

University General Education Council
September 8, 2021, 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present: K. Witemeyer, J. Smith, J. Jones, R. Rama, R. Brown, C. Flanders, S. Talley, D. Flanagan, K. Jang, L. Sharp-Penya, R. Ashlock, S. Sanders, J. Prather

Absent: M. Atkinson, M. Straughn

Ex-officio: C. Riley, E. Gumm, S. Macaluso, B. Smith, L. May

Guests: D. Kennamer, D. Counts

The meeting began at 3:31 p.m.

- Call to order by J. Smith
- Prayer by J. Smith
- Minutes from 11/11/20

Motion to approve minutes by S. Talley; seconded by D. Flanagan; 10 in favor; 1 abstention; motion passes.

Discussion Item

1. Discussion of General Education Assessment Findings (2019-20; 2020-21)

J. Smith – If curriculum is working well, our assessment should show that. If we are not showing success on our outcomes, that might indicate that there are problems with our curriculum. This is also a requirement to keep our accreditation. We must identify the expected outcomes for students, assess the extent we are achieving those outcomes, and show evidence of seeking improvement.

One of the things that emerged as we worked on our accreditation report is that we need to refine our assessment plan and do a better job of showing how we use the results. Until we have a new assessment plan, we need to keep following the one we have. This year, the level of compliance was problematic for the Cultural Awareness menu. We need to do better this year. Should we consider ramifications to encourage compliance for those courses that have not submitted assessment data?

J. Jones – Were there fewer reports in 20-21 than in the last year? Could that be due to the chaos caused by COVID? J. Smith – The results from 3 years ago, prior to COVID, were consistent to what we have seen the last two years. J. Jones – If we take a class out of the general education for non-compliance after 2 years, I'm not sure that is a good plan. That will give people an excuse to procrastinate. J. Smith – We can certainly discuss options. That is just a starting place for discussion.

L. Sharp-Penya – I think we need to visit with departments to see what they do or don't know about how they are supposed to be supplying information. There tends to be a lot of turnover in these types of positions in departments. J. Smith – I agree that better communication is very important moving forward. And having a fresh restart point as we are at now creates a good place to start that and continue moving forward. L. Sharp-Penya – I also think it would be helpful if there is a standard format to follow. J. Smith – I would love to find a sustainable system for our faculty and administration and put them in a form that we can easily act on.

J. Smith – I do think we should consider the role of assessment as we move forward with our new general education plan. I would like us to consider whether we should reassess the current courses on the menus regarding meeting the menu criteria before moving forward. Perhaps, notifying departments that they need to present assessment data before having a place reserved on our menus in the new general education. Talk to your colleagues and come with ideas about how to make regular assessment a part of what we do.

R. Brown – Is there a recommendation that is made from this data? I can't recall anything coming back to our departments about changes needed or feedback about good work. J. Smith – UGEC has not provided feedback for individual departments for courses on menus. We do a better job on those for specific requirements like Cornerstone and Math.

We moved from 5 broad outcomes to 4 more focused outcomes in 2020-21. I'd like to focus on three questions: How do we evaluate the measure's alignment with the current outcome? How do we evaluate the quality of the measure? What action would you recommend to ensure increasing student success?

Communicating clearly - COMM 211 and writing across the curriculum with capstone papers. J. Jones – Are we capturing the withdraw rates in these courses? Those might skew outcomes. L. Sharp-Penya – Students who withdraw from the course are not captured here, but D, F, and withdraw rates are captured elsewhere by the university. COMM 211 - The rationale for setting the targets is based on how we define a C in the class. A C is meeting the requirements. The 84% is based on the concept of the normal curve. R. Brown – I think we need to define what makes up a C. S. Talley – With my background in education, I'm having trouble evaluating these assessments because I can't see any of the measures or results. I know the department sees that data, but we aren't seeing it here. J. Smith – That is helpful. We might want to evaluate what formats would be helpful for rubrics, etc., as we move forward. Writing across the curriculum – we see that language use and mechanics is the area where we saw a reduction of success. S. Talley – There is a huge difference between *Excellence* and *Pass*. J. Smith - This one is rubric-based by the review committee not the grades received in the class. S. Talley – I think 4 categories would provide more data. S. Sanders – We read 75+ papers that must be read twice. Some of this assessment simplicity is for expediency as well. L. Sharp-Penya – We standardize the grading for COMM 211. We do a similar standardization across our courses that you see in the writing across the curriculum committee. R.

Brown – How well is the Writing Center being utilized? J. Smith – I spoke with Cole Bennett, after a year of low usage due to COVID, the usage has gone way up.

Examine diverse perspectives – capstone and cultural awareness. I can identify that we will need to update our capstone assessment to align with our new outcomes. R. Brown – I really like the level of detail in these measures. Being able to see the rubric and the data across the rubric is very helpful. I would like to see this in all the assessment areas. The cultural awareness piece – we have 62 courses on the menu and received assessment data from 10 courses. Of the 62, 44 were offered last year. One thing I would like to observe about the assessment of individual courses - it is hard to see if the measures were met across the menu as a whole. We might want to consider a set rubric or a common assignment that is administered across all courses on the menu to help with that. This menu has become very broad, and it is hard to standardize the assessment pieces. R. Rama – We have a standardized form that we use for our courses in our department, so I wonder if something similar could be utilized across an entire menu. R. Ashlock – If a course cannot measure something then perhaps it does not belong on the cultural awareness menu. C. Flanders – I would like to examine our criteria and perhaps reevaluate courses already on the menu.

Gather and use information to address problems – the cornerstone report analyzes the annotated bibliographies, and the math report looks at the course level assessment over time. This one seems to be in good shape. Our math faculty offer a lot of great data. In general, we have declined in our performance over the last two years. COVID and the move to online instruction may have played a role in that. Yet, we want to pay attention to these trends. D. Flanagan – Could students coming in be less prepared in math? That could be helpful to look at as well. R. Rama – I wonder if we have a responsibility to ask those types of questions of the math department. Can we ask departments to reflect on rationales for changes we see – positive or negative? J. Smith – I think that could be a helpful question to ask. Since we've moved to a test-optional admission process, it will be more difficult to see how prepared they are coming to us.

Engage Christian approaches to community and the Bible – These focus more on the Bible knowledge piece. We will need to look at how we can engage the measure to focus on the community piece. I think the pre-test/post-test method is helpful for the Bible knowledge piece. R. Ashlock – BIBL 102 – part of our focus is to help students think about community since many students don't attend church anymore. We try to get them to think about "we" instead of "I" by encouraging them to have meals together with their small groups and other activities. We have these opportunities, but we aren't sure how to assess that. It is more qualitative than quantitative. C. Riley – I would suggest we consider integrating the spiritual formation plan that the university is working on as part of the assessment in this area in addition to the curricular goals. J. Smith – We need to be measuring things like this – things that really matter, not just the things that are easy to measure. Perhaps we can do a knowledge measure and a community measure. R. Brown – There can be surveys, too, right? We don't have to just have numbers. Or perhaps a scale of agree vs. disagree.

J. Smith – At our next council meeting, we will be looking at the general education proposal. Read the proposal beginning to end. The part that we will focus on most is the curriculum, the category and number of hours required. I will ask Cole Bennett who chaired the team to attend as well. Come prepared with your questions. We will not have a vote at the next meeting. It will be a discussion. We will have 30 minutes of active discussion before the floor opens for motions to revise the proposal.

The meeting adjourned at 4:59 p.m.