

**General Education Committee  
Meeting Minutes for October 5, 2018**

**Committee members attending:** Mike Boyle, Justin Gardner, Virginia Hemby, Kate Pantelides, Zaf Khan, Dovie Kimmins, Geeta Maharaj, Lee Sarver, Janis Brickey, Teresa Davis, Karen Reed, Patricia Wall

**Ex-officio members attending:** Chris Brewer, Steve Severn, Peter Cunningham, Stephen Smith, Susan Myers-Shirk

**Guests attending:** Barbara Turnage, Emily Straker-Barak, Chloe Calhoun

- **Call to order** by Virginia Hemby.
- **Approval of minutes from September 7, 2018.** Vote was unanimous.
- **Introduction of guests.** Two college advisors from the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences, Emily Straker-Barak and Chloe Calhoun, were present to discuss their research regarding General Education requirements for undergraduates across the state.
- **Presentation on General Education** by Emily Straker-Barak and Chloe Calhoun. Emily Straker-Barak is the advisor manager for the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences. Chloe Calhoun, completed her research as part of a project for her master's degrees. She examined the General Education requirements for undergraduate students across several Tennessee higher education institutions, including community colleges. She looked at the course attributes that were used at the institutions. A case study methodology was utilized in which she examined the General Education coursework completed by specific transfer students to that of their MTSU counterparts. The MTSU students had entered MTSU as freshmen. The research was confined to students in two areas: natural sciences and humanities/fine arts.

The biggest issue seemed to lie with the natural sciences. Transfer students were able to fulfill their General Education requirements in a way that MTSU students cannot, namely the use of sequences (i.e. two courses in the same discipline, such as biology). The guests recommended that MTSU change their General Education requirements to allow MTSU students be allowed to complete their natural sciences requirements through a sequence OR allow them to take two survey courses from different disciplines (ex. one Biology course and one Chemistry course). They also recommended that MTSU students be allowed to take two General Education courses in the same Humanities or Fine Arts area. These changes could possibly attract students with a strong interest in one discipline, and thereby positively impact retention if students could more thoroughly explore an area of interest.

- Discussion on the presentation.** Steve Severn asked for an explanation of the rationale behind requiring students to take courses from multiple prefixes/disciplines. Susan Myers-Shirk stated that the idea was that General Education should be a broadening experience, and choosing from multiple prefixes helps with that. Also, it helps spread the students around: if we allowed the same prefix to meet the requirement, then it could affect student numbers and staffing. Steve expressed that it was important to let students follow their personal interests, and Susan agreed however stressed that it was important that students also get exposure to different disciplines. The committee discussed the advantage that currently exists for transfer students. Justin Gardner asked how quickly we could make the recommended changes, if the committee decided to do so. Susan responded that the committee has the freedom to make this change, however we need to first talk to those in the liberal arts and natural sciences because the change could present a staffing problem for them. Teresa Davis said that the proposed change also presents a philosophical shift, and that we need to consider this beyond just the idea that it makes us in line with the community colleges. Susan asked the guests if the committee could get a copy of their Powerpoint presentation. Virginia Hemby asked if the committee should bring in representatives from the different colleges to comment. Steve Severn commented that it is a philosophical discussion that we need to have, because it gets to the heart of “breadth and depth” that is a core question in General Education. Stephen Smith stated that any change should be based on what is best for everyone at MTSU, rather than a concern that transfer students have an advantage. There was more discussion related to the CPOS (course program of study), in which students paying for coursework with financial aid cannot take classes outside of their program. Susan stated that it seemed as though the committee was not yet ready to make a decision. Kate Pantelides said that the group needed more information, such as the student perspective: for example, how many students are having to take courses they don’t want to take? Susan suggested the formation of a subcommittee to examine these question; she also said she would talk to the deans most directly affected by any General Education decisions. Virginia Hemby asked for volunteers for the subcommittee. No one volunteered and Susan indicated she would talk with deans before the next meeting. Susan said that the next General Education meeting would be centered on competency reports, so it may be the second November meeting before we resume discussion of this issue.
- Updates on assessment of General Education competencies.** There are four General Education competencies which SACS will be looking at: quantitative, writing, speaking, and critical thinking. In our five-year review, SACS will be looking specifically at dual-enrollment and distance learning classes, to ensure the same instructional treatment as our in-person MTSU classes. Part of our work on this committee is to listen to these reports. Critical thinking is assessed through the California Critical Thinking test. The committee will need to examine the manner by which dual-enrollment and distance learning classes are meeting the critical thinking area, to ensure they are getting the same experience as in-person classes.
- New business.** There was no new business.

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM