

## Charge for a revision to the General Education Program

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The President and Provost of the Wayne State University ask that the General Education Reform Committee complete a review of the University's current General Education program, formulate recommendations for any needed change, and present to the Provost a proposal for a new general education curriculum. Ideally, appropriate approvals, along with any needed program and course development, will be completed in time for the new curriculum to be launched in Fall 2016.

Since the early days of Wayne State University, the university has pursued a mission that can be summarized in two words: *opportunity* and *excellence*. We realize this mission within a context of community engagement, recognizing our urban location, and committed to the creation of knowledge as a research-intensive university.

The work of the review committee, along with the general education curriculum that it formulates, should foster and advance the mission and goals of the University. The new curriculum should also reflect best practices and contemporary thought about how to achieve our mission and goals in the twenty-first century. In addition, the curriculum should

- reflect the changing demographics of the U.S., the region, and international populations aspiring to college degrees;
- support increased bachelors degree attainment;
- reflect the need to accommodate transfer of students from other institutions;
- support the majors in providing students ready to meet both the civic and workforce demands of a rapidly changing and diverse society;
- enable and support participation in undergraduate research opportunities, internships, learning communities and/or other high impact learning experiences;
- accommodate an honors curriculum, while promoting excellence for all;
- support assessment and the accreditation process.
- and be feasible within current and anticipated University resources.

To achieve this goal, the President and the Provost request that the committee proceed with a planning process with formal stages as follows:

1. Start the review
2. Agree on major parameters
3. Determine learning goals and outcomes
4. Design curricular structure

The Provost's office will provide the committee with administrative support, access to data, support for travel, and other resources as appropriate to facilitate the success of this important endeavor. Details of the requested timeline, outcomes, document artifacts, campus engagement process are provided in a companion document.

## Phase 1: Start the review

The President and the Provost request that the committee (with the assistance of the Provost's office) review and refine the steps outlined in the initial committee charge; document the committee selection process; and publish the time frame and planned intermediate outcomes. Further, the committee is asked to acquire and examine data, information, and perspectives that will inform the future planning and information process. This should include but need not be limited to:

- Student outcomes, including retention and graduation rates.
- Gen Ed assessment data.
- NSSE data.
- CIRP data.
- Exploration of general education approaches at Michigan Public Universities, peer and aspirational institutions.
- Awareness of national and state trends in General Education, especially the Association of American Colleges and University's LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) initiative.
- Other trends and initiatives in the higher education landscape, such as the changes to accreditation, the Degree Qualifications Profile, and degree attainment initiatives.

The Committee members will be asked to attend the AACU General Education and Assessment Disruptions, Innovations, and Opportunities Conference February 28-March 1, 2014.

The committee is requested to conduct events to gain multiple perspectives from the campus community and to build awareness about the review, and to provide transparency by holding town hall meetings, focus groups, faculty surveys and similar interactions. They are requested to document and hold a series of consulting meetings with important groups, including (but not limited to) the Academic Senate Curriculum and Instruction Committee, the Academic Senate Student Affairs Committee, the Academic Senate Policy Committee, the General Education Oversight Committee, the Council of Deans, and the Student Senate.

Ideally, the work of the committee during this phase of planning would result in the creation of the following documents:

- A description of the history of General Education at Wayne State University.
- A description of the planning process.
- Data gathered as evidence to inform the planning process.
- Documentation of the consultation and stakeholder meeting process conducted.
- A summary of the perspectives raised in that process.

## Phase 2: Agree on major parameters

The President and the Provost request that the committee articulate the major parameters that will inform the remainder of the General Education planning process. To accomplish this, the committee is requested to reflect on the data, information, and perspectives raised during phase 1 and engage in the following activities:

- A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis of the factors facing the institution that should inform the general education process.
- An elucidation of the purpose of General Education Program at Wayne State University. Such an elucidation should articulate and clarify the relationship between the General Education Programs and the programs and majors. For example, is the program foundational to the majors, is it intended to integrate into the majors, to complement them, a combination of these, or something else?
- An articulation of the kinds of learning that we want General Education to further (e.g. essential intellectual and practical skills, a knowledge of many disciplines and modes of inquiry, integration across the disciplines, experiential learning).
- An articulation of the kinds of distinctiveness we hope to achieve with our General Education Program. What aspects of our mission, culture, history, and values should be reflected in the General Education Program? How does the nature of our student body inform our General Education Program? How might it be distinctive – a signature of what it means to be a Wayne State student? In what ways do we hope and expect it will be distinctive for students?
- What principles and values should inform the remainder of our planning?

