

**MTSU University General Education Meeting  
Minutes for November 20, 2020**

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

**Ex-officio members attending:** Chris Brewer, Meredith Funderbunk, Leah Lyons, Susan Myers-Shirk (Director), Steve Severn

**Design team members attending:** Katherine Brackett, Louis Woods

**Guests attending:** Adonija Bakari, Emily Baran, Ann McCullough, Joseph Morgan, Keri Neely

**Call to Order**

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

**Approval of minutes from November 6, 2020**

Ryan Korstange made a correction to recategorize Louis Woods as a member of the design team. The minutes were approved with the correction.

**Course Proposals for Current General Education Program**

Ryan Korstange stated that there are 4 course proposals to vote on at this meeting. He gave a procedural reminder that to move forward, a two-thirds vote of the voting membership is required for proposals. Susan Myers-Shirk said that the voting membership is now at 18. One of the student members resigned. She is working on replacing the 2 missing members. This means that 12 approval votes are required to pass a proposal.

The public comment period is over and comments on the proposals were sent to committee before the meeting, which included 4 comments on the music proposal.

HUM 2610 (title and description change)

The proposal is to change the title from Foreign Literature in Translation to World Literatures. There was no public commentary about this change. Opened the floor for discussion. With no discussion, Samuel Blumer made a motion to accept the proposal, Mark Frame seconded. The proposal was approved with 17 in favor, 0 no votes, 0 abstentions.

HIST 2040 Survey of African American History I

The proposal is to add the course to the History category. Opened the floor for discussion. With no discussion, Aliou Ly made a motion to accept the proposal, Samuel Bloomer seconded. The proposal was approved with 17 voting in favor, 0 no votes, 0 abstentions.

### HIST 2050 Survey of African American History II

The proposal is to add the course to the History category. Opened the floor for discussion. With no discussion, Kevin Krahenbuhl made a motion to accept the proposal, Greg Nagel seconded. The proposal was approved with 17 voting in favor, 0 no votes, 0 abstentions.

### MUHL 2050 The World of Music

The proposal is to add the course to the Humanities category. Opened the floor for discussion. Susan Myers-Shirk reminded the committee that there were 4 comments from the public comment period shared to the committee by email. With no discussion, Samuel Bloomer made a motion to accept the proposal, Aliou Ly seconded. The proposal was approved with 17 voting in favor, 0 no votes, 0 abstentions.

Ryan stated that the result of the votes is that all proposals will move forward to the next step in the approval process.

### **New Business**

Susan Myers-Shirk shared that there is some uncertainty about the timing of the redesign process due to concern about faculty burnout and the ability to engage in meaningful conversations while dealing with the pandemic. The chair of the Chairs Council reported that they have similar concerns.

Faculty are working through the D2L shell and some are feeling overwhelmed with completing it by the February 12 deadline. The chairs asked that we not force the timeline and that the committee be open to pushing back the deadline. Susan shared that she feels this is a fair request. She would like to keep the February 12<sup>th</sup> deadline, but wants to make it clear that we can work with those who do not meet the deadline. This might push back the committee's timeline to decide on a model later in the semester, but necessary given where we are.

Steve Severn commented that the chairs' real concern was that the approval process not be rushed and that some faculty would like to be back on campus with in-person dialogue rather than Zoom sessions. He stated that this is a weighty decision that impacts the university long-term and that it is not good to make decisions in a fractured and exhausted state.

Susan shared that she respects the Chairs Council's concerns. The committee needs to make sure there is a robust conversation when the models are narrowed down. Steve said that he thinks that the feedback and input process can go forward, but that the final decision on the model should be made in a "regular" environment. Susan asked if would be acceptable to have conversations on campus, yet socially distanced and masked. Steve said that many faculty do not feel comfortable coming to campus right now. Mark Frame agreed that many faculty would not come to campus.

Steve said that the Chairs Council thinks that we need to move forward, but not in a rushed way since there is no required timeline by the Provost or others.

Susan said that she is concerned about stretching the process out too long – that it could result in redesign fatigue. Steve said that the Chairs Council’s concern is more about having open dialog because we want faculty to walk away from the process thinking that it was fair and thoughtful – and Zoom may not allow the sense of fairness and feeling heard.

Steve asked if an October-November timeline for finalizing the model is reasonable. Susan said that she will need to talk with Mark Byrnes and Nita Brooks to realign the schedule.

Warner Cribb added that these decisions should be looked upon as a priority, but right now it would be difficult to get the entire faculty to prioritize a discussion and analysis of the different models. Because it is important for the future of the university, we want to be sure we get it right. He said that if it takes longer to get everyone to prioritize the redesign process to make a good decision, it is worth it. He supports the Chairs Council recommendation.

Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand added that we have highly trained educators as a resource and we want to be able to fully tap into that resource. She asked what is lost by changing the timeline. Susan answered that she is concerned that we’ll lose engagement and momentum if the timeline is elongated because we’re now into the third year.

Susan said that ultimately, we are making recommendation to the Provost, so we must answer “up the line” on changing the timeline. A third concern is that we have assessment data when we get to the 2025 SACS review, but that is already problematic since we’re a year behind.

Susan said that if the timeline is pushed back, we will need to address the window of opportunity to add proposals to the current program.

Ryan Korstange stated that if the redesign is attempting to fix things that are broken, then delaying it can negatively affect student experiences by not addressing changes now.

Susan said that if we do nothing else, we must address assessment because our current method does not serve us as well as it could. She suggested that if the process is delayed, we address assessment in the interim. Warner stated that faculty will want to know what the assessment is going to look like as a part of the proposal process, and asked if it is the gen ed committee or redesign team’s job to address assessment. Susan said that it is both. Warner asked if figuring out information on what would be in the new course proposals could be started. Susan said these issues could be considered in the spring to keep everyone engaged.

Susan proposed that the executive team and design team meet to come up with a strategic plan on how do we make the best use of time in the spring semester if the redesign decision is delayed.

Steve said that if we delay, we are delaying the chance to fix issues, but since he is not sure that there are glaring shortcomings, fixing issues may not be as much of a concern as mitigating engagement.

Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand said that there are benefits to waiting, that changes need to happen, and that changes can impact how we are teaching courses. Students want more options, so even if we stay with same design, we will need to address students' desire for more options. She said that she doesn't think it's been clear to faculty that changes are needed, so the benefit of more time could be to communicate this need for more course options at a minimum.

Janis Brickey said that in preparation for the next SACS visit, addressing assessment shows that we are making progress.

Susan said that she will bring the exec team and design team together to develop the work plan for the spring. Meanwhile, departments and chairs can continue working through D2L as we figure out the next step. There was general support by the committee for this plan.

Aliou Ly asked that since the spring load for the gen ed committee may be lighter than we anticipated, should we accept new proposals for spring. Deana asked about the deadline for making changes to next year's catalog changes. Leah Lyons said that courses must be approved by January 20 for the new catalog. This means that even if we open the window for proposals in the spring, they would not go into effect until the following catalog. Leah clarified that courses can be approved by January 20 by the University Curriculum Committee to be "on the books" for next year, and that the courses could later be approved by the gen ed committee. Leah said that if the gen ed committee makes the decision that it is not going to accept new proposals in the spring, faculty can still work on proposals in the spring to get them ready to propose in the fall.

Greg Nagel made a motion that we accept new course proposals in the spring, Samuel Bloomer seconded. Ryan opened the floor for discussion.

Kevin Krahenbuhl said that if our current position is that we are accepting new proposals, we don't need a motion. In other words, there is no need to vote if the current position does not change. Ryan said that the moratorium had been lifted for the fall semester only and that it becomes active again after this meeting. Warner Cribb said that there needs to be a deadline if the moratorium is lifted.

Ryan clarified that for gen ed proposals, we are both the curriculum committee and the gen ed committee which means that UCC approval is not needed for new gen ed courses. Leah said that there is the January 20 deadline for the catalog, whether the course is gen ed or not. Ryan stated that the next gen ed meeting is January 29<sup>th</sup>, and because we have two-stage process, we would not be able to meet the deadline for next year's catalog. Warner said that he is concerned about message that redesign is not important if we accept proposals to meet old outcomes.

Janis said that assessment will take some time and that she is concerned about faculty and student fatigue. She said that we need to communicate that assessment is something that will move us forward and this should be our focus for the spring.

Susan said that the course proposals for this semester have been in the works for some time. She is concerned about people putting a lot of time and effort into the current gen ed curriculum because if changes are made, courses would need to be reworked to meet the new outcomes.

Samuel said that he thinks we should consider new proposals since we're not sure when new gen ed model will be approved given the previous discussion. If we get to fall 2021 and are not yet back to "normal," the redesign process could get pushed back again without new course proposals.

Warner said that he is not clear on how adding courses is making progress. Ryan said that it is progress if one of the challenges to the curriculum is that there is not a lot of choice. Samuel stated that offering more choices is making progress.

Ryan said that we have data from more than a year ago that is a review of our current gen ed program – what's working and what isn't - and that we should look at this again. Susan said it's a good idea to look at it again at exec team meeting to think about if/how to use it for spring.

Ryan stated that a motion is on the floor to accept course proposals in the spring. Susan said that that a simple majority of members present is required to pass. 6 members voted yes, 9 no, 1 abstained. The motion did not pass. The moratorium to accept new proposals will come back into effect for the spring semester.

Susan concluded that she will consult with the Provost and that the exec team and design team will meet to work on a strategy for the spring semester, including a plan for assessment and a path to continue to make progress toward an eventual model. She encouraged the committee to think about what a course proposal would look like, and procedures for proposals that will put us in a good position to move forward after a model has been decided.

The meeting adjourned at 3:09.

Respectfully submitted by Deana Raffo, Recording Secretary