

University General Education Committee meeting

4 February 2022

Voting Members: Amy Sayward, Lando Carter, Rebecca Fischer, Scott McDaniel, Nicolas Morgan, Terry Goodin, Deana Raffo, Janet Colson, Keith Gamble, Mark Frame, Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Keely O'Brien, Laura White, Rachel Kirk, Ryan Otter, Leon Alligood, Sungyoon Lee, Sydney Fischer, Virginia Hemby-Grubb, Warner Cribb

Ex-officio Jeff Gibson, Amy Aldridge Sanford, Susan Myers-Shirk

Non-members: Brian Frank, Christabel Devadoss, Kate Holt, Betsy Dalton, Kari Neely, Katie Brackett, Kristen West

Introductory issues

Lando Carter, committee chair, welcomed everyone in attendance, expressing his disappointment that the committee was not able to meet in January. Susan Myers-Shirk, General Education Director, welcomed Amy Aldridge-Sanford, the new Vice Provost for Academic Programs. Aldridge-Sanford thanked the committee for its important and hard work on General Education redesign.

Carter seconded the thanks to the committee and requested any changes to the minutes from the previous meeting that were circulated ahead of the meeting. Laura White stated that she believed that the preference poll described at the end of the minutes had been conducted; Amy Sayward said that she would amend the minutes to reflect this. The minutes—as amended—were approved.

Review of Design Team's Work on Model 2

Myers-Shirk reviewed the work that the Design Team had undertaken in light of the committee's discussion in December, which had resulted in the two versions of Model 2 that were circulated ahead of the meeting—one with Pathways and one with an Integrative Seminar. The preference poll that had ended the December meeting showed that a majority of committee members preferred Model 2 with either Pathways or an Integrative Seminar—not both.

Therefore the Design Team had crafted two versions of Model 2, one with Pathways and one with an Integrative Seminar. In reviewing the two models, she pointed out that both shared the same Foundations and Disciplinary Knowledge sections. The difference in the models was in the Explorations section, which covers four objectives and requires at least two different course prefixes. In the Pathways model, one course would cover each of the four objectives; in the Integrative Seminar model, three of the courses would cover objectives B, C, and D, and the Integrative Seminar would cover all four objectives.

The Design Team had also sought to further define Pathways and Integrative Seminar as they apply to this model. A Pathway would consist of 2-4 courses in Disciplinary Knowledge, would not necessarily be in sequence, would not be required (which would facilitate transfer but which would add value to those pursuing them at MTSU), and would be assessed indirectly. An Integrative Seminar would be part of the Explorations category, could be a lower- or upper-division course, could be a stand-alone course or a course accepted as an Integrative Seminar, but could not be a course focused on career development or professional skills. Both versions of Model 2 would require similar institutional resources.

Warner Cribb expressed that the College of Basic and Applied Sciences (CBAS) would likely have concerns about Model 2 as presented and wondered whether the Foundations section could have a broader range of hours so that Calculus (a four-hour course required in many CBAS majors) could be accommodated within the model without requiring more General Education hours or a redistribution of these “extra” hours to the major. Similarly, he wondered whether the Explorations category hours could be adjusted to accommodate the hours for two laboratory sciences. Some discussion followed in order to clarify the question at hand, but no motion was made at this point.

Mark Frame asked how Model 2 would work with existing transfer pathways and stated that despite committee members’ intention to expand student choice within the Explorations section of Model 2 that degree plan requirements might well significantly limit those choices. Myers-Shirk stated that some transfer pathways were indeed more restrictive than others, and Model 2 with Integrative Seminar would be trickier for transfer students to navigate. Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand stated that the committee had spoken of Integrative Seminars in two different ways--as a stand-alone course or as a designation on an existing course, similar to an Honors designation—and asked which version of the Integrative Seminar was envisioned in the version of Model 2 being voted on today. Myers-Shirk responded that both versions of the Integrative Seminar are envisioned in the model proposed by the Design Team in order to offer maximum flexibility. Sydney Fischer stated that in her role as a state legislature intern, she had just written a white paper on why students in Tennessee were not generally graduating within four years; she identified a primary obstacle as uncertainty about degree requirements. As a result, she expressed her concern that the redesign and inadequate advising could result in even greater confusion and uncertainty, especially if there is not a better way for students to check their progress than the existing Degree Works program.

