

Final Report of the Task Force on General Education

Task Force on General Education, 4/15/15

Overview

In 2011, the University of Delaware completed its periodic reaccreditation process. This required that a self-study be completed and submitted and that an evaluation team representing the Middle States Commission on Higher Education support a report to the faculty, administration, trustees, and students of the university. Both the self-study and the report of the evaluation team called for a re-envisioning of general education at the University of Delaware. This was to include a rethinking of the goals of general education and a rethinking of the implementation of general education. Subsequent to this, the Faculty Senate General Education Committee conducted an extensive review of aspirational programs, peer programs, the literature on general education, guidelines offered by the AAC&U, and assessment of current activities. In 2014, the Deputy Provost of the University of Delaware assembled and charged the “Core Working Group of the General Education Task Force” to move this process from the review stage to the recommendation stage. A “Steering Committee” was added to the task force to ensure broad faculty representation and the Faculty Senate General Education Committee was brought in as a close partner in this work.

In the first phase of the work of the Task Force, the focus was on a revision of the goals of general education. The Task Force held focused meetings with department chairs, deans, assistant deans, and various college-level committees engaged in managing educational affairs. The Task Force coordinated efforts with an ongoing strategic planning effort and leveraged the engagement of this group with faculty, staff, and students across campus. This first set of meetings culminated with an open hearing held by the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate Committee on General Education then brought forth a resolution based on the work of the Task Force and on November 3, 2014, the Faculty Senate of the University of Delaware adopted a new set of *purposes* and *objectives* for general education at the University of Delaware. Subsequent to this, the Task Force on General Education turned its attention to the design of a general education program that will ensure that all students at the University of Delaware meet the core educational objectives defined by our faculty.

In this second phase of the work of the Task Force, the group again held focused meetings, visited multiple departments, and coordinated with an ongoing strategic planning effort. In January of 2015, the Task Force held a set of retreats including faculty, staff, and students from the Task Force and the Faculty Senate Committee on General Education. The Task Force also worked with the Faculty Senate to hold two open hearings for discussion of recommendations on an implementation plan.

During this process, the Task Force noted that the design of a program of general education is constrained by the competing and often conflicting needs and interests of members of the university community. In light of these constraints and to promote the thoughtful development of a program of general education, we began the design process by attempting to articulate and achieve consensus on the *principles* we would uphold as we designed a program and the *characteristics* we would require of any program we might design. In this document, we review the adopted purposes and objectives, explain our working definition of what constitutes our current program of general education, state the principles and characteristics used by the group, and present our recommendations for an implementation plan. We note

that these are advisory to the Faculty Senate and we note our willingness and availability to assist the Faculty Senate Committee on General Education and the Undergraduate Studies Committee of the Faculty Senate in developing resolutions and the necessary details for successful implementation. Here, we include several appendices designed to offer guidance to the Faculty Senate on details regarding the recommendations in this report.

Review of Purposes and Objectives

On November 3, 2014, the Faculty Senate of the University of Delaware passed the following resolution on general education. We note that the addendum to the resolution more fully describing the purposes and objectives and the components of the resolution detailing a timeline for Phase Two are not included here.

University of Delaware Faculty Senate

Resolution on General Education

WHEREAS, the University of Delaware exists to cultivate learning, develop knowledge, and foster the free exchange of ideas, and

WHEREAS, a robust program of general education is an essential component of the cultivation of learning, the development of knowledge, and the fostering of a free exchange of ideas, and

WHEREAS, the overarching goal of general education at the University of Delaware is to set students along the path of possessing the characteristics of one who is both broadly and deeply educated, and

WHEREAS, in our April 2011 self-study prepared for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, we noted that the current undergraduate general education goals, requirements, and assessment activities are under review with an eye toward streamlining the list of goals and taking action steps between now and 2015 to establish a coherent and integrative program of undergraduate education and university requirements, and

WHEREAS, this review has proceeded and culminated in the recommendations below, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate adopts the following statement of purposes for the University of Delaware's general education program:

We seek to prepare students who are:

- Engaged citizens, involved in the world around them, and who understand the major challenges and debates of the day;
- Aware of their intellectual strengths and interests and of their ethical values and commitments;
- Capable of interpreting the arts and culture of contemporary and past societies; and,
- Equipped with the essential skills necessary to thrive in a rapidly evolving world including the ability to be a lifelong learner, creator, and innovator.

And be it further

RESOLVED, that to meet these purposes, the Faculty Senate adopts for all students the five objectives of general education set forth as follows:

General education at the University of Delaware prepares students who are able to:

- (1) Read critically, analyze arguments and information, and engage in constructive ideation.
- (2) Communicate effectively in writing, orally, and through creative expression.
- (3) Work collaboratively and independently within and across a variety of cultural contexts and a spectrum of differences.
- (4) Critically evaluate the ethical implications of what they say and do.
- (5) Reason quantitatively, computationally, and scientifically.

Working Definition of General Education

To aid in the discussion it is useful to define our current program of general education clearly. We define the current general education program as all requirements at the *university level* for undergraduate students. Note that *college level* requirements aimed at general education are neither considered nor addressed here. The task force assumes that colleges will continue to construct their own, perhaps modified, requirements. Indeed, we see college and major requirements as complementary and necessary to achieving the purposes and objectives of general education. The components of the current program considered here are then:

1. First Year Seminar (FYS)
2. English 110
3. Discovery Learning Experience (DLE)
4. Multicultural Requirement
5. University Breadth Requirement

Note that the “Capstone Experience” is not included in this definition as there is no formal capstone requirement passed by the Faculty Senate. At the same time, we note that the senate did endorse *in principle*, the notion of a capstone experience and that many units have instituted such an experience as a required component of their degree programs. Hence, the notion of a capstone requirement was also part of the discussions of the group.

Principles for Design of a Program of General Education

As noted above, competing and conflicting interests can make the design of a program of general education tricky to navigate. In order to mitigate these effects and attempt to bring some clarity to the decision making process when weighing competing or conflicting interests, the task force developed a set of principles to be applied during the design process. These are summarized in the following table.

As we design a new program of general education, we will...	Our new program will...
...prioritize student learning in all decisions.	...be interwoven throughout a student’s four years of study.
...carefully evaluate all current requirements, reconsidering each one from scratch.	...be engaging for both faculty and students.
...work to construct an integrated, combined course and experiential program.	...be coupled to strong advising, enhancing coherence and integration of the student experience.
...develop mechanisms to ensure that appropriate content is included, evidence-based, high-impact educational practices are incorporated, and regular	...be an integrated, combined course and experiential program for all students.

review and assessment of all general educational requirements are institutionalized.	
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Recommendations for Implementation

In broad strokes, the recommendations presented here are intended to lead to a developmental program of general education that builds on a common intellectual experience of core courses, guides the student through an intentionally developed experience of exploration, and culminates in a major-specific capstone experience. These recommendations also attempt to address concerns raised during the Middle States reaccreditation process and concerns raised by the university community during the work of the Task Force.

The initial charge of the task force included a mandate to examine the FYE/FYS for the University of Delaware to be responsive to our last Middle States accreditation report. This analysis resulted in the following recommendation:

Recommendation #1 – Recognize the FYE/FYS as an important experience for students with clearly articulated content aligned with best-practices in helping students through the transition from high school to college. Charge the Faculty Senate, in concert with the Division of Student Life, to develop a common minimal syllabus while allowing departments and colleges the flexibility to include material focusing on an introduction to specific majors. As this serves as the first introduction to the University of Delaware, the task force recommends that diversity competency, sexual misconduct awareness and prevention, drug and alcohol use education and abuse prevention, and ethics and academic honesty be components of this minimal syllabus.

As the task force evaluated the current FYE/FYS requirement, it became clear that while providing a valuable experience, the FYE/FYS was not designed to support the purposes and objectives of general education but played a key role in helping students transition to college. The task force also noted that many units had expanded the mission of the FYE/FYS to include an introduction to specific majors. The task force fully recognized the value of both of these roles and recommends that they be preserved. At the same time, an unevenness in the implementation of the FYE/FYS was noted both by the task force and by the most recent Middle States review committee. The task force recommends that the Faculty Senate, in concert with the Division of Student Life clearly specifies a common “minimal syllabus” for all FYS courses.

As outlined above, the initial efforts of the task force led to the Faculty Senate adoption of a new set of “General Education Goals,” newly framed in terms of the purposes and objectives presented earlier. Since these purposes and objectives represent a significant revision of past goals, and since these purposes and objectives include clearly defined, measurable skills, the task force recognizes that a review of all programs is called for and makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation #2 – Review all undergraduate degree programs to ensure alignment with and support of the new purposes and objectives of general education.

As the task force engaged with the campus community and with the current strategic planning committee for the University, several clear, repeated themes emerged with regards to the design of a new implementation plan for general education. Recognizing the current set of requirements as leading to a “check-the-box” mentality among students, faculty repeatedly called for more intention and coherence in a new program. Also recognizing that the current set of requirements is fully student choice driven, leaving no room for a meaningful common intellectual experience, faculty called for an implementation

plan balanced between student choice and common requirements. Noting the importance of diversity-learning and expressing little faith that this was accomplished through current requirements, faculty called for these competencies to be woven throughout a new plan of general education. Finally, recognizing that the current choice-driven model has led to a dizzying array of choices for students with little assurance that current options are aligned with general education objectives, faculty called for a clear system that ensured new requirements are aligned with general education objectives and that they remain that way over time.

In discussions about the nature of the requirements that would best achieve the new purposes and goals, several consistent themes again emerged. Faculty expressed a desire to see a core requirement that would provide an academically-focused, intellectually rigorous common intellectual experience for all students. Additionally, faculty called for a plan that spread general education over all four years of a students' experience and often suggested a formal capstone requirement as a mechanism to ensure this. Faculty repeatedly recognized the importance of and the learning-opportunity presented by "co-curricular" activities, and expressed a desire to see experiences beyond the classroom as part of general education. Finally, a persistent desire to preserve some level of student choice was expressed.

Merging these many calls-to-action and attempting to balance the competing interests of major degree requirements and those of general education, the task force recommends a revised set of requirements summarized in the next table and explained in the recommendations below.

Current Gen Ed Requirements	Revised Gen Ed Requirement
English 110 – 3 credits	English 110 – 3 credits
First Year Experience – 1 credit	First Year Experience – 1 credit (or FYE within major)
Discovery Learning Experience – 3 credits	CORE 120, 220 – 6 credits
Multicultural Requirement – 3 credits	Engagement and Exploration Requirement – 6 credits minimum, 12 credits maximum
University Breadth Requirement – 12 credits	Capstone Requirement – 3 credits
Total credits – 22 credits	Total Credits – 19 to 25 credits

Recommendation #3 – Create a new set of core courses, tentatively labeled “CORE 120” and “CORE 220” required of all students. Additionally, reaffirm the importance of English 110 as a key component of the general education of all students.

At the heart of the recommended revised program of general education lies the firm commitment to provide a high-quality, academically-focused, common intellectual experience for all UD students that actualizes the newly approved purposes of general education. The intent is to do this through two courses, required for all students. By successfully completing the core, each student will have obtained a foundational level of competency in *all* of the objectives of general education. Recognizing the difficulties inherent in switching to a core model from a broad distribution model, the Task Force recommends a pilot phase for the core, where courses are developed, assessed, and issues of scalability are resolved. Both courses offer opportunities to engage and infuse faculty expertise from across the University into the general education framework.

Briefly described, the core courses are:

CORE 120 – “The Grand Challenges, Great Debates, and Big Ideas of the Past.” This course provides the intellectual foundation necessary for a liberal education. Through the lenses of arts and culture, the

humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences, it explores the perennial issues that have characterized human experience, including issues of diversity, and the analytical perspectives that developed to solve complex problems.

