

**University General Education Council**  
**November 11, 2020, 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**  
**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

Present: K. Witemeyer, J. Smith, C. Flanders, S. Talley, R. Brown, M. Ice, R. Green, R. Ashlock, K. Jang, D. Flanagan, M. Straughn, J. Prather,

Absent: K. Wick, C. Flanagan, R. Rama

Ex-officios: S. Jones, C. Riley

Guests: K. Elliott, J. Camp, E. Gumm, J. Halbert, A. Sutherlin

The meeting began at 3:32 p.m.

- Call to order by J. Smith
- Prayer by J. Smith
- Minutes from 9/9/20

**Motion to approve minutes by S. Talley; seconded by R. Brown; all in favor; motion passes.**

*Action Item*

1. HIST 201 – Add to Social Science and Historical Literacy Menus

K. Elliott – This is a new course that will part of our public history track in response to interest that we are seeing in our students who are interested in pursuing careers in museums, archives, and national parks. This course is designed to meet that need, but it also is meant to appeal to students in general who appreciate the practical side of history. It is a citizen-making class. R. Brown – So the material covered is similar to HIST 222, but the method is different? K. Elliott – To some degree. This will be taught through the lens of public history. We are looking at the same time period but using a very different route to emphasize the effect on the present.

R. Ashlock – you mention a small cap size. That's something to consider for us in placing it on a menu if there are limited seats. Could more than one section be offered? How often? How much room for non-majors? K. Elliott – We are looking at offering it every spring. We could move to once in the fall and spring if there is demand. In terms of majors in the course, we would probably have 6-8 majors in the course with the remaining 12 seats or so to go to non-majors. This is a 200-level course, so we will keep it at an introductory level so it is approachable for both majors and non-majors.

C. Flanders – You note that the course is looking at history from a Christian perspective. I think removing that first sentence from the syllabus description would clarify the true purpose. K. Elliott – Thank you for that feedback. I will mention this to the course

instructor. C. Flanders - I also don't see the Department chair signature. K. Elliott – I do support this course and will be happy to sign. I think changes were made at the college council and my signature didn't come through.

R. Brown – Are both knowledge and inquiry (outcomes for social science) intended to be measured on the final exam? K. Elliott – This course has not been taught before, and I have not seen an exam. My understanding is that both pieces will be a very central part of the course. The project will be more geared toward inquiry and process. The knowledge will weigh heavier on the exam.

**Motion to approve adding HIST 201 to both menus by C. Flanders; seconded by D. Flanagan; 8 in favor; 1 abstention; motion passes.**

### *Listening Session with the General Education Proposal Team*

J. Smith – Autumn Sutherlin will address us about the new general education changes.

A. Sutherlin – We are seeking faculty perspectives about our current university requirements, what we want to keep, what we might want to change. You folks have a great perspective on this, because you address it regularly.

What do you think should be retained?

J. Prather – I think the Bible curriculum should be retained. It works well, and I would be opposed to reducing that. C. Flanders – Is there pressure to reduce? A. Sutherlin – We are not trying to reduce hours. J. Smith – There is no set agenda. We simply want to examine the question about what our general education should look like. We did a major overhaul in 2010. We did another revision in 2015. And since we revised our outcomes last year, this seemed like the natural time to evaluate the general education to make sure we are meeting those outcomes in a way relevant to our students. J. Prather – Is there a document to benchmark our comparison schools? A. Sutherlin – Not yet. There is the Texas Common Core. However, we want to look at how we are unique and what we want to preserve.

M. Straughn – Is there a question about how we address transfer students who come in with Core Complete? I have noticed that students have difficulty getting their PEAC courses completed. Our transfer students usually don't have Bible and PEAC courses, so those seem to be the key differences between what we offer and what state schools provide. E. Gumm – We have crosswalks for most of those pieces assigned and aligned. Bible is the one major exception. There are also major-based requirements that could still be outstanding even though there is double dipping with general education. S. Jones – I will talk to our faculty about the PEAC difficulties and will make a recommendation.

