse analysis project done with reflection and extrapolation to student processing of media.
 - c. How is the course instructor specific?
 - i. Each instructor would use the same introductory section of the syllabus (first month), managed by a coordinator. The course would branch out into instructor expertise from there.
 - d. Advantages and disadvantages to having native speakers in a class. Are you encouraging or prohibiting native speakers?
 - i. The course isn't about acquisition of language, but is more theoretical in nature – so would be no issue.
3. Process explanation - Susan
- a. Committee discusses the proposal, and discuss whether it goes forward.
 - b. Vote by ballot.
 - c. Simple Majority required for the proposal to go forward.
 - d. If the proposal goes forward, it is made public to university community, and for a period of public comment.
 - e. Final vote, which requires a 2/3rds majority.
 - f. Course is proposed in the social and behavioral science category. Must meet 4 outcomes (outcomes distributed to the committee).

4. Additional Discussion

- a. Is this course currently offered?
 - i. Course has never been offered. But approved by UCC last month. Could be offered for FA 2020.
- b. Peter Cunningham: Process clarification, after approval the course does not come back to the committee after public review.
 - i. Cunningham: The challenge is that the website regulations (here: https://www.mtsu.edu/gen_ed/submit.php) do not follow the university policy (Policy 32.7.f.7).
 - ii. Cunningham: For course approvals, having the proposal in Curriculog suffices for public comment.
 - iii. Cunningham: The university policies were changed after the gen ed policy was adopted last by the general education committee.
 - iv. Cunningham: Suggestion – table the discussion for now, direct the director of general education or committee chair to inform the public of the proposal under review, with a link to the Curriculog proposal.
 - v. Myers-Shirk: The committee must follow the procedure for course approval [which requires a simple majority vote to go out for university review] as it appears on the website.
 - vi. Myers-Shirk: Maybe all this means is notifying faculty that the proposal is in curriculog [but otherwise leave the process as it appears on the website in place.]

Motion by Connie Schmidt: Table the Vote, and have Susan, Peter, and Aliou to clarify the process of course adoption.

Question: T. Melton – what is the spirit of public review of the proposal? Should we not inform the public now about the proposal?

C. Schmidt: if the committee serves any vetting function, that is a problem with regard to public review.

L. Lyons: What is published on the gen ed website doesn't violate the policy, so why not follow it?

K. Neely: How many members are absent today? If the vote comes in negative – the proposal is dead.

Committee member: Who decides the correct interpretation of the policy?

Myers-Shirk: Dr. Cunningham, the Provost, and I will have to sit down and decide the correct interpretation of the policy.

Seconded: K. Krahenbuhl.

Vote: 12 – Yes, Table; 2 – no, vote today.

Update on Redesign, including results from September 27, 2019 General Education Committee “town hall” – Susan Myers-Shirk

1. Departmental meetings.
 - a. Mostly talking about the components/building blocks and process/procedure.
 - b. Lots of good feedback on implications for individual departments.
 - i. Small departments get majors from gen ed.
 - ii. Concerns about workload, and how the new gen ed will fit into the workload.
 - iii. Course cap increase is being discussed in some departments, and so there are concerns about how new general education components would fit with larger class sizes, and overall workload concerns.
 - c. The intention of the redesign process is to create an intellectual exciting compelling program for both faculty and students, that uses HIPs where faculty want to use them. But, we can't do that with large class sizes, and other workload pressures.
2. Last town hall: New format, which was successful.
 - a. The ‘town halls’ should have been called workshops.
 - b. New format:
 - i. Explained components.
 - ii. Turn and talk with someone from another college, which generated good conversation.
 - c. Added Q&A
 - d. Third town hall – Nov 7.
3. Procedure
 - a. The idea: Five step process
 - i. Gather info
 - ii. Design – from information, come up with 2-3 arrangements of the building blocks.
 1. By the design team.
 - iii. Gen ed committee – evaluate the designs from the design team. And finalizing 2-3 designs to go out to the university community.
 1. Proposals will be ranked in some way – without a vote.
 2. Goal: transparent, iterative, and collaborative process.
 - iv. Goal: Structure in place by the end of 2019-2020 AY.
 - b. Spring: Conversation about outcomes.
 - i. Workshops will be held to build a conversation about the outcomes we want. Which then will be tied to assessment.
 - ii. Long-term: We can use those outcomes at the program level.
 1. SACS accreditation requires assessment of learning outcomes at the program level. So, our current assessment will not work long term, so we need to find a way to assess across the entire general education program.

2. This requires general education outcomes, which then need to be tied to the building blocks of the program.
4. Mock Town Hall Data:
 - a. Comments/Thoughts?
 - b. MTSU has a small general education program – 59 courses. Well under our peers and other TN colleges. We are not going toward UT style, with 450 courses in gen ed.
 - c. Question on town hall attendance: Faculty only? Students?
 - i. Faculty only. No students have attended yet.
 1. Maybe have student advisory council run focus groups with their peers in the spring?
 2. Also have run qualities and components by the student advisory council as something of a test bank.
 - d. Question: Students seem not to be aware of career options – are we doing anything in the general education redesign to increase student awareness of potential careers? This leads towards authentic interest in topics. Also, the potential for assessment of student work by industry professionals.
 - i. Research indicates that Broad liberal education gives skills for work. There is a limit on what professional skills we can teach in gen ed, and that is a SACS limit.
 1. “These courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, or procedures that are particular to a specific field.”
 - ii. A strictly career course or internship course would violate that principle.
 - e. Resign is about to launch a 20 min narrated PowerPoint.
 - i. Topic: National trends in general education redesign.

Old Business

1. Procedure for awarding outstanding general education teaching award – from Sept 13.
 - a. There are additional notes that would impact our conversation.
2. General education assessment is carried by three departments (Communication studies, English, Math) and we need to find ways to give them more support.

New Business

1. Return to General Education award on Nov 8.

Meeting Adjourned by Aliou Ly @ 3:43pm.