CORE 220 – “The Grand Challenges, Great Debates, and Big Ideas of the Future.” This course explores the Grand Challenges, Great Debates, and Big Ideas facing modern society. Building on the analytical perspectives and habits of mind developed in CORE 120, this course provides a basis for student exploration of modern big problems throughout their academic career.

More specific guidance on this recommendation is offered for the Faculty Senate in Appendix A.

Recommendation #4 – Institute a university-wide capstone requirement for all degree programs.

In 2000, the Faculty Senate of the University of Delaware approved a resolution endorsing in principle the inclusion of a capstone experience as a degree requirement. In 2006, the University of Delaware’s Periodic Review Report to the Middle States Association stated that “Capstone experiences will be part of the education of all UD undergraduates by 2008.” With the majority of degree programs on campus now hosting a capstone experience, the task force recommends instituting a capstone experience as a formal requirement for all degree programs. At the same time, the task force recommends that the Faculty Senate undertake a full review and re-certification of all currently approved capstone experiences. We note that in general, capstone experiences will be the responsibility of departments, but the task force also recommends the creation of interdisciplinary capstone courses to be made available for students whose department does not have the resources to create such an experience or for students seeking to integrate the various academic and experiential components of their undergraduate education.

More specific guidance on this recommendation is offered for the Faculty Senate in Appendix B.

Recommendation #5 – Institute a university-wide “Engagement and Exploration” requirement for all degree programs. Require that a strengthened “Multicultural Component” be part of every student’s plan of “Engagement and Exploration.”

As mentioned above, throughout this process the Task Force heard repeated calls to “end the check-the-box” mentality that pervades our current program of general education. We argue that this mentality is a direct consequence of the structure of our current requirements, in particular, our current University Breadth Requirement and current Multicultural Requirement. As formulated, these requirements offer little to no academic guidance to students or faculty in terms of choosing courses most appropriate for a given student. As such, decisions as to which courses to take are often based on non-academic reasoning. The Task Force recommends that the current University Breadth Requirement be reformulated, with the separate lists being combined into a single “EE List” where the catalog description of each course on this new list clearly indicates which aspects of the objectives of general education are supported. The Task Force also recommends that the current list of courses satisfying the Multicultural Requirement be reviewed in light of the 2009 Report of the Diversity Task Force. We recommend that the Multicultural Requirement be incorporated into the Engagement and Exploration Requirement and that students be given stronger, direct advice on choices within that list.

Finally, the task force recognizes that often the most valuable “breadth experiences” are those that take place outside of the classroom and recommends that the “Engagement and Exploration” requirement include the option to be partially satisfied through co-curricular, perhaps non-credit bearing, activities for

students that choose such an option. Indeed, one of the distinguishing factors of a UD education (versus on-line or other types of higher education institutions) is that we are a residential campus and significant learning is achieved through interactions with faculty, peers, and the community. By formally recognizing these experiences as part of our general education program, UD will affirm its commitment to an on-campus experience distinguish itself from others.

More specific guidance on this recommendation is offered for the Faculty Senate in Appendix C.

Recommendation #6 – Incorporate the intent of the current Discovery Learning Requirement into the Engagement and Exploration Requirement and the capstone requirement, and incorporate the current Multicultural Requirement into the Engagement and Exploration Requirement for all degree programs.

The revision of the current set of general education requirements implies that existing requirements must either be modified or removed. The Task Force recommends removing the Discovery Learning Requirement. The integrated, developmental approach to General Education proposed here encourages and facilitates the inclusion of meaningful experiential learning throughout a student's undergraduate career, particularly through the capstone requirement and the Engagement and Exploration Requirement. Similarly, the Task Force recommends that the current Multicultural Requirement become a required Multicultural Component of the Engagement and Exploration Requirement, and that diversity components be included in the FYS and the CORE requirements.

Appendix A – Details on Core Courses and Implementation

The Call for a UD Core

The objectives for a program of general education approved by the Faculty Senate of the University of Delaware are *trans-disciplinary*. That is, they embody those skills and habits of mind that may have arisen in a particular discipline, but have been found of such wide applicability and usefulness, that they have transcended their original disciplinary home and now are essential components of every educated person's toolkit. The purposes of general education approved by the Faculty Senate also transcend disciplines. In this case, they speak to the characteristics of individuals the faculty of the University of Delaware aspires to produce in their graduates. Given this common cause, in both purposes and objectives, calls for the creation of a UD core that lays the foundation for this essential learning for all University of Delaware students and the recognition that just as this foundation is itself trans-disciplinary, the effort to build this foundation must also include the efforts of faculty from across the entire University.

The Requirement

All students are required to pass, with a grade of C- or better, English 110, CORE 120, and CORE 220. Typically, English 110 and CORE 120 will be taken during a student's freshman year while CORE 220 will be taken during a student's sophomore year. Departments may develop recommended curricula that delay CORE 220 until a student's junior year, but no later.

Core Course Details

Each of the core courses will count for three credits and may not be taken pass/fail. Here, we review the basic course descriptions for each course and provide additional detail as appropriate.

CORE 120

CORE 120 focuses on intellectual traditions. A draft catalog description is as follows:

CORE 120 – “The Grand Challenges, Great Debates, and Big Ideas of the Past.” This course provides the intellectual foundation necessary for a liberal education. Through the lenses of arts and culture, the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences, it explores the Grand Challenges, Great Debates, and Big Ideas of the past.

The goal of CORE 120 is to offer students a sense of the intellectual traditions that have helped shape our present global culture. The method of this course is historical, comparative, and problem-based. Utilizing the skills of research and analysis acquired in CORE 120, students will critically examine the interplay between the grand challenges, great debates, and big ideas of the past and the development of western culture. They will analyze the impact of these challenges, debates, and ideas on a spectrum of cultures, and in doing so build awareness of their own intellectual strengths and interests and ethical values and commitments.

CORE 220

CORE 220 focuses on the grand challenges, great debates, and big ideas of contemporary society. A draft catalog description is as follows:

CORE 220 – “The Grand Challenges, Great Debates, and Big Ideas of the Future.” This course, aligned with University of Delaware strategic initiatives, explores the Grand Challenges, Great Debates, and Big Ideas facing modern society. This course provides a basis for student exploration of modern big problems

throughout their academic career. It specifically develops skills in research, data analysis and interpretation, and the use of the scientific method.

CORE 220 has a particular focus on developing student skills in research and analysis through engagement with a contemporary grand challenge. Note that this is not a survey course, but is rather an in-depth encounter with a particular challenge or issue from diverse viewpoints.

Who will teach these courses?

While major degree requirements are of obvious importance, throughout the work of this task force, the message from the faculty has been clear – general education is a crucial component of the student experience and its status and importance must be elevated at the University of Delaware. Toward this end, there has been a strong desire expressed to ensure that a student’s earliest experiences, i.e. those taking place in this core, are supported by our most capable faculty. The task force also recognizes that the core is inherently cross-disciplinary and that the effective implementation of a core will require the participation of faculty from numerous disciplines. These desires put this implementation on the boundary of shared governance between the faculty and the administration of the University of Delaware. Here the task force calls upon the administration to provide the necessary resources for managing these courses so that they can be required of and offered to all students. We recommend that pilot versions of CORE 120 and CORE 220 be instituted in spring of 2016. We recommend that the Faculty Senate General Education Committee regularly reviews the selection of the faculty leaders developing and teaching these courses. Furthermore, we expect that the faculty working together to develop these course curricula will more broadly represent the intellectual and cultural diversity across our campus.

The Core and the Objectives of General Education

The core is intended to provide a foundational layer of skills across the general education objectives. Yet, we must realize that not all objectives can be fully met nor deeply realized within three courses. At the same time, the core is also aimed at the *purposes* of general education and should serve as a foundation for producing students aligned with these purposes.

The Core and Diversity Competency

Our commitment to diversity is enacted in the CORE courses in three primary ways. First, the content of all CORE courses is drawn from a variety of cultural contexts. CORE 120 focuses on contemporary solutions to a global problem; CORE 220 centers on past responses to similar global crises and innovations. The contributions of diverse cultures and the variable impacts on diverse populations will be included. Second, the faculty developing and teaching the CORE curricula will be selected from an intellectually and culturally diverse pool. Third, the method of both CORE courses emphasizes working collaboratively with other students—through group-based learning, peer response to writing, and small-group discussion. Course sections will not be by major, but rather students will interact with a diverse group of students drawn from different majors and colleges. Both courses push students to reflect on their own values and commitments by requiring them not only to read and view texts from other cultures but to work closely with students from other cultures.

How will this requirement impact degree programs?

Requirements within degree programs will need to be changed in order to incorporate the core. At first glance, this requires degree programs to incorporate six additional credits of study.

We note however that the removal of the Discovery Learning Experience and the transition from University Breadth to Engagement and Exploration will provide degree programs with the flexibility to incorporate the core without needing to alter credits required for the major.

Assessment of the Core

Courses in the core will support the development of student competencies in all the objectives of general education. Content will be aligned with the purposes of general education. Assessment of student learning in the objectives will be carried out using modified versions of the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics. The Center for the Teaching and Assessment of Learning (CTAL), continues to work with the Faculty Senate Committee on General Education in developing these rubrics. For the core, since all objectives are being assessed, multiple rubrics are relevant. Final rubrics for the core will be developed in consultation with the initial group of faculty teaching the core. To understand the nature of these rubrics, the reader should examine the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics.

Appendix B – Details on the Capstone Requirement

Formalizing the UD Capstone Experience

A Capstone Experience (CE) can serve as a critical part of a student's academic and professional formation and education. In its March 13, 2000 meeting, the University of Delaware Faculty Senate approved a resolution indicating that it “endorses in principle...major components of the GEP” (General Education Program), including a “Capstone Experience (CE) which integrates the undergraduate experience such as a senior seminar, group project or similar experience.” The Faculty Senate also resolved that “each department or program responsible for administering undergraduate majors is encouraged to direct its students to acquire basic skills, avail themselves of discovery learning, and participate in a capstone experience.” The University of Delaware’s Periodic Review Report (PRR) (2006:41) to the Middle States Association indicates that “Capstone experiences will be part of the education of all UD undergraduates by 2008.” In making this commitment, it is anticipated that the majority, if not all, of the academic departments and programs will be able to satisfy the CE without the creation of new courses and without increasing the number of credits required for graduation. As it currently stands, a capstone experience is not a required component of the university's general education requirements, but can be viewed as a suggestion.

What defines a Capstone Experience?

A Capstone Experience synthesizes, integrates, and expands the knowledge that students have developed throughout their undergraduate academic careers. It allows students to connect and bring together the knowledge experiences that they obtained through the courses they have taken to satisfy the requirements for their major. In its 2002 report (*Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*), the Middle States Commission on Higher Education indicates that a CE is a mechanism that can be used to assess learning outcomes as it provides for the “synthesis or aggregation” of information. Wagenaar (1993) defines a CE as follows: “a culminating experience in which students are expected to integrate special studies with the major and extend, critique, and apply knowledge gained in their major.” When defining the Capstone Experience, the Boyer Commission (*Reinventing Undergraduate Education*, 1998) indicates: “All the skills of research developed in earlier work should be marshaled in a project that demands the framing of a significant question or set of questions, the research or creative exploration to find answers, and the communication of skills to convey the results to audiences both expert and uninitiated in the subject matter.” Palomba and Banta (1999:125) point out that the CE is a “well-thought-out project that is comprehensive in nature and allows students to demonstrate a range of abilities.” John Gardner (*About Campus*, 2000) argues that “Capstone experiences are created by institutions that recognize that they must provide the most empowering, introspective, reflective, intellectual experiences for their departing students or they are not going to think much of the institution as they walk out the door.” The specific CE is likely to be unique to a given discipline yet can serve as a common intellectual experience for all UD students in the future.

