

Approved 2-13-17

**The Minutes of  
THE GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
OF  
ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY**

The General Education Committee met Tuesday, November 29, 2016 at 1:00 p.m. in Brown 355.  
The following were present:

Dr. Christine Austin	Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim
Dr. Pam Carr	Dr. Thomas Nupp
Cheryl Chaney	Karen Riddell
Nancy Cox	Dr. Jeremy Schwehm
Gwen Faulkenberry	Matthew Smith
Dr. Patrick Hagge	Dr. David Ward
Dr. Theresa Herrick	

Guests: Ms. Tammy Weaver

Approval of Minutes Dr. Schwehm called the meeting to order and asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the October meeting. Ms. Cox made a motion to approve. Dr. Hagge seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Passport Overview Dr. Schwehm distributed a handout of how Tech's general education courses fit in to a Passport block. The courses were color coded for whether they had been found to meet the Passport requirements. He told the committee those courses shaded in green had all ratings of 3 and were Passport ready, yellow had mostly 3's, but had at least one 0 meaning one of the outcomes was not addressed, those in white had a combination of 3's, 2's and 1's and are close enough to being Passport ready, and the ones shaded in red had no information gathered as yet. He said the information gathered had found that Oral Communication is only addressed in communication courses which could cause issues if it was decided that everyone would get Passport. Critical Thinking, as far as crosscutting skills, was covered fairly well, but Teamwork was not covered very well. He said there were some areas that could be fixed. For instance, if everyone was required to take oral communications and a student successfully completed COMM 2003, then that student meets Passport proficiency in Oral Communications as well as Teamwork and Human Society, so we have single courses that can meet Passport proficiency across the content areas which will make it easier for our students.

Dr. Schwehm thought the main things the committee would need to work on would be to decide if all students would be Passport eligible or if it would be an option, working with departments to clearly articulate the proficiency criteria, and coming up with a solid plan for assessing those, what to do for the departments and colleges that do not require a speech

course, and what to do for those that have different requirements for social sciences vs fine arts and humanities vs natural sciences. He then asked the committee if they had any questions.

Dr. Hagge told the committee he was still working on the History courses, but had really good feedback so far from faculty and most of the courses that the information had been gathered on had all 3's.

Dr. Schwehm told the committee he had spoken with some of the members of Faculty Senate and most of the questions were concerning how this would affect what they teach, academic freedom, and assessment. He asked the committee what kind of responses they had so far. The committee said most of the comments were positive, but they had the same type of questions about academic freedom and assessment. Faculty were happy with the fact that this would help students with transferability and enrollment.

Ms. Chaney said she had a lot of questions about whether they had to start offering oral communication in their classes. When they found out they didn't, they were okay with it. Dr. Schwehm told them he had spoken with the Math department and that a lot of their courses were standardized. Ms. Chaney also noted that BIOL 1114 offered a lot of written communication and could possibly be added to that foundational skill. Dr. Schwehm noted that since every student is required to take Composition I, they will all have the required written communication met. Also, quantitative literacy will be met for all students since everyone is required to take a math course and all college level math courses would meet the quantitative literacy requirements. The committee then noticed that BIOL 1114 had been left off of the handout. Dr. Schwehm said it probably happened when he was moving things around on the spreadsheet. He will add that back on and post everything on to the Blackboard site.

Ms. Faulkenberry said the feedback was fine now, but she is afraid it might not be if faculty are asked to change things. Ms. Weaver told the committee it needs to be communicated that this is not just being done for Passport, but also for HLC compliance. She didn't want Passport to get a bad name. She said this is more an exercise we are going through for HLC that will also benefit the student. Tech can't participate in Passport unless we can prove the learning outcomes are met and since that is required by HLC, this will give us a framework to show we have done that. Dr. Austin didn't think this process required anyone to change anything in their courses at this point, it just requires the committee to start gathering samples on what is being done and how it is being assessed and applying them to rubrics. Dr. Schwehm asked if the committee should do this before determining whether we should be a part of Passport or wait until that is determined. Ms. Weaver stated that she didn't think we could

become a member of Passport until we could prove that we validate we are meeting those outcomes, so it is kind of had to go hand in hand. Dr. Austin stressed that, no matter if we decided to become a member of Passport or not, this would strengthen our general education program. She said this assessment of the learning outcomes would have to be done anyway, so we would just be giving it a framework and putting some order to it, which we don't currently have. Ms. Weaver commented that Passport will validate for students that they have fulfilled these general education outcomes where in the past, this was only validated when the student received their degree.

The committee discussed whether all of the general education courses were on the spreadsheet and Dr. Schwehm said they were, with the exception of BIOL1114 which he had inadvertently left off. The committee then discussed that COMM 1003 was listed under Teamwork and not Oral Communication since it does not include an oral communication component in the course. Ms. Weaver thought this process may bring to light some potential issues with our general education, because right now this course just introduces students to different types of speeches and the students do not actually practice oral communication. Dr. Schwehm asked Ms. Weaver to get together a list of majors that do not require an oral communications course or just require COMM 1003.

Dr. Schwehm told the committee he felt the courses coded in red under Human Cultures and Natural Sciences would probably move up in the same block they are in once the information is gathered and if that works out, then the issue, other than Oral Communications, would just be Teamwork. This could be rectified if everyone had to take either COMM 2003 or 2173 which would meet the requirements for both Oral Communications and Teamwork. Outside of that, then we are looking at another course that is required across almost all the disciplines, like a college level math or communication I, to add a Teamwork component. Ms. Chaney thought some of the sciences could be made to meet the Teamwork skill, especially within the labs. She thought that most are already doing some type of teamwork projects, they may just not assess them. Some of them also do oral presentations. Ms. Weaver commented that a lot of the other institutions she has looked at had oral communications along with teamwork and crosscutting skills coming out of labs. She also pointed out that the laboratories are a required component of general education. Dr. Schwehm pointed out that labs were listed on the spreadsheet that Dr. Woods had distributed at a previous meeting. Ms. Chaney then asked about how it would work with the courses since some have the labs separate from the courses and some don't. Does it make a difference? Dr. Herrick commented that some of the majors that are now requiring COMM 1003, could decide to require COMM 2003 or 2173 which would take care of the Oral Communication requirement.

Dr. Schwehm then questioned how the committee needed to go forward. Did there need to be committees of faculty from each area to sit down and refine the procedures and courses to meet the requirements of Passport? We need a clear idea of the best way to go about this so the committee is not overstepping or creating an impression that the committee was told by administration that this had to be done. He told the committee he had put out an announcement in Faculty Senate and he hoped he had made it clear this is something that faculty will be involved in and won't just be dictated to them. Dr. Herrick suggested to first finish gathering the information on the courses for the spreadsheet. Dr. Schwehm asked the committee members to finish gathering that information and get back to him and he would post it on the Blackboard shell and asked that the committee members check for accuracy then. Ms. Weaver asked the members on the Natural Sciences component to go back and look at the labs as part of their components. They agreed to do that.

Dr. Austin told the committee when HLC comes for the accreditation visit, the General Education Committee will be one of the committees they will want to speak with. They will ask about general education courses and how they are assessed. She said this process will go a long way in helping show this and proving we are looking at assessing these outcomes. Dr. Schwehm asked Dr. Austin if TracDat was still the method used for storing information and Dr. Austin said it was for the time being. She said that when the time came, that is where the information would be taken to show that the outcomes had been met.

Dr. Schwehm pointed out that some of the positives that we have right now are that everyone takes Comp I, Comp II, and Math. Ms. Weaver said the next set that everyone took would be the History and Political Science sets.

Dr. Schwehm commented that it probably would not be possible for every student to meet Passport without asking some of the departments to make changes. Ms. Weaver said that in the past, the general education at Tech made it difficult for students transferring in or out of Tech. That is why the current list of general education courses were developed. She said we just need to make sure this list meets the learning outcome. Ms. Weaver left for another meeting.

Dr. Schwehm told the committee they now needed to decide how to move forward and lay the groundwork for next semester. He then asked for a vote to move forward with this initiative and to start looking more closely at it. Dr. Herrick made a motion to move forward with getting Passport approved as our general education and sending it to the Curriculum Committee. Dr. Carr seconded the motion. The committee then discussed whether to make it required for all students or as an option for students.



The committee thought this part would be worked out in the process. Dr. Herrick pointed out that Engineering would not meet the criteria as is since it does not require Biology, with the exception of Bio-Chemistry. Dr. Carr commented that was true unless they were required to change their curriculum. Also, oral communication is not required in all. Dr. Schwehm thought those kinds of decisions would be made at the college level discussions. Dr. Schwehm asked if there were any more questions before calling for a vote. There being no other questions, he called for a vote. Motion passed. Dr. Schwehm told the committee he would speak with Dr. Underwood and others to get their advice on a timeline and procedures on how to proceed. Dr. Ward recommended getting the Faculty Senate involved and behind it. Dr. Herrick said it needed to go to Curriculum Committee first since that is the usual sequence. Dr. Schwehm asked if the Faculty Senate would then appoint the college level committees to set the proficiency and criteria. Dr. Ward thought it could just come back to the General Education Committee for that.

Ms. Chaney commented that some majors have specific courses that might cover oral communication, but are not general education courses. Dr. Schwehm said Passport allows for activities outside of general education to satisfy the Passport learning outcomes, but it doesn't mention courses outside of general education. The activities would just have to be documented. An example they gave was an internship that involved creative expression. He will research more on that to see if it is a possibility for courses as well. Dr. Carr mentioned this could lead to a lot of record keeping. Dr. Nupp said that the General Education Committee could make a recommendation that all students have oral communications as part of their general education. It didn't have to be a specific course, but the learning outcome.

Ms. Chaney also mentioned Nursing, which is one of our largest majors, may not have courses that satisfy the Natural Science requirements since their courses with labs may not have the required components. This may be something that would have to be addressed at some point.

Dr. Schwehm said the next step would be to get the information on the remaining courses gathered and he would then get with Ms. Weaver to put together something to go to the Curriculum Committee. He will send that out to the committee before sending it to Curriculum Committee in February. He will send out a scheduler sometime in January to set a meeting to discuss this.

Ms. Faulkenberry asked how the grading would be done if the activity was outside of the classroom. Dr. Schwehm said he thought that was something that Passport left up to the institution to decide. Dr. Herrick said it would probably be like the College Distinction in that whoever was

overseeing the activity would do the grading. Dr. Schwehm then went back to an earlier question about whether the student could pass the Passport proficiency outcome within a class while failing the class and the answer was yes, they could. They could also pass the class, but fail the outcome causing them to not meet Passport. Dr. Schwehm asked if there were any other questions. There were no others at the time.

Ms. Cox made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Hagge seconded. Meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.