R. Green – Is part of the consideration here the data of assessing capstone papers? I work with writing across the curriculum program, and we collect data, but we don't really use it very much. I would like to utilize the data that we are collecting in our capstone courses and see what that tells us about how our general education is working.

J. Prather – I worry about changes that we make and how that affects our departments. The impact on faculty. I don't want to harm our colleagues. J. Smith – We have a number of departments on campus that do not contribute to the University Requirements. I think we need to look not only at what affect it will have on the faculty, but what affect it will have on the students. I think we need to ask questions and investigate with departments before we make any changes. Looking at the whole system is a good place to be.

C. Flanders – I haven't seen student evaluations for Cornerstone. Do we have more than anecdotal data for student impact? J. Smith – For many of our sole requirements (i.e., CORE 110), we have ongoing assessment work. We have artifacts from the capstone classes. Many of our other menus have become so large that there was no way to provide comparable data on those.

S. Talley – I want to look at what the final objective is – what do we want our students to achieve with general education – then adjust backwards. A. Sutherlin – One of the places we're starting is with the four new student learning outcomes that were approved last year. S. Talley – If we don't have an assessment on it, we have no way of knowing if the standards are being met.

R. Green – I'd like to make a pitch for foreign languages. A student can go through ACU for four years and never take a foreign language. I think with the changing demographics of our country, this is a skill that is needed. I know many of our students select degrees in order to avoid foreign language, but it is still valuable.

K. Jang – Can there be multiple general education options? J. Smith – We used to have departmental cores, but in 2010 we made a universal grouping that all students must take.

C. Flanders – I believe that students today need more training in critical thinking and ethics. So philosophy and ethics would be an important thing to add. These are addressed in other courses, but I see these as a real need. J. Prather – I would second that. Everyone should have to take a philosophy course no matter what discipline you are studying. It is invaluable.

J. Smith – Addressing our menus is important too. Are there any thoughts on the criteria? What information do you need to approve a course?

J. Prather – We have historical literacy, etc., but we don't have anything about digital literacy. A lot of schools are offering introduction to technology courses in some form.

E. Gumm – There are some things on our university requirements that are distinctive – Bible, for example. Maybe we want to be more structured with the upper-level Bible. Cornerstone is also distinctive. I would like the things that we talk about in that course to trickle into other courses. I think our communication requirement is one that we need to look at. It is an outlier compared to other institutions. One thing I see a lot from a student perspective is a need for a personal finance class. With all the student debt and the indebtedness of our culture and especially with the cost of private education, this would be a great add. S. Talley – You could have a New Literacy menu that addresses things like digital literacy and financial literacy.

C. Flanders – At the graduate level, there is a big move toward competency-based approaches. Some people have these competencies already. Similar to AP or CLEP. S. Talley – We had a committee about that one. It is very complicated at the undergraduate level.

A. Sutherlin – I feel like critical thinking comes up a lot. How to teach it, how to measure it? S. Talley – It is hard to assess this on a multiple choice test. We use a lot of rubrics and project-based learning in our department. Of course there are papers, and essay exams. Students figure out this style, but when they are faced with it in a practical environment, they struggle. K. Jang – I have looked at the European standard for critical thinking. That lines up very well with our outcomes. C. Flanders – All of our faculty aim for critical thinking, but our students are still struggling to grasp it. M. Straughn – In measuring critical thinking, what I would love to see is for our students to be more willing to engage in hard, uncomfortable things for which there might not be any easy or comfortable answers. Not just critically think, but critically act – the translation from the knowledge and the thinking to the action. They need to learn how to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. S. Talley – It's like a Foundations of Critical Thinking course. Having this early on so they are prepared to tackle the rest of their college experiences. Students coming from K-12 arrive only knowing how to perform on standardized tests. They are missing this piece.

M. Ice – Some of the problems that we are discussing might not have a curricular answer. Perhaps more of a mentoring program. A. Sutherlin – I think our old University 100 class used to do this. E. Gumm – I've offered an honor's colloquium on adulting and students are hungering for it. C. Riley – There is a class in the Psychology department that is very popular that addresses similar issues as well.

E. Gumm – Cultural Awareness is a good example of a menu that is hard to define because the criteria is vague.

The meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.