

University General Education Council
April 8, 2020, 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present: K. Witemeyer, J. Smith, J. Prather, M. Straughn, M. Rogers, R. Green, D. Flanagan, C. Flanders, C. Flanagan, M. Ice,

Absent: D. Kneip, B. Rix, K. Jang, L. McCurley, K. Wick,

Ex-officios: B. Carroll, C. Riley, E. Gumm (S. McDowell was absent)

Guests: K. Elliott, J. Camp, D. Hendricks, S. Lee, S. Self, D. Kennamer

The meeting began at 3:32 p.m.

- Call to order by J. Smith
- Prayer by J. Smith
- Minutes from 2/26/20

Motion to approve minutes by C. Flanders; seconded by R. Green; all in favor; motion passes.

Action Items

1. Revision of Undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes

J. Smith – We are looking at a new set of undergraduate student learning outcomes. The last time we put these into action was in the 2010-2011 academic year. Over the last decade, we've seen some of the limitations of having such complicated outcomes. A group of faculty formed a committee in the fall to examine these outcomes. We looked at frameworks and best practices from other institutions. We looked at specific schools and compared trends. We ranked our own preferences. Several outcomes rose to the top for the committee. What do we want our students to know, to do, and to value. We were not looking at changing the curriculum. We will either align our current curriculum to these new outcomes or they will guide future curriculum development.

There was a strong push to explain the reasons behind these outcomes. We want our students to have purpose, perspective, and wisdom. So we added a preamble. We narrowed these outcomes down to four. Communication deals with speaking, writing, and reading. Examining diverse perspectives can address cultural diversity as well as critical thinking—being able to see things from different points of view. Gather and use information to solve problems can address quantitative literacy, information literacy, and problem-solving. Engaging Christian approaches to community and Bible is difficult

to measure. We didn't want to stop with simple knowledge, but we also did not want to enforce the idea that students must have faith at the end of this.

C. Flanders – I'm particularly interested in number 2. At one level, to examine diverse perspectives can apply to anything. I don't know how important it is to further define this item with the measures that will come into play later. As it is worded, is it too broad or vague? J. Smith – Our goal was to have outcomes that stand alone without an embedded measure. It sounds like you want to ensure that cultural awareness remains a vital part of the general education. It is a good question. There were discussions about both cultural awareness as well as critical thinking or problem-solving. Sometimes saying "critical thinking" doesn't have a lot of meaning. The way we can see that at work is to acknowledge that there are more perspectives than your own. That can be cultural or not. It does leave us with a very broad outcome. So that is a reasonable point of discussion.

J. Smith – Are there any of these outcomes that you find challenging or problematic? C. Flanagan - #3 One of the leading definitions of intelligence is the ability to resolve problems encountered. I do like the language of "address problems." I wonder if "resolve" is stronger. J. Smith – Some problems can't be solved and being able to engage is the best we can do, so the language of "address" was an intentional step back.

J. Prather – I realize that coming up with a broad base of SLOs for the entire university is a challenging endeavor. It seems like these point to being a decent human being. It doesn't seem to fit what a liberal arts education is for. Preparing someone to be a good, global citizen is not particularly well-represented here. J. Smith – What would you say is missing? J. Prather – I would need to think for a while.

S. Lee – You mentioned a preamble that is yet to be written. Each of these is very short. Will there be additional language brought for to further define these? J. Smith – The preamble is included in the proposal. The outcomes themselves are intended to stand alone. This is consistent with other institutions. The way these are shared publicly, however, would most likely include a paragraph of explanation for each one. S. Lee – The outcomes in the current catalog mention quantitative skills, where does that fit? J. Smith – Outcome #3. S. Lee - Also number 5 in the current catalog is attached to outcomes in capstone courses. How would capstone change with these new outcomes? J. Smith – At this point, changing the outcomes will not change the curriculum we have in place or the criteria for menus or capstone. As the council moves forward, there would be opportunity for change should they deem that desirable.

M. Rogers – The language specifies when they *complete* their undergraduate degree. Aren't these measured while they are here? J. Smith – That is the intent. We measure their progress on these outcomes while they are here, with the hope that these outcomes continue with them throughout their lives.

J. Smith – If we were to approve the new outcomes, I would visit with faculty who teach courses currently in our University Requirements to see how things might be measured. The tools that are available are rubrics we use as a basis for the current five outcomes.

Our current outcomes have multiple things to be measured within each of the five items. They are great outcomes, but they are very difficult to measure and require a very specific curriculum to address all of them. We wanted to simplify those for clarity and measurement purposes.