Generally, CEs will require students to engage in explorations in which the outcomes are unknown, and/or to engage in self-assessment, reflection and analysis that prepares them for future success. These experiences should occur during the senior year or near the end of the program of study, and must have a set of learning goals that are well-communicated to students and directly related to a program’s goals. Students can develop their own individual project, participate in group projects, or work with faculty on an ongoing project. These “experiences” should have a set of requirements that show the depth and breadth of the major or discipline, and will allow students to synthesize and integrate their knowledge into

an academic or research experience. Faculty supervision and mentorship is critical to ensure a successful Capstone Experience.

Capstone Experiences may occur in the context of an Honors Thesis, independent research experiences, in an appropriate capstone course, or appropriate senior seminar style course. Other possible capstone experiences may involve field work, a practicum, study abroad, service learning projects that include both service and academic components, or internships. Generally, students will be expected to develop and present a final product that is graded and synthesizes and expands knowledge in their field of study such as through a research paper, thesis, report, exhibit, portfolio, performance, or oral presentation.

A key characteristic of a capstone experience is the extension of scholarly knowledge in the discipline through creation or design, rather than simply synthesizing existing knowledge. When efforts are undertaken in groups, the capstone experience may offer students an experience working with individuals with different backgrounds - something especially likely if teams involve students from multiple disciplines.

What is the requirement?

Students will be required to complete a 3 credit Capstone Experience that is performed either independently, in small teams of students, or in a seminar setting. Eligible capstones will be identified by departments but must be characterized by a synthesis or application of existing knowledge in a discipline. In some programs, students can complete this requirement by successfully completing a course rather than an independent project. Faculty are encouraged to develop multidisciplinary capstone seminars and experiences that departments and units may choose to accept in lieu of a capstone based in the major. Such courses must be approved by the Faculty Senate Committee on General Education.

The Capstone Experience and the Objectives of General Education

The capstone experience will enhance and expand students' knowledge in their respective disciplines, will prepare them to enter graduate school or the workforce, and will promote lifelong learning. Moreover, it directly addresses many of the purposes and objectives of general education as articulated by the Faculty Senate. Namely most CE's will require students to read critically, analyze arguments and information, and engage in constructive ideation. For those efforts that involve teams, the project will help students learn to work collaboratively within and across a spectrum of differences. The scholarly outputs of the CE must be communicated in an appropriate manner. As such, students completing the CE will be more likely to be engaged citizens who understand challenges and debates relevant to their discipline. They will better understand the skills necessary to be a lifelong learner, creator, and innovator.

The Capstone Experience and Diversity Competency

The pursuit of scholarly activities which is a hallmark attribute of many faculty in higher education, offers many opportunities for students to gain diversity competency. Whether through modern scientific research that is inherently multidisciplinary in today's world, through the development of unique works of aesthetic expression that are discussed and debated by people who have different life experience and backgrounds, to projects that study the role and response of specific social groups in different contexts, diversity of background, thought, and expression, are highly likely to emerge in all CE's.

How will this requirement impact degree programs?

For programs in which students already have an opportunity, or similar requirement, the CE requirement will not pose an additional burden on students in terms of credit hours. However, the nature of this requirement does require additional faculty effort to mentor and guide students. Departments that have a large student to faculty ratio may opt for students to participate in a senior seminar course as a substitute

for the CE requirement for those students that cannot be mentored directly by a faculty member. This substitution may also be appropriate for students that spend a significant portion of their time off site immersed in a practical experience.

Assessment of the Capstone Experience

The Capstone Experience will usually be discipline specific and hence each will support a different range of general education objectives. Assessment of student learning in the objectives will be carried out using modified versions of the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics. The Center for the Teaching and Assessment of Learning (CTAL), continues to work with the Faculty Senate Committee on General Education in developing these rubrics. Departments should work with CTAL to define an appropriate set of rubrics for assessing their CE.

References

About Campus (May 21, 2000). John Gardner interview conducted by Charles Schroeder as reproduced by Jean Henscheid, "Capstone Experience," presentation to the University of Delaware faculty, June 6, 2006.

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Middle States Commission on Higher Education. (2002). ***Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation***. Philadelphia: Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Palomba, C. and Banta, T. (1999). ***Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education***. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Appendix C – Details on the Engagement and Exploration Requirement

Engagement and Exploration at UD

The Engagement and Exploration Requirement (EE) is designed to allow students and their major advisors the opportunity to design an *intentional, personalized* learning experience that takes the student beyond the typical domain of their major and in ideal cases, beyond the classroom. Because, in fact we are preparing students to be “engaged citizens, involved in the world around them, and who understand the major challenges and debates of the day” we must allow them to practice this engagement outside the bounds of classroom walls.

Note that the EE requirement is not a simple replacement of the previous Discovery Learning Experience (DLE) requirement. Rather, the EE requirement combines features of the DLE, provides for an intentional approach to breadth, and attempts to capture important student experiences that take place outside of the classroom, insofar as they relate to the purposes and objectives of general education.

Responsibility and authority for developing Engagement and Exploration Plans for students in a given degree program lies with the unit administering that program, most typically the academic department. As it is at the unit level that teaching and service workload assignments and performance appraisals are performed, each such unit can thus best decide its methods for advising students and developing student plans. An approved list of “EE” classes with specified levels of achievement in the General Education Objectives and a similar list of approved co-curricular activities will be available and constantly updated for use by in developing EE plans. Representatives from each college on the Faculty Senate General Education Committee will have the responsibility to assist departments in their college to develop approved plans. This member of the Faculty Senate General Education committee will coordinate with their counterpart on the Faculty Senate Undergraduate Studies Committee concerning changes to curricula that involve general education requirements.

The requirement is designed to allow units administering degree programs to create individual students EE plans to do the following:

- Fill in gaps in their students’ mastery of the general education purposes and goals;
- Allow their students to take advantage of a wide range of learning experiences that go beyond the classroom; and
- Help students systematically explore interests outside of their major.

What is the requirement?

All students, in conjunction with their academic advisor, must have an “EE Plan” approved by their department by the time they have accrued 60 credits taken at the University of Delaware. Departments or other units administering degree programs are responsible for creating their own internal process for creation and review of EE plans. Every EE plan must include a Multicultural Component consisting of a 3 credit course selected from an approved list of courses. Final approval of these plans is at the discretion of the Department Chair, Program Director, or their designee. An approved plan will look unique for each student and can be constructed in any one of three different ways:

Three Ways to Build an EE Plan		
	<i>Credit Bearing EEs</i>	<i>Non-Credit Bearing EEs</i>
A	3 credits of EE classes, 3 Credit Multicultural Component	Approved EE Experience(s)
B	6 credits of EE classes, 3 credit Multicultural Component	Approved EE Experience(s)
C	9 credits of EE classes. 3 credit Multicultural Component	NA

- Each EE plan must include at least 6 credits of courses with an EE designation that are not in the student's major department.
- Each EE plan must include at least 3 credits of courses with an MC designation.
- An approved plan can consist solely of courses in which case 9 credits of courses with an EE designation that are not in the student's major department and 3 credits of courses with an MC designation are required. A portion of these credits may include credit bearing out of the classroom experiences such as undergraduate research, study abroad, internships, or service learning. These non-course based credits may be related to the students' major. For example, undergraduate research within one's discipline may be allowed as may honors research, UNIV 401/402.
- Departments are encouraged to work with their students to devise EE plans of 6 or 9 credits that include approved educational opportunities that take place outside of a traditional classroom.
- Also included in the plan, may be educational opportunities that take place outside of a traditional classroom which are not credit bearing such as student leadership roles, undergraduate research, internships, volunteer work, and athletics and recreational sports. Non-credit bearing experiences should be significant, must be assessed, and student involvement verified by an advisor.

Note that in cases where out-of-the classroom educational opportunities are part of the plan, there is no "non-major" restriction. Undergraduate research in one's discipline may be allowed, for example.

If a student with an approved EE plan changes majors, their plan, or a revised version of the plan, must be approved by their new major department. The first six credits of approved EE classes are guaranteed to count toward meeting the EE requirement for students changing majors with the exception of courses that are major requirements for the new major. Credits counting toward the MC component are also guaranteed to count toward any new EE plan. A student with multiple majors has the right to select with which department they will develop their EE plan. In this instance, in order to facilitate dual majors, all EE courses that lie outside the major approving the EE plan are admissible.

The Faculty Senate General Education Committee will be charged with the following:

- The committee will provide departments with general guidelines for the creation of EE plans, including a selection of sample plans.
- So that Departments and students can carefully think through, develop, and assess non-credit bearing components of an EE plan, the committee will work with units on campus that provide out-of-classroom educational opportunities to students, to develop and maintain an EE registry. This on-line registry should include a description of the opportunity with associated learning outcomes and their relationship to the general education purposes and objectives; an articulation of time involved; and the name of a validating advisor. Units such as Admissions, the Division of Student Life, and the Institute for Global Studies among others will contribute and annually update this information.
- The committee will periodically review approved EE plans from departments. If in the committee's judgment, a department's plans are not satisfactory, the committee will assume the role of final approver for all plans for that department until in the committee's judgment the department is ready to reassume the role of final approver.

What counts as an “EE” course?

The Faculty Senate of the University of Delaware will maintain a list of approved EE courses that clearly indicates the general education objectives they have been certified to support. EE courses must be open to all students and must significantly support the development of student learning of at least one general education objective. While EE courses may have pre-requisites, they should be accessible and inviting to non-majors. Departments and Colleges are encouraged to work together to create “EE Clusters” that coherently support multiple objectives or the study of a particular topic. Note that such clusters should be more focused than minors and are not intended to provide a “certification” in a discipline, but rather to support inquiry or the development of modes of inquiry into a particular topic.

How will “EE” courses be approved?

The faculty senate will establish an ad hoc EE committee to develop an approval process in conjunction with the Faculty Senate General Education Committee according to the timeline in Appendix E. The ad hoc EE committee will work to approve the initial list of EE courses across the campus, and work with the General Education Committee, colleges and departments, and the faculty teaching the CORE classes, to identify areas of need and opportunities for development of new EE courses or approval of existing courses as EE courses.

What do non-course Engagement and Exploration activities look like?

The flexibility of including non-course based activities in the EE requirement is designed to allow students, faculty, and departments to capitalize on a wide range of learning opportunities that take place outside of the traditional confines of the classroom. There is no a-priori restriction on the nature of these activities. They may include, for example, undergraduate research, service learning, leadership of student organizations, or study abroad experiences. Departments are encouraged to consult reference [1] and related references examining the power of experiential learning in the co-curriculum.

Engagement and Exploration and the Objectives of General Education

In addition to allowing departments to capitalize on learning that happens outside the classroom, the EE requirement also gives departments the ability to fill-in gaps in their majors’ mastery of the objectives of general education. As part of a full curriculum review (Recommendation #2), Departments are encouraged to set their own internal guidelines for the development of EE plans to ensure full mastery of all general education objectives.

Engagement and Exploration and Diversity Competency

All EE plans are required to contain an “MC Component” consisting of a course selected from the MC list of approved “Multicultural Courses.” The Faculty Senate General Education Committee will conduct a review and approval of courses for this list in line with the notion of diversity competency as explored in Appendix D.

How will this requirement impact degree programs?

This requirement replaces the current University Breadth Requirement and provides departments the opportunity to craft intentional, personalized learning experiences for their students. This replacement will allow even highly constrained degree programs to craft such experiences without the introduction of additional burdens.

