

University General Education Council
October 13, 2021, 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Adams Center Classroom

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

Absent: M. Atkinson, S. Talley

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

Guests: C. Bennett, D. Counts, J. Camp

The meeting began at 3:31 p.m.

- Call to order by J. Smith
- Prayer by R. Rama
- Minutes from 9/22/21

Motion to approve minutes by J. Prather; seconded by R. Brown; all in favor; motion passes.

Action Item

1. Revised General Education Proposal

J. Smith - Our plan is to discuss any particular areas where you wish to consider revisions. If we do revise the proposal, we will not vote on the overall proposal. We will create a clean copy so we can be sure what we are voting on. We'd love to hear the student perspective as well. If there are revision motions, we will vote on the specific changes, not the entire proposal.

R. Brown - I recommend a change of the numbering for Mathematics. There are two courses that have prerequisites, so it would add clarity to remove those from the Gen Ed requirements. Dr. Hendricks approved the change. I recommend changing it to read MATH 120-185, 238. We only need to accept courses that are being assessed for Gen Ed.

J. Jones - The menus will be populated later, so do we need to decide this now? J. Smith - In the case of Math and other single-discipline menus, the courses are set since all courses would fall under a single department. We will address the other menus later since they are from multiple disciplines.

E. Gumm - If we move forward with this, we will also need to include the MATW language. So, MATH/MATW 120-185, 238.

L. Sharp-Penya - I think that adds clarity, and I support this revision.

R. Brown moves to revise the general education proposal to change the math requirement to read as MATH/MATW 120-185, 238. M. Straughn seconds. All in favor. Motion passes.

J. Smith - We will also add the Dallas online course equivalents to this. J. Prather - Are there any students who could miss fulfilling this requirement if they jumped straight to MATH 186? E. Gumm - There is a prerequisite of MATH 185 for MATH 186, so a student couldn't take that course without credit for MATH 185. J. Prather - OK. I feel good with that.

R. Rama - Is it better to have broader options? J. Smith - It can be. It would aid transferability and greater flexibility. If we want students to engage a particular topic, then a shorter menu would be better.

R. Rama - I would like to consider expanding the Humanities menu beyond Literature only. Everyone would need to bring courses for approval, but expanding the name/description of the menu would invite departments to apply. C. Bennett - We went down to literature based on faculty feedback. We initially had a 6-hour requirement with 3 hours of Literature and 3 hours of Fine Arts. Then we narrowed it down to a 3-hour menu. The chairs of the departments were hesitant about having non-majors taking their classes. We also had a lot of faculty feedback that indicated they didn't want students to graduate without having a literature course with deep reading and comprehension skills. R. Rama - If the Art & Design Department wanted to propose a course, as the proposal stands now, we wouldn't have a place to put it.

R. Rama moves to revise the Humanities menu to include Literature or Fine or Performing Arts. J. Jones seconded. 1 in favor, 9 opposed. Motion fails.

M. Straughn - Can we discuss making this menu 6 hours? So we can incorporate both literature and arts. J. Prather - Where would those hours come from? J. Smith - History/Political Science was discussed along with Bible hours. L. May - Would students take fewer English classes? J. Smith - It would be possible. Students could take literature or a fine art course. L. May - But ENGL 111 and 112 would still be required? J. Smith - Yes. L. Sharpe-Penya - I spoke with Dawne Meeks who would love to have and Intro to Theatre course included. There are other courses that would be considered Humanities as well, such a Civil Discourse in Communication. It fits the definition well. J. Smith - History is similar where it is a humanities-type course but would not be included. B. Smith - I came in with credit for ENGL 111, 112. The only English course I took was literature. Without that English class, my reading comprehension skills and writing skills would have suffered. L. May - I also came in with my lower-level English courses. I like the idea of having a larger pool of options, but I think the writing focus is important. E. Gumm - About 40% of incoming students have credit for ENGL 111 and 112. K. Jang - What is the difference between written communication in the ENGL 111/112 and having it here with literature? J. Smith - SACs actually prefers that humanities be pure humanities without a focus on writing skills. That is why we focus on that portion in the Written Communication section. L. Sharp-Penya - I like Marcia's suggestion of having a 6-hour section with 3 required hours of literature with broader

Humanities options for the second 3 hours. J. Prather - That is what I would like to see as well. J. Smith - One of the challenges is finding seats for students in those other humanities classes. So separating it out as 3 and 3 instead of combined would be a good strategy. M. Straughn - My daughter came in with dual credit for all of her English classes. She regrets not taking an English here. J. Smith - If we want to change the hours and design of this menu, we will need to oppose the previous motion.

