

Resolution on General Education Addendum – Explanatory Paragraphs

Engaged citizens, involved in the world around them, and who understand the major challenges and debates of the day.

Higher education is not solely a private investment in one's future, but a public good that inculcates citizens with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to participate effectively in political culture. An educated citizenry is essential to a functioning democracy, a responsive and accountable government, a vibrant marketplace of ideas, thriving communities, global awareness, and to the solution of urgent social problems. The general education program can foster students' capacity for civic engagement in at least three ways. First, the intellectual competence that is fostered by general education—critical thinking, ethical reasoning, historical and cross-cultural perspective, breadth of knowledge, multicultural awareness—enables students to evaluate policy options and make reasoned judgments about complex and diverse challenges such as inequality, climate change, education, health care, infrastructure, and international instability. Second, courses in the curriculum provide knowledge of fundamental concepts that inform active citizenship, including the structure and institutions of government and societies, political theory, economics, constitutionalism and the rule of law, and United States and world history, politics, and culture. Third, experiences beyond the classroom can familiarize students with pressing issues of the day, provide experience with participatory democracy, encourage public service, and create an awareness of the real-world impact of laws and public policies. These experiences may include service learning, field experience, volunteer work, participation in the governance and decision-making of student organizations, involvement with political campaigns and organizations, and attendance at public lectures on current events and controversies. Our graduates should leave the University of Delaware with the ability and desire to vote, serve on juries, engage in civic discourse and collective action, and participate meaningfully in the public life of their communities.

Aware of their intellectual strengths and interests and of their ethical values and commitments.

Students identify intellectual passions that they can pursue over the course of their lives. They see themselves as both formed by and contributing to the cultures of which they are part. They are able to articulate the reasons behind the positions they hold on key ethical questions and to explain the values and commitments that drive their work and thought. While self-awareness is a perpetual process, UD graduates must have acquired enough maturity, perspective, and insight to provide strong footing during post-academic pursuits. What they are passionate about, what they value, what they are good at, (and not so good at), and how they are unique are understandings that will serve to propel them forward. An awareness of how they have connected and can continue to connect their minds with their hearts and then with their hands are essential for a potential of life-long success and happiness. It helps them identify intellectual passions that they

can pursue over the course of their lives, recognizing the values and commitments that drive their work and thought. While they will not have achieved their fullest potential upon graduation from UD, they should graduate with an understanding of their potential and with aspirations to fulfill this potential.

Aware of and capable of interpreting the arts and culture of modern and past societies,

A well-rounded individual has the ability to appreciate the arts and culture of modern and past societies and the fact that arts and culture often are connected to the perennial issues that have characterized human experience and shaped contemporary culture and debates. Understanding how themes such as justice, conflict, and the nature of good and evil have been represented in philosophy, literature, drama, and the visual arts exposes students to different modes of intellectual inquiry and aesthetic expression, as well as scholarly approaches to critically analyzing those perspectives. Historical and cross-cultural inquiry emphasizes the contingent nature of present conditions, introduces customs and beliefs different from one's own, and provides alternatives for imagining how society should be organized. Students should understand that their identities, experiences, and values are rooted in cultural traditions, but that those traditions are not universal; sensitivity to and appreciation of cultural difference and change over time and place is essential to living in a global society.

Equipped with the essential skills necessary to thrive in a rapidly evolving world including the ability to be a lifelong learner, creator, and innovator.

While the knowledge students gain in their disciplines through courses required for their majors will prepare them specifically, general education at UD needs to prepare students broadly for a world in motion. They must have the capacity to be successful in communities that are remarkably both interconnected and dynamic. This constant variability requires leaders and citizens who can creatively and critically adapt with a conscience, understanding that their actions affect the lives of those around them. At the same rate that contemporary science and technology and the political, economic, and cultural arenas change; so too must graduates be able to change. It is essential that UD graduates can acquire new skills and knowledge and be innovative while understanding the corresponding, often complex, ethical and social implications.

Objective #1: General education prepares students who are able to read critically, analyze arguments and information, and engage in constructive ideation.