Assessment of the Engagement and Exploration Requirement

Each Engagement and Exploration Plan is highly student specific and hence each will support a different range of general education objectives. Assessment of student learning in the objectives will be carried out

using modified versions of the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics. The Center for the Teaching and Assessment of Learning (CTAL), continues to work with the Faculty Senate Committee on General Education in developing these rubrics. Departments should work with CTAL to define an appropriate set of rubrics for assessing the overall effectiveness of their Engagement and Exploration Plans.

References

[1] “Disrupting Ourselves: The Problem of Learning in Higher Education,” R. Bass, *Educause Review*, March/April 2012, pp. 23 – 33.

[2] “High-Impact Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter” G. Kuh, AAC&U, 2008

Appendix D – Diversity Learning

The material in this appendix was provided by the Center for the Study of Diversity. This appendix explains the notion of “diversity learning” and provides a rubric to assess diversity learning on a programmatic level. We re-emphasize that in recommending the removal of the current multicultural requirement, the task force is recommending the integration of the competencies described below across all new requirements and that these competencies be embedded fully within degree programs as part of the assessment plan for Objective #3. The material provided in this appendix, especially the assessment rubric, should form an integral part of each unit’s assessment plan for the extent to which their student’s achieve the objectives of general education.

Diversity LEARNING VALUE RUBRIC

Adapted by the Center for the Study of Diversity
(Based on the “Global Learning VALUE Rubric” developed by the AAC&U—
<https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/global-learning>)

Definition

Diversity learning is a critical analysis of and an engagement with complexities and challenges that arise when people with different experiences, backgrounds, goals and perspectives interact, and their implications for understanding and benefitting from the diversity that describes our institutions, organizations and societies. Through diversity learning, students should 1) become informed, open-minded, and responsible people who are attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences, 2) seek to understand how their actions affect the quality of interactions and relationships among diverse people, and 3) address the interpersonal and intergroup, institutional, national and global issues collaboratively and equitably.

Framing Language

Effective and transformative diversity learning offers students meaningful opportunities to analyze and explore complex social, interpersonal and intergroup challenges, collaborate respectfully with diverse others, apply learning to take responsible action in contemporary diversity contexts, and evaluate the goals, methods, and consequences of that action. Diversity learning should enhance students’ sense of identity, community, ethics, and perspective taking. Diversity learning is based on the principle that the world is a collection of interdependent yet inequitable systems, societies and social groups and cultures, and that higher education has a vital role in expanding knowledge of these systems and their dynamic interactions including privilege and stratification, personal and collective identity, and to foster individuals’ ability to understand and interact with people who are different. Diversity learning cannot be achieved in a single course or a single experience but is acquired cumulatively across students’ entire college career through an institution’s curricular and co-curricular programming. *As this rubric is designed to assess diversity learning on a programmatic level across time, the benchmarks (levels 1-4) may not be directly applicable to a singular experience, course, or assignment. Depending on the context, there may be development within one level rather than growth from level to level.*

Glossary

Diversity Self-Awareness: an understanding of the interrelationships among the self and others who belong to diverse social groups

Perspective Taking: the ability to engage and learn from perspectives and experiences different from your own

Cultural Intelligence and Communication: the ability to recognize the influences of one’s own cultural heritage, to learn about the cultural diversity of other people, and to communicate across cultural differences.

Personal and Social Responsibility: the ability to recognize one’s responsibilities to society, and to develop a perspective on ethical and power relations between and among various social status groups within society, organizations and institutions.

Understanding Global Systems: the ability to understand the historic and contemporary roles of human organizations, how they influence how life is lived worldwide, and the options available to people in different strata and societies.

Knowledge Application: An ability to apply knowledge and skills gained through higher education to real-life problem-solving both alone and with others.

	Capstone 4	Milestones 3 2		Benchmark 1
Diversity Self-Awareness	Effectively addresses significant human differences based on articulating one’s identity and relationships within diverse environments.	Evaluates the impact of one’s own and others’ specific relations and positions within various diverse environments.	Analyzes ways that different self-identifications enable relationships and positions within various diverse environments.	Identifies some connections between an individual’s personal decision-making and his/her positioning within various diverse environments.
Perspective Taking	Evaluates and applies a range of perspectives to complex subjects within natural and human systems in the face of multiple and even conflicting positions (e.g., cultural, disciplinary, ethical).	Synthesizes other perspectives (e.g., cultural, disciplinary, ethical) when investigating subjects within natural and human systems.	Identifies and explains multiple perspectives (e.g., cultural, disciplinary, ethical) when exploring subjects within natural and human systems.	Identifies multiple perspectives while maintaining a value preference for own positioning (e.g., cultural, disciplinary, ethical).
Cultural Intelligence and Communication	Adapts and applies a deep understanding of multiple worldviews, experiences, and power structures while initiating meaningful	Analyzes substantial connections between worldviews, power structures, and experiences of multiple	Explains and connects two or more groups historically or in contemporary contexts with some acknowledgement of power	Describes the experiences of others historically or in contemporary contexts primarily through one perspective, demonstrating some openness to varied

	interactions with various groups to address significant issues.	groups historically or in contemporary contexts, incorporating respectful interactions with various groups.	structures, demonstrating respectful interaction with various groups and worldviews.	groups and backgrounds/worldviews.
Personal and Social Responsibility	Takes informed and responsible action to address significant ethical, social and environmental challenges in institutions and communities and evaluates the local and broader consequences of individual and collective interventions.	Analyzes the ethical, social, and environmental consequences facing institutions and communities and identifies a range of actions informed by one’s sense of personal and civic responsibility.	Explains the ethical, social, and environmental consequences of local and national decisions for various institutions and communities.	Identifies basic ethical dimensions of some local or national decisions that have consequences for institutions and/or communities.
Understanding Global Systems	Uses deep knowledge of the historic and contemporary role and differential effects of human organizations and actions on various communities, groups, and institutions in order to develop and advocate for informed, appropriate action to solve complex problems.	Analyzes major elements of human organizations and actions historically and in the contemporary world to pose elementary solutions to complex problems.	Examines the historical and contemporary roles, interconnections, and differential effects of human organizations and actions.	Identifies the basic role of some global and local institutions, ideas, and processes involving human organizations and actions.
Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Situations	Applies knowledge and skills to implement	Plans and evaluates more complex solutions to	Formulates practical yet elementary solutions to	Defines diversity-related issues in basic ways, including a limited

	sophisticated, appropriate, and workable solutions to address diversity-related issues using interdisciplinary perspectives independently or with others.	diversity-related issues that are appropriate to their contexts using multiple disciplinary perspectives (e.g., cultural, historical, scientific).	diversity-related issues that use at least two disciplinary perspectives (e.g., cultural, historical, and scientific).	number of perspectives and solutions.
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Appendix E – Frequently Asked Questions