Discussion followed to clarify the motion on which the committee was going to vote, specifically about whether “neither” would be an option in the decision between Model 2 with Pathways, Model 2 with an Integrative Seminar, or “either.” Gray-Hildenbrand, being the author of the preference poll that had ended the previous meeting, stated that including “neither” was in keeping with the spirit of that motion. But including “both” was not included in the current vote, as a majority in the December vote had voted against that proposition. The resulting preference poll had 20% voting for Model 2 with Pathways; 25% voting for Model 2 with an Integrative Seminar; 45% voting for “either”; and 10% voting for “neither.”

Discussion and Voting on Models to Be Forwarded to University Community

After these results were posted, Keith Gamble offered that the results showed a slight preference for Model 2 with an Integrative Seminar, since those voting “either” should be assigned to the preference with a majority (Integrative Seminar). Rachel Kirk asked for feedback from those who felt strongly for Pathways or for Integrative Seminar. Cribb offered that Pathways would be easier to assess, while Amy Sayward offered that she thought Integrative Seminars would be easier to assess. Fischer offered that she had a clear preference for Pathways as the way forward most likely to enrich the General Education curriculum and make it more relevant. She also said that Pathways offered the best blend of structure and choice. Mark Frame asked what the executive committee’s suggestion was on how best to move forward following this vote; Sayward responded that the three members of the executive committee thought that two models should be forwarded to the university community for comment simultaneously. She said that forwarding one model might be perceived as the committee railroading

the community, while sending three might make it appear that the committee had not done any work in reducing the number of models last sent for comment. Additionally, sending the models simultaneously (rather than consecutively) was most likely to result in fruitful comments that compared and contrasted the two models. Gray-Hildenbrand asked whether the model could be adjusted before being sent for university response. The response was yes, as the committee and the Design Team still had to decide on certain aspects of the model before it would be ready to be sent out. Sayward's motion that the committee send two models to the university community simultaneously was seconded by Gamble, and the vote in favor was 17-3.

Gamble followed up this vote by making a motion that Model 2 with an Integrative Seminar be one of the two models that will be forwarded to the university community; Sayward seconded the motion. Cribb then asked some clarifying questions about the first preference poll and its relationship to the current motion; Sayward stated that she had seconded the motion because it offered a straight up-or-down vote (rather than the range offered in the preference poll) about Model 2 with Integrative Seminar. The motion passed by a vote of 13-6-1. Gamble opined that this was the opportunity for discussion about the other models and which should be forwarded to the university community. There being no discussion, a preference poll about the remaining models (Model 1, Model 2 with Pathways, Model 3, and the existing curriculum) was taken:



When the results were revealed, Gamble observed that there was a preference for Model 2 with Pathways. He asked of those committee members who did not like either version of Model 2, if there were modifications that could be made that could lead to their support for this model in light of the committee votes. Carter followed up, asking if there were any comments on Model 2 in its two versions. There was no discussion, so conversation moved back to clarifying the modifications that the committee wanted to see to Model 2.

Adjustments to Model 2

Cribb made a motion to change the Foundations category with the Mathematics course counting as 3-4 hours (rather than the existing 3) and the Foundations category as a whole counting as 12-13 hours (rather than 12); the motion was seconded by Gray-Hildenbrand. The motion passed 19-1. Cribb followed up with a second motion to amend the Explorations category to 11-12 hours, which would see CBAS students taking a total of one less course with three 4-hour courses within General Education and which would mean that students could complete the category without a lab science course. Frame thanked Cribb for identifying a clear solution to the challenge he raised at the beginning of the meeting, and Frame seconded the motion, which passed 18-1-1.

Gamble then moved that the second model that the committee should send to the university community should be Model 2 with Pathways; Cribb seconded the motion. White asked whether the

Design Team would have an opportunity to make changes in light of these adjustments, which would likely impact the objectives as distributed in the Explorations category. Jeff Gibson also pointed out another area that would need to be edited in light of the changes just approved. Sayward stated that the models would absolutely have further edits and another committee meeting before they would go to the university for comment. The motion then passed 18-1-1. The committee's time being largely expended, Myers-Shirk stated that further discussion about the committee's schedule and its subcommittees would have to take place via email before the next meeting on February 18th.

Carter closed the meeting by thanking all of the committee members for their helpful comments and active problem-solving. The committee adjourned at 3:58 p.m.