M. Straughn moves to expand the Humanities menu to 6 hours, reserving 3 hours for literature. J. Smith - We will need to discuss where the hours will come from before we move ahead with this motion.

J. Jones - Do I remember seeing something that the history menu can only be populated by HIST courses? J. Smith - Yes, currently only History and Political Science. R. Brown - This is a huge increase in number of history hours. E. Gumm - One of the contributing factors is that the state of Texas requires 6 hours of history/political science from public institutions. J. Smith - Students can still use those transfer hours as electives, this just gives them a clear place to use them inside general education. M. Straughn - Can't you put History other places, like social science? J. Smith - That is one thing we will look at as we populate new menus. L. Sharp-Penya - Can History meet the demand if the requirement is expanded to 6 hours? C. Bennett - We did verify with History and Political Science that they felt they could. J. Smith - The Provost's Office has the most concern about this menu. We will not be able to supply additional faculty, so that will likely mean a reduction of upper-level courses to meet the increased demand for general education courses. J. Prather - If we reduced the History/POLS menu to 3 hours, it wouldn't hurt the History Department, correct? J. Smith - It would be consistent with what we currently require. R. Brown - It sounds like the biggest downside of a reduction of hours is the transfer piece. J. Smith - Those transfer hours can still be used as electives. E. Gumm - It can also be used to fulfill the general education selection. J. Prather - What if we took away the general education selection to gain the 3 hours we need for Humanities? How would that affect students coming in? E. Gumm - Having a narrower place to put transfer credit, makes it harder to transfer in. M. Straughn - Our students would suffer if that general education selection was removed.

J. Jones moves to reduce Bible hours to 12 hours. M. Straughn seconds.

R. Brown - Bible courses could fit in the Humanities menu. If we reduced to 12 hours, we could open a space for additional Bible courses under Humanities if that menu was broadened. D. Flanagan - At 12 hours, students would still take one course a year. And our mission is to integrate faith into all of our courses. C. Flanders - There are many professors who see their job as teaching their discipline without the faith element. D. Flanagan - We do have to show the integration for tenure. C. Flanders - I think it is inconsistent across campus. L. May - I've never had a professor who did not integrate faith into the classroom. I can see value in reducing the hours. J. Prather - If we did drop it to 12 hours, what would we be losing? Less demand. R. Ashlock - We would need to decide as a department how we divided the hours. Do we keep the same 3 core classes with one upper-level elective? Or do we change it to one New Testament, one Old

Testament and two upper-level electives? J. Smith - because of how the proposal specifies courses, we will need to keep that in mind. C. Flanders - The spiritual life proposals that have been approved all assume 15 hours. That is affected. Taking 3 hours of Bible away would hurt our students, in my opinion, because of the depth of discussion and critical-thinking. J. Prather - The Bible courses are the most highly rated part of general education by our students. It is a core part of our identity and a very well-received part of our identity. I often hear my upper-level students talk in great detail about their upper-level Bible courses. I've heard students tell me that these courses are saving their faith. We would lose that. I think my students benefit very deeply from the rigorous Bible requirement. I have heard from faculty about the general trajectory of the university. We have seen so many institutions lose their Christian identity. I don't want that to happen to us. C. Riley - As part of the spiritual formation piece, there are only 12 hours called out on that. M. Straughn - Our nursing majors are only taking 12 hours, and they have a direct tie to our university's mission. They are a great example of how students can richly experience that core identity with only 12 hours of Bible. B. Smith - I've taken many upper-level Bible courses, and I like them, but quantity doesn't always mean quality. Maybe reducing the lower-level courses. Many freshmen feel overwhelmed. L. Sharp-Penya - We can still preserve these hours by adding them to the humanities menu.

J. Smith - Because we have a motion and a second on the table, we need to address that. My recommendation is to table a vote so we can discuss it next time. If we did go to 12 hours, we can have our colleagues from Biblical Studies give a recommendation of how the hours would be divided. We will also discuss an expanded menu for Humanities and where those three hours would come from - either History/Political Science or Bible. We will need to come to a vote at our next meeting.

R. Brown moves to table the motion to reduce Bible hours to 12. D. Flanagan seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 4:59 p.m.