During the discussion of this plan with constituents from across the university many questions, concerns, and suggestions have been raised. In many cases, these have been addressed by modification of this document. However, there are important questions for which a detailed answer is warranted, but not easily included above. In this appendix, we collect and answer the most frequently asked of these questions. These are categorized for clarity.

Advising and the EE Requirement

How will this change the role of faculty in terms of advising?

The EE requirement does require faculty to have a different discussion with students than does the University Breadth Requirement. This is an intentional response to the oft-heard complaint concerning a “check the box” or “get your gen eds out of the way” mentality among both students and advisors. The EE requirement is intended to encourage the type of thoughtful discussion between students and advisors that leads to increased student agency, self-direction, and responsibility for learning.

But what about departments with large numbers of majors?

The challenge of individually advising a cohort of several hundred majors is daunting and for some departments, insurmountable. This is why the responsibility for how EE plans are designed and how advising occurs is left with each department. We imagine, that in departments with large numbers of majors, a limited menu of EE plans might be designed and students directed to choose from among this menu. However, we hope that a selection of such plans will still be a step toward a more intentional, thoughtful selection of courses for students.

Can current breadth courses become EE courses?

Certainly, but not automatically. The “EE list” will differ in one important aspect from the “Breadth list.” In particular, the EE list will not simply list courses, it will include information that explains which general education objectives the given course develops and to what extent. We hope this list will be a valuable tool for faculty and departments as they help students develop their plans.

How will EE courses be assessed? Won't this list drift over time?

In order for this list to remain useful, it is important that faculty are confident that given courses do indeed strengthen student skills in given general education objectives. In order for courses to be certified as EE courses, departments will be required to agree to add a selection of questions to student course evaluations. These questions will be aimed at gauging the extent to which students see the relevance of the course for their progress toward mastery of general education objectives. This data will be shared with the Faculty Senate General Education Committee and will allow the Faculty Senate to maintain oversight over these courses.

Why is this requirement better than what we do now?

The “a la carte menu” approach to general education is widely recognized as ineffective in promoting student learning and as leading to the “check the box” mentality mentioned above. As stated by the AAC&U in their recent document *General Education, Maps & Markers*, “Instead of developing big-picture understanding of the wider world through a purposeful immersion in the liberal arts and sciences, students too often find that their broad or general learning is fragmented, incoherent, and frustrating... This is hardly an invitation to powerful learning.” We hope that by encouraging faculty and

departments to work more closely with students in the development of an EE plan, that we will be able to more effectively leverage the time spent in courses outside of the major for powerful learning.

What happens if a student changes majors?

All students are guaranteed that the first six course credits of any EE plan are fully transferrable to a new major except in the case when those courses are requirements of the new major. They are also guaranteed that any MC courses are fully transferrable. In those cases, students will develop a new EE plan within their new department. In cases where the courses are transferred, departments will work with students to develop the second part of their EE plan. It is important to remember that EE plans are also a tool for departments to use in helping their students achieve competency in all objectives of general education. We believe this balance between transferability and input from the new major will allow department to effectively use this tool while preserving the prior work of students as credits toward a degree.

Why is the out-of-classroom experience optional? Shouldn't it be required for all students?

Ideally, all students would have an out-of-classroom experience. However, there are many degree programs that are tightly constrained and where this would be an unreasonable additional burden. In deference to those programs, the requirement is constructed to provide flexibility. We do hope that departments with flexibility will work to take advantage of this new opportunity to impact student learning.

The CORE

Who will teach the core?

A core set of courses required for every student in the university should be taught by our best faculty, with input from all faculty, and a place for continual innovation and improvement. The plan is structured so that the Faculty Senate General Education Committee oversees the selection of faculty who will teach in the core. We envision these faculty being released from other duties and having an “in-house sabbatical” of one to two years so that they may devote their time and attention to these courses. We suggest that this be a privileged position and these faculty be designated as “University of Delaware Core Fellows” during their term of service. We envision that such administered workloads will be between 50 to 100% of the faculty member’s effort and be typically for two to three years in duration.

But, don't we need many faculty to teach the core?

We estimate that to staff CORE 120 and CORE 220 will require the efforts of approximately 30 faculty teaching two courses per semester each semester during their time as Core Fellows. While this seems like a large number, remember that the University of Delaware currently employs more than 1200 full time faculty members. If every faculty member on campus spent only a single year teaching in the core, we would need more than 40 years to rotate through our entire faculty.

What other budget implications are there?

The creation and staffing of CORE 120 and CORE 220 will have budget implications. We envision responsibility and resources for these courses residing with the Provost’s Office. At the department level, when faculty are selected as a Core Fellow, the department would receive full compensation for that faculty member’s time. Selection as a Core Fellow would require the support of the Department Chair of the faculty member’s department.

Will each section of each core course be different?

Not terribly. The intention is for CORE 120 and CORE 220 to be team-designed and team-taught. These courses are by their nature interdisciplinary and integrative. This requires a team-based collaborative approach to both design and teaching in turn leading to a common intellectual experience across all sections of a given core course. Leveraging technology to scale-up aspects of the course that are common across all sections will be encouraged. Cohorts of Core Fellows will be structured so as to include faculty from across the University, ensuring that intellectually diverse perspectives are seen by all students.