



University Council

March 15, 2019

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE – 2018-2019

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Undergraduate Student Representative – Ali Elyaman

Graduate Student Representative – Chasity Tompkins

Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal from the General Education Subcommittee for a revision to the General Education Curriculum will be a discussion item for the March 22, 2019, Full University Curriculum Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

John Maerz, Chair

University Curriculum Committee

cc: Interim Provost Libby V. Morris
Dr. Rahul Shrivastav

Undergraduate Education at the University of Georgia

Undergraduate education at the University of Georgia focuses on two overlapping spheres: General Education, the Major, with several opportunities to expand beyond those areas.

General Education represents the broadest part of the educational experience, giving students a strong foundation that enables them to meaningfully engage with each other and the communities they will join and shape after graduation.

Fully half of the courses students complete to earn an undergraduate degree rest in the **Major**, where students deeply immerse themselves into an intellectual area of their choice. Within the major, a Capstone serves as an opportunity for students to integrate their educational experiences.

Students in many programs are also allowed to explore intellectual interests that lie outside the boundaries of their major through **General Electives**. The **First-Year Odyssey Seminar** introduces students to the academic life of the University and **Experiential Learning** enables students to connect their academic work to the world beyond the classroom.

I. GENERAL EDUCATION

The 2017 Task Force on Student Learning and Success made a number of recommendations to “evolve” student learning. Three specific recommendations were made in the area of general education. As a result of the Task Force report, the University appointed 2 special committees to find ways to “increase writing skills in the curriculum” and to “make data literacy a core part of undergraduate education.” The Task Force also recommended that the organization of the general education curriculum be updated.

The Task Force agreed that “relevance and intentionality were foundational to a robust general education curriculum.” The Task Force “believed that steps to highlight the relevancy of general education coursework would be beneficial to students’ long-term success.” Specifically, the Task Force wanted students to move away from a “check box” model of General Education to something that allowed students to be more purposeful and intentional in selecting general education courses.

The changes being proposed by the General Education Subcommittee of the University Curriculum Committee are meant to establish such a framework. We now define General Education at the University of Georgia as both a choice of courses from a core set of important domains of knowledge and the acquisition of a broad set of fundamental skills that are timeless and therefore applicable to an ever-changing world.

A. "BUILD A FOUNDATION"

A durable education that extends beyond the college years requires gathering essential skills. At the University of Georgia these skills are:

1. *"Thinking Critically about Complex Problems"*
2. *"Effectively Communicating Ideas"*
3. *"Interpreting Data"*
4. *"Reasoning using Mathematics"*

These skills can and should be acquired through the entire undergraduate curriculum. Critical thinking skills are at the very heart of every course taught at the University of Georgia. The new Communication Literacy Requirement details degree requirements and learning outcomes that establish proficiency in written and other forms of communication, as does the new Data Literacy Requirement. All students are required to take 2 courses (6 credits minimum) in mathematics and quantitative reasoning. The learning outcomes for these mathematics and quantitative reasoning courses are:

- i. Express and manipulate quantitative information, concepts, and thoughts in verbal, numeric, graphical, computational, and symbolic form to frame and devise a solution to a problem.
- ii. Evaluate conclusions drawn from or decisions based on quantitative data.

B. THE CORNERSTONE CURRICULUM

The General Education Cornerstone Curriculum is the framework of a comprehensive, liberal arts education at the University of Georgia. The Cornerstone Curriculum exposes students to a broad set of important intellectual ideas.

1. "Explore the World"

Students must understand the central facts and concepts of the life and physical sciences. Students will be required to complete three courses (3 credit minimum, 9-12 credits total), with at least one in Life Sciences and one in the Physical Sciences. At least one of these courses must include a laboratory.

- i. Explore the Science of Living Things (1-2 courses, 3-8 credits)**
- ii. Explore the Science of the Physical Universe (1-2 courses, 3-8 credits)**

The learning outcomes for courses in these 2 areas are:

- a. Demonstrate an understanding of basic knowledge, principles, and laws in the natural sciences.

- b. Explain how knowledge is constructed in the sciences using the scientific method.
- c. Evaluate reliable sources of scientific evidence in order to construct arguments, to apply scientific knowledge and to assess critically real-world issues.
- d. Within a laboratory course, demonstrate proficiency in experimental science by making observations, understanding the fundamental elements of experiment design, generating and analyzing data using appropriate quantitative tools, using abstract reasoning to interpret data and relevant formulae, and testing hypotheses with scientific rigor.

Being an engaged member of local and global communities also requires students to learn about the human experience. Students must complete two courses (3 credit minimum) in the Arts and Humanities, which provide a vital window into core aspects of the human experience.

iii. Explore the Human Experience (2 courses, 6 credits)

The learning outcomes for courses in this area are:

- a. Describe, interpret, and critique literary, artistic and other works within the humanities and their contexts.
- b. Analyze the impact and role of artistic and literary production and achievement on our understanding of the human condition.

2. “Explore Human Connections”

Many of the endeavors that students will be involved in after graduation involve collaboration and teamwork. Courses in this area ensure that students gain an understanding of the complex and dynamic nature of the social systems that characterize our diverse and interconnected world. Students are required to take 2 courses (3 credit minimum) in Anthropology, Economics, Geography, History, Political Science, Psychology, Religion, or Sociology, one course (3 credit minimum) in Ethical Reasoning, one course (3 credit minimum) in Environmental Awareness, one course (3 credit minimum) in Multicultural Diversity within the United States and 2 courses (3 credit minimum) related to Societies outside of the United States.

i. Explore Social Connections (2 courses, 6 credits)

The learning outcomes for courses in this area are:

- a. Identify and explain the fundamental concepts of social policy at either the local, national, or global scale.

- b. Interpret interconnections among and differences between social institutions, groups, or individuals.

ii. Explore the Reasoning Behind Ethical Decisions (1 course, 3 credits)

The learning outcome for courses in this area is:

- a. Explain how ethical principles provide justification for standards of conduct.

iii. Explore the Connection between Humans and the Environment (1 course, 3 credits)

The learning outcomes for courses in this area are:

- a. Evaluate the interactions between human activity and the environment at local, regional, or global scales.
- b. Explain the ethical, cultural, economic, or political forces that affect environmental problems and policies.

iv. Explore Multicultural Diversity within the United States (1 course, 3 credits)

The learning outcome for courses in this area is:

- a. Demonstrate an understanding of elements important to members of a contemporary cultural group within the United States, particularly in relation to its values, beliefs or practices.

v. Explore Societies Outside the United States (2 courses, 6-8 credits)

The learning outcome for courses in this area is:

- a. Demonstrate an understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of a contemporary society and people(s) outside of the U.S. particularly in relation to its values, beliefs or practices.

C. "EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS"

A critical part of undergraduate education allows students to explore new areas of interest and those that complement their major. The University of Georgia provides three avenues for students to expand their intellectual horizons. The **First-Year Odyssey** Seminar introduces first year students to the academic life of University through small classes taught by tenure-track faculty. **Experiential Learning** enables students to connect their academic foundations to the world beyond the classroom, through opportunities such as creative endeavors, study abroad and field schools, internship and leadership opportunities, faculty-mentored research, and

service-learning. **General Electives** allow students to move outside the major to explore new academic avenues.

D. "DIVE DEEPLY"

The Major represents the opportunity for students to deeply immerse themselves into an intellectual area of their choice. Each major should provide a **Capstone** experience that enables students to culminate and integrate the entire educational experience.