

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

The General Education Committee met Thursday, September 18, 2017 at 11:00 a.m. in Brown 355. The following were present:

Dr. Christine Austin	Karen Riddell
Dr. David Blanks	Dr. Thomas Nupp
Cheryl Chaney	Dr. Jeremy Schwehm
Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim	Dr. David Ward
	Dr. Alaric Williams

Absent: Dr. Pam Carr, Dr. Cathi McMahan, Katy Dodd, Tkeyah McDaniel

Minutes Dr. Ibrahim opened the meeting and asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the April 24th and the August 17th minutes. Dr. Ward made a motion to approve, Ms. Chaney seconded. Motion approved.

Dr. Schwehm Dr. Ibrahim spoke to the committee about what was worked on last year and what would need to be accomplished this year. He reported that the committee had worked a lot last year on the Passport Initiative, which did not get passed through Faculty Senate, but we could still move forward with the data collection. He asked Dr. Schwehm to speak to the committee about what steps were needed now. Dr. Schwehm said the Faculty Senate did not want the outside oversight for our General Education, but would rather for us to do it all in-house. He distributed a handout on Course Program General Education (CPGE) Trends (2014-2017). He said that what we currently have is very similar to Passport, so we have a framework. He thought the work done by the committee last year was not wasted, since we could use a lot of it. He said some of the General Education courses made sense for the outcomes and some did not. He thought that our CPGE is somewhat complex in that we don't need all of these courses for all of the outcomes. For example, we don't need to use the History or Computer Science courses to show Scientific Reasoning. We should let the Science courses do that. Also, almost every General Education course is listed under Critical Thinking, but we don't really have the proof to show that all of these courses address Critical Thinking. He thought one thing the committee could do this year would be to simplify the CPGE and have courses speak to what they are designed to speak to as far as Learning Outcomes are concerned. He thought the committee also needed to clarify the Communicate Effectively Goal into Oral and Written Communications Learning Outcomes. He said we need to determine what learning outcome each general education course addresses, how it teaches it and how it assess that learning outcome. Dr. Schwehm told the committee that he thought the reason we don't have many reports from the committee is the limited data we get. He met with Dr. Austin over the summer to work on this. A lot of

the courses are reported as pass/fail and it is hard to tell what outcomes have been met and also, we don't get data for a lot of courses. He hopes the committee can look at the courses and evaluate for each of the outcomes what exercises or exams are utilized in the course and what criteria for success is used. He has provided forms (in the handouts) for instructors to complete to show what would be used to show the outcome is being met. Dr. Austin said she would also add that the committee needs to determine what the standards are and have a common rubric throughout the courses so that we know what we are supposed to be meeting.

Dr. Schwehm said that ideally, the committee should be evaluating the courses based on the data collected every year to be able to assess how we are doing, but we don't have the structure to do it. We need to have that structure so that we can explain to others what we are doing. He thought the CPGE structure is not straight forward enough and needs improved.

Dr. Schwehm also spoke to the committee about making Dr. Austin, as Director of Assessment, an official member of the committee. He wasn't sure how to go about this though. He also thought the General Education Committee needed to be considered one of the "big 3" committees to take charge of General Education (along with Faculty Senate and Curriculum Committee) to make sure we are doing what is needed as far as General Education.

Dr. Schwehm said that with Passport, students had to take certain courses to be Passport certified, but we are not under those restraints with our general education, so students don't have to take a course from each one of these blocks, this was just a way to visually depict what general education courses we have and where they fall as far as our learning outcomes are concerned. As long as we show that every course that says it teaches oral communication (for example), does that effectively, that is all we have to do.

Dr. Austin Dr. Austin distributed a handout on General Education – Institution-wide Trends (2014 – 2017) that she had put together for Dr. Abdelrahman to show what was going on with general education. She said that most areas are going up little by little except for Quantitative Reasoning and Scientific Reasoning and there are reasons for that. She said the CPGE system needs work because it is not tracking the way it is supposed to. She had the committee look at the "Courses Enabled for Gen Ed" page. Some of these were okay, some needed deleted from the CPGE and some needed added to the CPGE. The ones that need deleted are basically Scientific Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning courses and they are skewing the data. She is working with Wyatt now to get these changed and will hopefully get these fixed this semester. Another thing she has been working on is a system of reminders to faculty that are teaching general education courses that they need to input the data for their courses. They will be using the same system they use for inputting grades, so it won't be anything new for them. Some are not set up in the system yet, so will have to have that done first and then the department heads can

help them know what to put in. It goes back to what they are using to assess; some are using whole course grades, some are using specific assignments, etc., so we don't know at this point what that is. Dr. Austin passed around a couple of reports that are tracked to particular questions, showing what they should look like. She said all this data needs to be pulled in to some kind of consistent order before we can be sure the data we are getting is consistent on this system. This is only a piece of the general education assessment. Right now we don't have an understanding, as a committee, of what our students are doing; we only have contributions from individual faculty. We need to be pulling artifacts from particular courses and then this committee would assess these depending upon what general education goal it is. Right now we are just in step one of assessing our general education, but we have other things we need to be doing. The Passport system is a good way start because it aligns with what we are looking at and we need to have some kind of a key of all the courses and what they are assessing and teaching towards. We need to have a common understanding of what critical thinking means for the entire university so that all the courses are teaching towards those outcomes. It doesn't matter how it is taught, as long as it addresses the outcome. This will give us a better understanding of how our students are doing on the general education goals.

Dr. Schwehm told the committee they would notice that Civic Engagement shows up on our list, but we don't have any identified learning outcomes for this. It is one of our knowledge skills that we claim to teach in some of our courses, so we need to work on this. Also, for the Wellness Concepts, we don't have programs that require that anymore, so we will need to discuss that. The committee discussed that there are lots of ways that our students show Civic Engagement, it is just not being tracked in a way that we can get the data. The committee then discussed the amount of data that would need to be gathered. Dr. Austin told the committee that this committee (General Education Committee) would be overseeing the data collection process, but they would not be responsible for gathering it all. There should be groups that look at each area and get a sample to assess whether what we see in our ARGOS reports is correct. She said the committee might not want to try and assess three goals each year; they might just want to do one per year. Once the CPGE system is up and running, it might help determine how the committee wants to prioritize these assessments. Once we know what kinds of assessments are out there, we can get a good sample across all of the courses teaching a particular outcome and use the rubric we have and whatever else we build.

The committee then discussed whether some of the data gathering could be made easier in some way, for instance having a column added to the Blackboard grade sheet. Dr. Schwehm said they might be able to build an auto-graded assessment in Blackboard since every course now gets a Blackboard shell. He said it wouldn't work for every course, but it could help. Faculty could offer some incentive to the student for taking the assessment. This would give some data. The committee could give the faculty some suggestions for the questions on this assessment. Dr.

Ibrahim thought it was important for the committee to try and streamline the data gathering and assessment process for the faculty.

Dr. Ibrahim asked the committee if they thought Blackboard was used heavily by faculty in their departments. Most said their departments did, but they know that there are still some faculty that do not use it. Dr. Ibrahim thought the committee should come up with some type of prototype for assessment that could be used across multiple disciplines. Dr. Nupp wondered if the assessment they use in their department could be made Blackboard friendly for this use. Ms. Chaney said that it could be used in Blackboard, but there were some parts that Blackboard would not be able to grade, such as the student writing a paragraph about something. The faculty member would have to grade those parts, but it would be minimal. The rubric could also be put in to Blackboard. Ms. Chaney said in the sciences, they are reminded every semester to give their general education assessment and grade and enter it in to Banner. It has become a habit for them, so they all do it.

Dr. Ibrahim thought the committee needed to work on an infrastructure or foundation this year as phase one and then build upon that next years. He commended Dr. Schwehm for presenting Passport to the Faculty Senate last year, even though it did not go through. Dr. Schwehm said that he did not look at it as a failure though, because it got the go ahead for the General Education Committee to take the lead in reevaluating/restructuring how we assess our general education.

The committee then discussed the template that would be used for Blackboard assessment. They thought they would need to work with the Office of Information Systems to put the right classes in and get the data gathered.

Dr. Ward wondered if the committee needed to first concentrate on getting the courses added that needed added or deleting the ones that needed deleted. He asked Dr. Austin if this was in the process. She said she was meeting with Carol Adkison to learn how to do this in the system. Since Institutional Research is the only one right now that can add or delete courses, there is a bottleneck. The committee then discussed if there needed to be a standardized scale for rating and decided there did need to be one. They thought the auto-populated Blackboard assessment and the standardized rating scale would be a big help.

Dr. Ibrahim thought the committee should (1) identify a template to use across disciplines, (2) identify the courses and (3) train or assist the faculty to collect the data. He didn't know how much of this could be accomplished this year, but the committee could get a good start. Dr. Schwehm suggested the committee focus on two outcomes the first year to see how the systems works and then use it on others the next year. He thought Written Communication and Oral Communication would be good to start with since there were not a lot of different courses involved in these. The committee discussed this and wondered if they should start first with either science or behavioral science since there were members on the committee in these areas and not any from English or communication. Dr. Austin

said there didn't really have to be someone from that area on the committee. What we need is a common understanding of what those outcomes are and some kind of rubric. We have value rubrics that can be adapted and used as the possible templates. The committee thought it was imperative to leave the decision of how to assess up to the faculty member. The committee would just tell them what needed assessed.

Dr. Schwehm spoke to the committee about using history faculty teaching 7 history courses that he has identified to assess critical thinking. He asked the committee what they thought about having this group use the template as a pilot group. He said he has also worked a lot with the Math department who have most of their general education courses taught by adjunct faculty. They might also be a good pilot group to work with the template. He thought it would also be good to engage someone in English to get some of the qualitative assessment data. Even if these faculty are not on the committee, we could still use them.

For the next meeting, Dr. Ibrahim thought the committee should find a few classes to pull out of the rubric and build a template. Dr. Schwehm said he would get with the Math department to talk to them about using the template. Dr. Austin volunteered to get her Graduate Assistant to put all the rubrics in to the General Education Committee Blackboard shell.

Adjourn 12:10 pm