

**MTSU University General Education Meeting
Minutes for January 29, 2021**

Committee members attending: Samuel Blumer, Janis Brickey, Warner Cribb, Mark Frame, Terry Goodin, Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Virginia Hemby-Grubb, Rachel Kirk, Ryan Korstange (Chair), Kevin Krahenbuhl, Aliou Ly, Tammy Melton, Greg Nagel, Ryan Otter, James Piekarski, Deana Raffo, John Sanborn, Laura White

Ex-officio members attending: Chris Brewer, Meredith Funderbunk, Jeff Gibson, Susan Myers-Shirk (Director), Steve Severn

Design team members attending: Michelle Boyer-Pennington, Katherine Brackett, Christabel Devadoss, Kristen West, Louis Woods

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm by Ryan Korstange, Chair.

Approval of minutes from November 20, 2020

Deana Raffo made a correction to the spelling of Kari Neely's name. The minutes were approved with the correction.

Presentation about Timeline and Agenda for Spring Semester

Susan Myers-Shirk shared that John Sanborn has been added to the committee.

Susan reviewed a PowerPoint that she had previously shared with Deans and Chairs. It began with an overview of the history of the Gen Ed redesign process from fall 2018 to spring 2020. The redesign process was put on pause in spring and summer 2020 due to the pandemic.

Susan said that some Chairs felt they were "out of the loop" on the redesign process and formed a subcommittee on redesign. A Gen Ed Redesign D2L shell was created last spring/summer in an effort to engage more faculty.

After the pause from the pandemic, the updated plan was that we would be exactly one year behind in the redesign process. Chairs expressed concern about the timeline presented in the fall because faculty are overwhelmed, and therefore, the timeline seemed rushed. Susan talked with Provost Byrnes and Nita Brooks about this concern.

Susan shared the Gen Ed priorities that were developed from surveys, focus groups, and strategic planning groups. The priorities include flexible options, core knowledge and skills, student engagement and exploration, relevant and innovative content, and inclusion and intercultural competence.

Susan emphasized that from the onset, the intent was that the process be inclusive, equitable, transparent, and iterative. The Gen Ed program is the purview of the faculty.

Susan shared that there is a disconnect between how the design team thinks about design and how faculty think about design. The design team has been focused on the iterative process with changes and adaptations along the way. Faculty have thought about it as presenting 3 models and then the committee must pick 1. This process is based on a design principle called “scrumming.” In scrumming, a basic prototype is introduced and is then changed again and again until a fully workable model is attained. We are working on this principle. There is not a single model, or prototype, but rather faculty input has been included along the way and adjustments have been made. For example, there was little support for the e-portfolio and capstone elements. Subsequently, they have “disappeared” from the models. Susan recognized that because there has been so much data collected throughout the process, there has not been a way for faculty to know that their individual feedback has been heard.

Susan presented the spring 2021 timeline and emphasized that it is intended to be flexible. In January, the Gen Ed committee will reaffirm our priorities and articulate our process and explain the design process more effectively. In February, Q&A sessions will be conducted with department subcommittees based on the D2L shell content. We will also examine models, outcomes, assessments, and procedures for new course proposals. In March, public zoom forums will be conducted to continue the scrum process. Depending on what happens in February and March, a decision may be made about structural changes in April. However, if the committee is not prepared to make a decision about structure by the end of semester, we will continue to make adjustments. Getting it “right” is more important than rushing the process if we are not ready to make a decision.

If the Gen Ed committee makes a decision about structural changes in April, then next year (if we have funding), faculty will begin working on any of the structural elements that may include defining any new categories, designing pathways, designing first year seminars, and creating courses. Developing an assessment plan must happen regardless of what happens this year.

Samuel Blumer asked if the faculty who do not feel involved will be okay with this timeline. Susan answered that she thinks they will because of the opportunities for feedback with the D2L shell and with the public forums.

Janice Brickey commented that assessment is important in the design process.

Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand asked questions about what it will look like when it is time to vote and asked for clarification on the procedures. Susan said that the intent is to have the vote by the end of the semester, yet simultaneously the intent is also to respect faculty concerns. This means that the Gen Ed committee needs to balance engaging the community while also getting to where we need to be. This is why we are holding off on a definitive vote date. We need to examine the feedback from the public forums and D2L shell. Susan recognized that this ambiguity may be uncomfortable for the committee. Jenna asked about the committee’s role.

Susan said that the committee has an understanding at the microscopic level, but is also a representative of the faculty. Ideally, we will have broad campus support for a particular model by the time we get to the vote.

Warner Cribb said that Policy 32 gives any university group the opportunity to submit proposals for change. Susan said that the 3 current models are a starting point and the guidelines allow time for the university community to make comments. Susan reminded the committee of the voting procedures. For a major change to be made to the gen ed curriculum, the committee will submit a model for university review, then there will be a two-week comment period, then the committee will review the comments before voting. Making program changes requires two-thirds support from voting members. Susan said that we are still in the scrumming process and have not sent out anything out to university for comment period. In early April, we will know whether we have something to send out to the university for a formal, official, public comment period.

Samuel asked about sending out information to the university community for comment sooner. Susan said that the public forums and D2L shell are opportunities for feedback before there is a formal proposal for public review and comment.

Ryan said that there are two types of public comment. It is currently iterative, meaning as we receive feedback, changes are made. When we hope to have a proposal in April, the public commentary will be evaluative.

Samuel asked if we should find a way to expose all faculty to the models. Susan said that anyone can attend the public zoom forms in March. Samuel asked about funding. Susan said that some monies have been set aside and she is also requesting a lump sum when it comes time for implementation. The funding will be for faculty learning communities, block grants for design teams, retreat workshops, etc.

Greg Nagel asked if the minutes could be sent out to the university community as a way to better inform faculty. Steve Severn pointed out that Gen Ed meetings are open and the minutes are posted on the website. Discussion ensued about ways to be transparent without inundating faculty with emails when some faculty may not be interested. A suggested was presented to ask the Provost to request that chairs get their faculty involved.

Susan shared that some department subcommittees have finished their work in D2L, and some have just gotten started.

Workshop on Gen Ed Redesign Models/Prototypes

Ryan introduced an activity to pressure test or identify problems for one model. The activity involves examining a model and looking for failure points or anticipated challenges. He emphasized that this activity does not reproduce the work of the department subcommittees. Rather, it is an opportunity to gather a unique set of feedback from an interdisciplinary group.

The committee members, ex-officio members, and design team members, were divided into 3 breakout groups to pressure test or identify problems with Model 1 for about 40 minutes.

The committee reconvened and summarized the top 3 challenges they identified in breakouts. Group 1 – confusion between pathways and connections; lack of comparison to current model; pieces within the single model makes it look like there are three models. Group 2 – confusion about the 6-hour history requirement and whether there will be flexibility for other disciplines to meet those requirements (e. g. art history); transfer students and FYS and prior credits for pathways; how do we communicate the benefits and the needs that have driven the redesign, especially for faculty who are not familiar with the current gen ed program. Group 3 – general logistics (workload, FTTs, adjuncts, scheduling); resources (advising, time, compensation); communicating the value added (what's the value in interdisciplinary pathways, both from the students' side and faculty side).

Ryan asked if there are things we are leaving out, missing, or omitting from this model? Janice said that it will take time (years) to fully implement the model and that faculty will need to understand that there will be 2 parallel programs for a while. A transfer path will also have to be mapped out.

Ryan shared that inclusion and intercultural competence is a core value and it is minimized in this model.

The lack of current course examples in the categories is also missing.

Ryan will share all of the information from the breakout groups with the design team. The Google docs link will remain open through the weekend and committee members can continue to add comments.

Susan expressed her appreciation to the committee on their commitment to the redesign process.

With no new business, the meeting adjourned at 3:59 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Deana Raffo, Recording Secretary