Critical reading skills are essential for acquisition of knowledge and advancing understanding. Students need to contextualize written content and respond to it effectively, differentiating their own contemporary and culturally influenced values from those expressed by another. They must be able to analyze and critically evaluate information presented and the arguments that have been constructed. Arguments may pose challenges to the values and beliefs of the student, requiring

the student to reflect on their own attitudes and presumptions about our civilization or about the natural world, or perhaps about their place as an individual. Following careful reflection and synthesis, students should be prepared to engage in constructive ideation, building new ideas and concepts, and contributing to the solution of previously unsolved problems.

Objective #2: General education prepares students who are able to communicate effectively in writing, orally, and through creative expression.

Effective written and oral communication skills are essential components of learning and critical thinking. They are necessary for personal growth, meaningful social interaction, and participation in civic debate and in the modern workplace. These skills allow individuals to foster comprehension of complex or competing ideas, organize and disseminate knowledge, and persuade others to reconsider their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The development of written and oral communication skills equips graduates to communicate effectively to general and specialized audiences, employing multiple genres and different technologies, including text, voice, data, and images. A student with these skills will understand how to advance a credible argument using logical reasoning and the use of evidence; how to write and speak with clarity and grace; how to account for different audiences and contexts; and how to employ the standard conventions of writing. Similarly, it is essential that students recognize and are able to communicate in a variety of media that go beyond the written and spoken word. These include forms of artistic and emerging forms of expression enabled by technology.

Objective #3: General education prepares students who are able to work collaboratively and independently within and across a variety of cultural contexts and a spectrum of differences.

An understanding, appreciation, and assimilation of common and diverse perspectives facilitates social, cultural, technical, and economic progress. The general education program herein establishes a foundation for appreciating what each individual brings and what diversity brings to modern society. The definition of culture is intentionally broad and encompasses an international perspective derived from various peoples and cultures, a social and economic perspective that may be derived from individuals from different segments of a society, a discipline-based perspective obtained through experience or study, and others. The development of skills to work independently and collaboratively within a culture ensures that graduates have a well-established foundation of basic knowledge and awareness and can communicate and work with others of similar background. A student with these skills will build upon their own knowledge, perspective, and experiences to communicate and work effectively with those of similar background providing an important base for interactions with individuals from different backgrounds. The development of skills to work independently and collaboratively across cultures ensures that graduates will understand the limitations of a single perspective and the value of diverse perspectives and cultures in creative problem solving of major challenges and discussion in debates, and establishment of an engaged society. A student with these skills will

learn from diverse perspectives, assimilate this knowledge, and synthesize new solutions and ways of thinking.

Objective#4: General education prepares students who are able to critically evaluate the ethical implications of what they say and do.

Students see themselves as members of communities. As such, they consider the potential effects of their words and actions upon other people. In their speech and writing, they strive for mutual understanding. In their work as professionals, they aim to serve a larger community. They are responsive to the views and needs of others, and they acknowledge the strengths of differing perspectives. They understand their own positions as partial and fallible. They seek not simply to provide technical solutions to clearly defined problems, but to situate their work in broader historical and social contexts, to question assumptions, and to pose and consider alternatives.

Objective #5: General education prepares students who are able to reason quantitatively, computationally, and scientifically.

The ever-increasing growth of scientific knowledge and the subsequent application of that knowledge has been a principle driver for change in modern society, impacting individuals and societies worldwide. The general education program proposed here prepares students to thrive in a rapidly changing scientifically and technologically driven world by equipping them to reason using the principal tools of science and by introducing them to the central concepts of science that form the basis for modern reasoning about the physical and biological world. The development of quantitative reasoning skills equips graduates to understand and interpret quantitative information presented in multiple forms and given in multiple contexts. A student with these skills will understand data, the visual presentation of data, the statistical analysis of data, as well as essential concepts such as exponential growth and the law of large numbers. Computational thinking synthesizes these skills with the ability to analyze and logically organize data with modeling and simulations, the ability to think in abstractions, in terms of decomposition, evaluations, and generalizations. The development of scientific reasoning skills equips graduates to understand the evaluation of evidence in modern science. A student with these skills will understand the scientific method, inductive and deductive thinking, causal reasoning, and how to evaluate the evidence for and against a scientific hypothesis or theory.