

## **General Education Reform**

### **General Education Steering Committee's Framework Summary**

#### ***Why?***

- The current program has not been meaningfully assessed, nor does it lend itself to meaningful assessment. The latter is why overlaying an assessment component onto the current program is not a solution.
  - The Steering Committee considered the assessment issue at length and decided that it would move forward in guiding the development of a new general education program, and leave it to others to assess the current program. Since then, a few documents related to the assessment of the current program have been generated and made available to the Advisory Council.
- The current program (beyond the core) consists of a diverse menu of course choices distributed over various academic disciplines. It lacks cohesiveness, fails to articulate a clear vision of the attributes and abilities of a successful student, and lacks a framework for providing defensible evidence of teaching and learning accomplishments. Many courses serve multiple functions: general education, majors, minors, and service to other programs of study. Many of these courses would function better as they were originally designed (i.e., not as a general education course).
- Reform provides the opportunity to focus on outcomes-based student learning and to create outcomes that are not only measurable, but are educationally important and relevant to today's world and the changing needs of our student body. It enables us to create an effective culture of assessment, both formative and summative, that promotes continuous improvement. A new program composed of courses taken primarily for general education credit would not only ensure philosophical cohesion, it would better serve the educational needs of a student body that includes more non-traditional and under prepared learners.
- Reform provides an opportunity to more effectively align a general education program with academic programs of study. Although work intensive, this is the advantage of conducting a curriculum audit along with general education reform. This process will (and should) be transformational.
- It is essential that we create a general education program that can and does evolve with the changing needs of our student body, that responds in positive ways to social, political, economic, and technological change, and that positions our students to be competitive in a continuously changing job market. Holding ourselves to that standard requires that course and program assessments be carefully designed and integrated and that we use assessments to promote and ensure academic excellence throughout.

#### ***How?***

- The General Education Steering Committee has considered general education reform since February 2007, becoming immersed in and discussing the issues, and producing two documents that help frame and guide the process:
  - [Pathway to Success for the 21st Century: Redesigning General Education](#)
  - [FGEAC Descriptions, Expectations and Responsibilities](#)
- The GESC has established a time line for the reform effort.
- The GESC has built a [General Education Reform](#) website to provide a resource for the reform effort and a venue to help insure transparency and openness of the process.

- The Faculty Senate has authorized the formation of the Faculty General Education Advisory Committee which is charged with the task of moving the reform process forward by developing a new general education program defined by measurable learning outcomes and consistent with external general education mandates (SACS, CPE, etc), identifying and recommending appropriate assessment strategies, overseeing the development of criteria for new general education courses, and developing and recommending a committee structure to review and approve new general education course proposals.
- The FGEAC is strongly encouraged to reach out and include other members of the campus community by way of membership on FGEAC committees focused on various components of the reform process and participation in campus forums.
  - For example, there are people on campus who have experience and knowledge in developing curricula and appropriate assessments. Reaching out to these folks can enhance the conversation and facilitate the sharing of ideas.
- The role of the GESC is to provide direction, guidance, assistance, and support to the FGEAC.
- To date the FGEAC has developed a draft list of [Learner Outcomes](#), is exploring what other institutions are doing in general education reform, identifying best practices in assessment, gathering information from focus groups and forums, and preparing for participation in an [AAC&U General Education Conference](#) in Boston (21 -24 February 2008).
- The most immediate milestone for the FGEAC is to have a proposed general education framework ready for a campus-wide faculty consideration and vote by the end of April 2008. This framework should include proposed assessment strategies.

### ***Centralized General Education Unit***

- The GESC strongly recommends a central unit that would more effectively coordinate course offerings in the general education program; will implement effective assessment strategies; collect, organize, and analyze assessment data; use that data to make necessary adjustments to the program; and provide assessment data for various accreditation and accountability reports.
- Establishing centralized leadership and accountability will assure a focus on general education as a critical part of the overall educational experience of the undergraduate student. Redefining that experience within the context of a traditional liberal education focused intentionally and specifically on developing the best qualities and outcomes in our graduates should engage the institution's best teachers. Teaching in the general education program should be considered an honor, and ought to attract some of our best faculty.
- MSU is considering several options as it moves toward developing and adopting differentiated faculty workloads. In this context, faculty would be able to select general education courses as part of a teaching component in a palette that also includes some mix of advising, research, service, etc.
- The curriculum audit process will help inform how Academic Affairs will be re-structured so that its resources and reporting channels are streamlined, and that all academic programs, including general education, are more effectively aligned with MSU's Mission. In fact, the institution is in the midst of an overall re-alignment as

evidenced by the development of a business plan, curriculum audit, and general education reform.

### *Interdisciplinary Courses*

- When the current general education program was conceived and implemented in the mid-1990s, it included a required paired course component as a way to bridge writing with specific content areas. Although a good concept, the scheduling logistics became untenable, and the requirement was abandoned after a few years.
- Reform provides an opportunity to develop interdisciplinary courses that address some set of general education learner outcomes as a way for students to understand the interconnectedness of the human experience. This does not mean that all general education courses will necessarily be interdisciplinary, nor does it mean that interdisciplinary courses inherently lack rigor. The level of quality and rigor are a function of the individual faculty that delivers the course. We expect that there will be content-specific courses developed, submitted and approved for inclusion in the general education program. The program, then, would include a mix of both types of courses.

### *Working Strategies*

- Morehead State University will require 120 credit hours to graduation.
- General Education will consist of 33 credit hours with a minimum of 15 hours of core courses and a capstone course for a total of 36 credit hours.
- A centralized management and assessment of General Education will facilitate oversight and continuous improvement.