

True Blue Core Committee Meeting Minutes

April 19, 2024

Voting members in attendance: Andrea Hall, Stephanie Totty, Laura Cochrane, Janet Colson, Teresa Davis, Yi Gu, Sungyoon Lee, Suzanne Mangrum, Ann McCullough, Scott McDaniel, Amy Sayward, Jorge Vargas

Voting Members Absent: Rebecca Fischer, Keith Gamble, Natalie Griffin (on leave), Angela Hooser, Giselle Noel, Kera Reynolds,

Ex Officio in Attendance: Susan Myers-Shirk; Christopher Brewer

Implementation Team in Attendance: Tammy Melton, Kristen West, Christabel Devadoss

True Blue Core Team in attendance: Christina Cobb, Abby Arnold, Molly Walters

Welcome from Chair

There was an outpouring of gratitude for Ann McCullough's leadership and those rolling off the committee.

The minutes from the March 15, 2024 meeting were accepted.

Myers-Shirk indicated a slight change in the order of the agenda. The Committee agreed to move the discussion about the general education award to the end of the meeting to allow the nominees in attendance to leave.

Review/Discussion of Proclamation

The suggestions for the proclamation have been made. The committee agreed to add Myers-Shirk and McCullough's signatures to the proclamation rather than signatures from the entire committee. It will make the document one page instead of two. The document is available in the 2023-2024 TBC Committee channel in Teams.

Discussion about repeatable courses

Myers-Shirk led a discussion to get feedback on how the TBC should handle repeatable courses. [This became an issue because, on October 06, 2023, the Committee approved the following:

“No configuration in which a student could take more than 12 credit hours from a single program in the Core curriculum will be allowed, and no program may be represented in more than 3 categories. A program may propose multiple courses within a single category as long as doing so does not permit students to take more than 12 hours in that program. Categories here are defined as the four (4) skills categories in Foundational Skills and the four (4) Knowledge Domains.”

Because the English Department offers a repeatable legacy course in the Creativity and Cultural Expression Category (9 hours), it is currently possible for students to take 15 hours of English in the Core. The Committee desires a Core that is designed so that no one department, program, or major can dominate and has considered a number of strategies, including asking the Department of English to remove the repeatable course. They declined.

McCullough asked about TN transfer credits. Myers-Shirk responded that MTSU must accept TN Transfer Pathway courses as well as associate's degrees. In that context, any three literature courses would transfer. Currently, MTSU students can take ENGL 2020 as a Discovery course, an Explorations course, and to meet the literature requirement.

When the Committee decided to limit departments/programs to 12 hours/3 categories, it thought ENGL 2020 was non-repeatable; that was an error and ENGL 2020 is repeatable, which means that in the True Blue Core, students may take up to 15 hours of English. Amy Sayward questioned whether this practice was consistent with the SACSCOC requirement for breadth of knowledge. However, limiting MTSU students to 12 hours of English would be treating our students differently from transfer students who will be allowed 15 hours of English that cannot be declined by MTSU.

One possible solution would be to make an exception for the English department. McCullough stated that her preference would be that if one department is allowed 15 hours, all departments should be allowed 15 hours for equity.

In response to questions about how to make other TBC courses repeatable, Myers-Shirk indicated that the course proposal should go through Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. McCullough argued that this (making a course repeatable) would need to be an option for all courses for departments to have parity in the Core. McCullough also suggested that Myers-Shirk have a conversation with the chair of the English department. Rebecca Fischer concurred.

Tammy Melton suggested that the problem could be solved if the course was moved from discovery to exploration. Some discussion ensued

The Committee concluded, given its concern for equity, the SACSCOC requirement for breadth of knowledge, as well as the Committee's belief that a 12 hour/3 category limit is the most fair approach, recommends that ENGL 2020 become non-repeatable or be moved to the Explorations category.

The Committee also requested that, if the above recommendation cannot be implemented because of implications for transfer, the Provost's Office provide an explicit statement for posting on the True Blue Core website that explains the reasons for making an exception for the Department of English.

The committee unanimously supported the director making this suggestion.

Outstanding Teaching in General Education Award

Dr. Christina Cobb presented the winner of the 2023-2024 Outstanding Teaching in General Education Award, Liz Barnes. Cobb also indicated that the process for selecting the award winner has needed to be streamlined for years. Cobb began the process of revision by using menti.com to gather responses. This feedback will be used to identify needed revisions and to have a more extensive discussion during the summer retreat.

Currently, in order to be considered for this award, the faculty member must have two nominations from at least two different categories of the four. Then, the Center for the True Blue Core goes through the other eligibility requirements to present the committee with a list of finalists. There were more nominees this year because there was an effort to ask for nominations directly from students via a university-wide email.

There was enthusiastic support from several committee members to make the packet into a shorter, curated application that is uniform and abbreviated. Less is more.

The meeting was adjourned.

Meeting notes submitted by Suzanne Mangrum

04/19/2024

Edited by Susan Myers-Shirk

09/12/2024