

Minutes of University General Education Committee

September 23, 2022, at 1:00 p.m. in JUB 100

Voting Members Present: Keith Gamble (chair), Leon Alligood, Nita Brooks, Janet Colson, Rebecca Fischer, Mark Frame, Yi Gu, Virginia Hemby-Grubb (via Zoom), Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Rachel Kirk, Ann McCullough, Scott McDaniel, Keely O'Brien, Amy Sayward

Voting Members Absent: Warner Cribb, Sydney Fischer, Terry Goodin, Angela Hooser, Sungyoon Lee, Cheyenne Sweeley

Ex-Officio: Amy Aldridge Sanford, Christopher Brewer, Jeff Gibson, Susan Myers-Shirk, Stephen Severn

Others present: Christabel Devadoss (via Zoom), Kristen West, Elizabeth Wright, Anne Anderson, Betsy Dalton, Christina Cobb, Anna Kate Holt, Elisha Lawrence

The time of this meeting (and only this meeting) was changed from 2:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. to allow committee members to attend the MT Engage reception that started at 2:30 p.m. Warner Cribb, a voting member of the committee, requested that the minutes reflect that he was unable to attend due to having previously scheduled a meeting with students in his lab group meant to accommodate his attendance at the regularly scheduled meeting time.

Keith Gamble, the committee's chair, opened the meeting, noting that eleven voting members were present. He asked for feedback on the minutes that had been submitted; there being no edits or corrections, the minutes were considered approved. He then turned the committee's attention to the category definitions document that had been circulated ahead of time and opened the floor for discussion.

Amy Sayward suggested alternative language to indicate that courses that had previously been in the General Education curriculum could be fast-tracked for inclusion into the Disciplinary Knowledge category. Ann McCullough expressed a concern about the language of "changing others' attitudes and beliefs" rather than understanding them that was in the non-written communication description. Sayward also expressed concern about the language of additional courses being able to request admission to the Disciplinary Knowledge category "at a later date." There was agreement to some language like "as soon as practicable after the launch of the program."

Scott McDaniel asked about the changing of the name of one of the categories from "History, People, and Cultures" to "History and Civic Learning." Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand then asked a procedural question, of whether this part of the meeting was for making motions and voting or simply talking. Gamble replied that this document is largely for the director and the implementation team. The purpose of the meeting was primarily to ask questions and help improve it through corrections and suggestions. The document also communicates what the committee has done through its work and retreat. After the committee's discussion, Gamble stated that he would not ask the committee to approve the overall document, recognizing it as a living document but also recognizing that essential pieces are new clarifications of the overall structure that was approved last year. For example, he

pointed out that the idea established in the document that legacy courses (those that were in the General Education curriculum in Fall 2022) should be fast-tracked to the Disciplinary Knowledge subcategory and that new courses (not in the General Education curriculum in Fall 2022) would seek approval for the Explorations subcategory should be approved by the committee. The details of the document and how it should be communicated to the campus community would, however, remain the domain of the General Education Director.

Gamble noted Gray-Hildenbrand's request to vote on the title of the category. Sayward asked about editing the number of hours included in the Disciplinary Knowledge and Explorations category with the goal of making it clearer and giving more emphasis to the Explorations category—a key innovation of the new model that is listed as having (0-3 hours), for example. Susan Myers-Shirk said that the wording was meant to emphasize that the new model was an evolutionary change (as requested by the Chairs Council) rather than a revolutionary change. Gamble stressed that the opportunity was built into the model for innovation. There was discussion on how best to list and explain the differences between Disciplinary Knowledge and Explorations categories.

There was also discussion about how much time and effort would be required to implement the changes made in the General Education redesign. Gamble agreed that clarity was important, but thought that the details of implementation might best be left to later. Myers-Shirk confirmed that a program cannot be launched if it is not in the catalog, which means that January 2024 (the catalog deadline) would be the deadline for getting the new General Education program launched in Fall 2024. Steve Severn, representing the Chairs Council, pointed out that the Fall 2024 schedule would have to be made and in the system in the Fall of 2023, ahead of the catalog deadline.

Mark Frame expressed a concern that only the "History and Civic Learning" category limits the prefix of the Disciplinary Knowledge category. He thought that sent the wrong message to faculty and students. Myers-Shirk explained that that was by-product of the transferal of all of the categories from the legacy curriculum and thought that it paralleled the language in other categories. Gamble pointed out that the proposed transition of the legacy curriculum into the Disciplinary Knowledge subcategory meant that functionally only courses with an HIST prefix would be in that category initially in any case, until new courses are allowed to be added to Disciplinary Knowledge subcategories. Frame thought that this line should be deleted. Jeff Gibson similarly thought that the first line in the "History and Civic Learning" Explorations description could be deleted, as the second sentence was sufficient to define the category.

Gray-Hildenbrand then expressed concern about the language of an Explorations course focusing on a "clearly relevant topic." She worried about how that phrase would be defined and utilized in the future. Gamble suggested that common sense and future committees would define that. Gray-Hildenbrand preferred the SACSSOC language "non-skills-based" that Myers-Shirk suggested.

Gamble then moved the suggestion made earlier by McDaniel about **voting on the change in the category from "History, Peoples, and Cultures" to "History and Civic Learning."** He stressed that this was not a structural change in General Education, just a rewording or clarification of the language adopted previously. In response to a question from Rachel Kirk, Myers-Shirk stated that the name change came for a concern that the older title had overlap with other categories and from the summer-time realization that civic learning better fit what is currently being taught and learned in these classes. The vote was **13 members in favor, none opposed, and no abstentions.**

Gamble then moved to discussion of a motion that the Disciplinary Knowledge subcategories would only be open to existing courses and Explorations subcategories would only open to new courses (not in the General Education curriculum in Fall 2022) for initial course approval. Gray-Hildenbrand then raised the question of whether a legacy course could request to be added to a different category's Disciplinary Knowledge subcategory based on the outcomes now attached to that category. She used the example of "Introduction to Philosophy," which could be fast-tracked into the Disciplinary Knowledge in the Fine Arts and Humanities subcategory but which might better correlate with the Critical Thinking rubric that is connected to the Human Society & Social Relationships category. Gamble stated that it was envisioned that legacy courses would transfer to the same categories, which would facilitate the launch of the program, but others expressed the view that faculty and departments should decide which outcomes their courses best fit. Myers-Shirk stated that maintaining the current categories would also be easiest for transfer students. Gamble stated that he thought the issue went beyond the motion he had made. Frame suggested that a vote on Gray-Hildenbrand's motion might be made before Gamble's motion, as the one vote might influence the other. Gamble assented, and Gray-Hildenbrand's **motion that departments have the option to choose the category of their legacy course—with appropriate justification**--was moved to the floor (seconded by Frame). The motion **passed unanimously**, with 13 voting in favor.

Gamble then returned to his original motion. Frame suggested that there be a specific, two-year timeframe for new courses being considered for the Disciplinary Knowledge subcategories. Gamble did not accept this as an amendment to his motion, as it laid outside the power of the current committee. The motion **that the only courses that can be approved in a Disciplinary Knowledge subcategory are legacy courses (in the Gen Ed Curriculum in Fall 2022) and that the Explorations subcategory is only open to non-legacy courses** moved to the floor. **Eleven voted in favor, and 2 were opposed.**

Further discussion about the History requirement followed, clarifying what the legislation requires and how the university currently ensures that students meet it. There was consensus among the committee members on bringing the language in the "History and Civic Learning" category into conformity with Frame and Gibson's suggestions.

Gamble stated that there were no other motions on the table about category language.

Frame asked whether General Education courses had to be numbered as 1000- or 2000-level courses. Myers-Shirk stated that maintaining that current schema facilitates transferability but that the University of Tennessee Knoxville did have 3000-level courses in its General Education curriculum, which caused difficulties with transfer students. Frame stated his opinion that more integrative and exploratory thinking could be undertaken in 3000-level courses. Severn and Myers-Shirk said that there was no specific university guidance, Vice Provost Amy Aldridge-Sanford stated that the current schema makes things easier and keeps transfer students from hemorrhaging hours. Gamble said that there was no current policy prohibiting a 3000-level General Education course. Myers-Shirk stated that such a significant change would need further discussion and a vote.

Gray-Hildenbrand revisited the question Sayward raised earlier about the hours distribution between Disciplinary Knowledge and Explorations subcategories. Gamble pointed out that the approval of the model included the hours distribution that is included in the Working Categories Definitions document. Sayward then withdrew her request for edits, stating that her goal was clarity and emphasis, not a

significant change. Gamble then adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m., stating that he expected a vote on this overall document and the course approval process at the next, October 7th meeting.