

University General Education Council
April 8, 2026, 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Present: K. Witemeyer, J. Smith, D. Jackson, M. Deeg, D. Kneip, S. Marshall, L. Reed Senter, A. Pittman, M. Isbell

Absent: A. Randrianasolo, K. Williams

Ex-officio: J. Jones (E. Gumm and C. Riley were absent)

Guests: S. Jones, G. Straughn, D. Kennamer

The meeting began at 3:32 p.m.

- Call to order by J. Smith
- Minutes from 2/25/2026

No corrections were presented, so minutes were accepted as approved.

Action Items

1. MUSM 431 & 432 Capstone Application

The two-course capstone series was previously MUSM 431 & 449, but they are removing 449 from the music degree plans. D. Kennamer – Music completely overhauled their degree plans this year. They have been approved by AUAC. Students who still need the old capstone can either change catalog year or sub the new capstone course. D. Kneip – Since they are using MUSM 431 as a Bible, does it matter that they are also using it for capstone? J. Smith – We can engage that question. K. Witemeyer – That course has been approved as capstone in the past, so that one is not new to capstone. It is the 432 course that is looking for approval for the capstone designation. J. Smith – We have the application. Are there any questions. M. Deeg – In general, what is the faith in vocation assignment looking for? J. Smith – The only guidelines we have are the capstone guidelines on the blog. That single-sentence definition is all we have. The intent is for that to be broadly applied. D. Kneip – I can say as a music dabbler, I can see how that would be difficult because some are performers, some are teachers, some are in ministry. I can see how this assignment would work well for those different student types. J. Jones – I think this is fine from a pedagogical perspective. G. Straughn – We are looking at a return to spirituality in the modern age. It is an application opportunity.

Motion to approve by D. Kneip; seconded by M. Deeg; all in favor, motion passed.

2. MTVA – Assign Gen Ed Free Elective to a Major Requirement

J. Smith – Both of these programs are asking for an exception. These are for our music education students who must conform to state requirements. G. Straughn – This was not my first choice, but it was the best way we could find to make these work. We initially considered reducing the Bible requirements, but we decided that wasn't in alignment with the general mission of the university. This was an alternative solution. We wanted to keep the total degree hours to 128. In the past, they had been at 132 or 133 hours. This allows us to include the 6-hour block for student teaching. We revised the lower-level requirements and collapsed some courses. We were still left with a 3-hour gulf. By assigning the free elective to a major requirement, we can keep the hours to 128 and protect students from going beyond their tuition block. It is also important for the students to stay with the education cohort. This isn't ideal, but it is a reasonable compromise. D. Kennamer – Even in public school settings, these students are going over the standards hours. This isn't just an ACU issue. J. Smith – The number of exceptions for gen ed requirements is very limited. Nursing is the only one. Placement for clinical teaching in this program is a similar situation.

A. Pittman – If nursing is the only exception, I'm a little nervous about not protecting that. G. Straughn – One of the challenges with music education is that they are being certified from elementary through high school. The certification exams cover a huge range of content. We need a larger volume of classes compared to other subjects. D. Kennamer – Art has 129 hours, and they are another all-level certification. The additional clinical teaching is what has put the strain on this degree plan, and the state has limited what counts as a requirement for the hours that must be completed before their clinical teaching. There is only one exam, so you have to know both instrumental and vocal.

A. Pittman – Is there a sense that the university is trying to get all programs to 128 hours? I understand the block tuition issue. Is the larger number of hours a deterrent to prospective students? J. Smith – The state only requires 120 hours. However, their tuition is much less to begin with. Our Abilene faculty have decided that 128 is the minimum for our degrees. I don't have an administrative push one way or another. We can go higher. D. Kennamer – The two degrees above 128 are at 129. This would increase to 131. G. Straughn – When I spoke to Admissions in the past, there is parental concern about the price point. Admissions would like our programs to be more competitive on the hours. The Baylor music degrees is 124 hours. D. Kneip – Block tuition covers up to 144 hours, but I understand that music students take a lot of zero credit courses for all the ensembles, and the clinical teaching is an issue. D. Kennamer – I agree with trying to protect our gen ed, but when we have external forces at work, taking things beyond of our control, we need to look at what is best for the students.

G. Straughn – Nothing prohibits a student from taking a free elective within their major. Our students are basically getting 2 programs – music and education. I have less heartburn having our music students taking an education course as their free elective. A. Pittman – I can see this problem getting worse with requirements from outside accreditors, so I worry about setting a precedent. J. Smith – I think that is smart to look

to the future in that way. We need to know what the specific criteria are for exceptions. Our general education is very large and robust. I think there is a good conversation to have as we move forward about the size of our general education as our programs become more specialized. D. Kneip – I'm favorable to the proposal because it is not to eliminate a major piece of general education content, it is just a matter of an elective. J. Smith – This would be only the second exception. I am able to justify the nursing difference because the students are not on campus their last year. I can make a similar argument with the clinical teaching off-campus. We typically do not list the conditions for how to make an exception, because that invites departments to look for exceptions. A. Pittman – I really am concerned about precedent because of the market pressure to do the most with the least. J. Smith – One thing that might be a helpful guardrail is the requirements that each major is supposed to retain 6 hours of electives within the major block. It would take a lot for a request to get to us. Simply making the request does not grant it. D. Kennamer – These questions are valid, and none of us made these adjustments lightly. D. Kneip – Having some extra time to consider might be helpful.

G. Straughn – This isn't much different than a student bringing in AP or dual credit for a general education course. The gen ed requirement for the free elective states *not required for your major* – perhaps could that be applied as *your main content area*, since we are asking for a EDUC course to count for this free elective. Some programs at other institutions have a music major plus an education minor, so they are separated anyway. Perhaps this is just an interpretation issue. D. Kneip – If there is an opportunity to have greater clarity in the catalog, that would be helpful to us moving forward.

3. MTIA – Assign Gen Ed Free Elective to a Major Requirement

See above.

Motion to table items 2-3 by D. Kneip; seconded by A. Pittman; all in favor, motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.