W. Carroll – Are these required for accreditation? The language is very much student-focused. It seems like we are trying to address two audiences. J. Smith – In the past our audience has been educators. The committee this time wanted to be student-focused. All the accreditors care about is what are the outcomes and how are they being measured. I don't see any obstacles on that front with this language. C. Flanagan – It makes sense to me to simplify this process. J. Smith – Things are too unwieldy right now to measure things accurately. This will make our job easier.

C. Flanagan – Are we voting on these four new outcomes to be approved? The measures are still potential according to the proposal. J. Smith – We are voting on abandoning the current student outcomes and replacing them with these new outcomes. Once the new outcomes are in place, we will develop an assessment plan that will come to this council next fall. The measures listed as potential were given to show that the measures were actionable but we are not committing to those measures with this vote.

C. Flanders - #2 still bothers me with how broad it is. It needs some tweaking to express the cultural component. Could we table this to work on revising the language? J. Smith – It is within our purview to make revisions, if that is the council's will. C. Flanders – I would be willing to work on this if others agree.

J. Prather – In thinking about this a little more, I think there needs to be a fifth criterion that addresses the *so what*. Something that addresses the mission of ACU. The purpose behind career calling. Why their work matters. J. Smith – Two things from the committee's work that address that – ACU is generally not classified as a Liberal Arts institution. The committee did not work from a liberal arts perspective. That sense of *so what* was very much at the heart of the introductory text. This education is not just for the student, but for their community. It is not an outcome because that is very hard to measure while the students are still here.

C. Flanders – There is no inclusion of *virtue* language in these SLO's which is odd for a Christian institution. J. Smith – There is much more that could be here, and that will always be the case.

J. Smith – I would need at least 3 volunteers. We have Chris and James. I will gather feedback from them and present at our next meeting.

Motion to table for revisions by volunteers by C. Flangan; seconded by M. Rogers; all in favor; motion passes.

2. HIST 330 – Inclusion on Cultural Awareness Menu

J. Smith – We looked at this at our last meeting. She has made some revisions. K. Elliott – We have removed prerequisites from the course. Then we added more detail. C. Flanders – This is outstanding to me. I was the leading voice to table last time, but I would be the leading voice to accept this time. J. Prather – We recently had a great book come out of ACU called *Slavery's Long Shadow*. Was that considered as a text? K. Elliott – That is an excellent book, and I would imagine it could be part of the course in the future. J. Smith – As a point of clarification, the prerequisites have not yet been removed from the course, that is outside the purview of this council, so we will be voting on the inclusion of this course as it currently stands, but a simple information item proposal could address the prerequisites in the future.

Motion to approve by R. Green; seconded by C. Flanders; all in favor; motion passes.

3. COMM 310 – Inclusion on Cultural Awareness Menu

J. Camp – We looked at this last time as well. We went back and looked at the readings and realized how many of these readings already address cultural biases. I worked that more deliberately into the learning outcomes and assignments. J. Smith – We cannot change course outcomes in this council. J. Camp – Aside from that, I went back to add more explicit content in the area of cultural components within the assignments. W. Carroll – I read the modifications to draw attention to what your course is already doing. C. Flanders – This course has a lot of cultural awareness activities and this clarification made it clear. I love what you've shown here and am satisfied that it meets the criteria. J. Smith – We now have mapping to all five criteria.

Motion to approve by C. Flanders; seconded by M. Straughn; all in favor; motion passes.

4. MATH 237 – Drop from University Requirements Menu

J. Smith – There was a change in curriculum for our early childhood education degree plans. MATH 237 is numbered above MATH 120; however, this proposal is to exclude this course from fulfilling that requirement. D. Hendricks – About ten years ago, students in these programs took MATH 147 and 148. MATH 147 was excluded from University Requirements because the two courses together formed a sequence with necessary content covered across both courses. We didn't want students to take one course, change their major, then not have the full sequence. Education has dropped MATH 120 from their major. Together MATH 237 and 238 cover enough for general education credit. One by itself is not enough. We want the students to have deep conceptual understanding of the concepts so they can successfully pass that knowledge on to their students. D. Kennamer – We have developed an additional EDUC course to address math conceptually. MATH 120 didn't prepare them to do that. That's why we created the EDUC course. After taking EDUC 270, they will proceed to MATH 237 and 238. It is an alignment process so they can think and teach in the ways they need to. W.

Carroll – Will your students have to take 3 extra hours? D. Kennamer – There will not be additional hours. EDUC 270 will be the prerequisite for MATH 237 instead of MATH 120.

Motion to approve by C. Flanders; seconded by R. Green; all in favor; motion passes.

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.