Ideally, the work of the committee during this phase of planning will result in the creation of a document detailing the work of the committee and describing the items above.

### Phase 3: Determine learning goals & outcomes

In this phase of planning the committee is requested to build on previous phases to articulate the set of learning goals and outcomes that we expect our General Education program to achieve.

The committee is requested to engage with the following questions:

- What are the learning goals and outcomes of General Education?
- How well do they align with the national consensus about the aims of college student?
- How do they support the principles and values articulated in Phase 2?
- How do they relate to our mission? How are they central to the mission and to the student experience? How do they reflect our distinctive culture, history, and student body?
- How do they describe the complex content knowledge, intellectual and practical skills, and dispositions that students will need for the complexities of the twenty-first century?
- Have we made certain to include important outcomes even if we don't yet know how we will implement or measure them?
- What are the aspects of personal and social responsibility necessary to the reflective and engaged citizens that we want General Education to develop? Are those aspects reflected in the goals and learning outcomes?
- In what ways do the goals acknowledge, over time and across courses, the developmental changes students undergo? Have we developed clear expectations for novice, intermediate and advanced levels of performance? How do they relate to the beginning, middle and end of student's college careers.

Ideally, the committee would report the outcomes of their engagement with these questions in a document which articulated the proposed program goals and learning outcomes for General Education, together with a discussion which addresses, as much as possible, the questions above.

## Phase 4: Design curricular structure

In this phase, the committee is requested to design and describe the curricular structure and requirements proposed to achieve the learning goals and outcomes articulated in phase 3. The curricular structure should articulate one or more “purposeful pathways” to achieve the learning goals and reflect the parameters described in phase 2.

In addition to a curricular structure, the committee is requested to document the following items:

1. What are the intentional elements? For example, the philosophy discussed in phase 2, the SWOT analysis performed, the values articulated, and so on, might translate into program requirements. For example, these requirements might include requirements for elements that support the transition into college, pathways for transfer students, requirements for high impact educational experiences, requirements for introductory courses, etc.

The committee is requested to consider how these intentional elements and the overall program structure manifest our mission and our distinctiveness, to discuss how the design advances the learning goals and outcomes. Finally, ideally, the committee would define mechanisms (such as course-specific learning outcomes) that could be used by the General Education Oversight Committee and the administration to assure that individual courses and other structural elements relate to the purposes and the learning goals.

2. A discussion of the coherence of the program. (For example, are there learning outcomes that “bookend” the undergraduate degree, achieved first in a student experience and at a higher level of accomplishment in a capstone or other integrative experience? Are there shared experiences for all of our students that can be easily understood by our students, our faculty, and other stakeholders?)
3. A discussion of the relationship between the proposed general education curricular structure and our current general education program.

In particular, the committee is requested to perform a gap analysis between the learning goals and outcomes described in phase 3 and our current program and to identify any courses or other curricular elements that would be preserved, modified, or built upon to develop the proposed general education program.

4. A consideration of other curricular and co-curricular elements that might be leveraged to enhance the effectiveness or to ease the implementation of the proposed general education program. These items might include learning communities, undergraduate research, service learning, residence life, the advising initiative, student organizations, leadership development programs, orientation programs, and community engagement initiatives.
5. A discussion of how the proposed general education program relates to the majors. In particular, it is hoped that the learning goals advanced by the proposed general education program will align with and support many of the learning goals and outcomes required for accreditation in professional programs as well as those articulated for non-accredited programs. It is also hoped

that unnecessary duplication of coursework between the general education program and the program and major requirements could be avoided. How does the general education program support the *transfer* of skills, methods of inquiry, and habits of mind into the majors and professional programs? The committee is requested to provide examples of clear pathways through general education, college requirements, the major, and any co-curricular requirements that lead to timely graduation as well as the development of advanced knowledge, skills and dispositions for a sample set of programs or majors. This sample should include at least one major from each school or college that enrolls undergraduate students.

(Example structures provided in the charge to the committee for this phase are meant to be illustrative and are not intended to be prescriptive.)