

# **Possible Approaches to General Education on the University of Minnesota Morris Campus**

Report of the General Education Subcommittee

Submitted July 1, 2011  
to the UMM Curriculum Committee

# Introduction

## ***Background***

Stephen Trainor (2004), former dean of undergraduate studies at Salve Regina University, wrote that general education programs should capture “the distinctive mission and essence of an institution.” With a revised mission statement as well as defined learning outcomes, UMM can and should review and re-examine its general education program to capture its mission and essence as an institution. If we do so effectively, carefully, thoughtfully, and persuasively, the benefits to student retention and academic success can be impressive (Gaston, 2010).

With the adoption of the UMM Student Learning Outcomes in March 2010, we now have defined a set of outcomes that each of our graduates should attain by graduation. In light of these new learning outcomes, we are challenged to make clear the role and function of the various aspects of a student’s education at UMM including their general education program, major degree programs, and co- and extra-curricular activities, especially for the purposes of assessment.

Each catalog cycle, major degree programs are reviewed and revised by discipline faculty and the campus community. Ongoing work through our governance process and professional staff enhance our co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. The role and function of general education on the Morris campus, however, has not been addressed since 1989 (other than the translation of courses during semester conversion). In the fall of 2010, the Curriculum Committee discussed the process for this review and re-examination of UMM’s general education program and determined that a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee should be formed to do background research and data collection as a first step in the review and re-examination process.

The charge of the subcommittee was to examine alternative models for general education and prepare a white paper on these alternative approaches and how they would fit at Morris. Membership on this subcommittee was drawn from faculty, staff, and students and included some members of the Curriculum Committee and others outside the committee. The work of this subcommittee provides background information for the Curriculum Committee discussion of general education and is intended to inform proposals brought forward to the campus as we as a community continue these discussions.

The subcommittee began by reviewing alternative current models for general education in the U.S, with a focus on institutions with similar missions or similar distinctive qualities. We hope that the work of this subcommittee can help clarify the key factors of our mission, our culture, our history, and our vision that will influence the approach we take to general education. Membership of the subcommittee came from recommendations of the Consultative Committee and MCSA, and from a general call to campus for volunteers. Members of the General Education Subcommittee included:

Cheryl Contant, VCAA&D and Curriculum Committee Chair  
Tisha Turk, English  
David Roberts, Mathematics  
Tammy Berberi, French  
Paula O’Loughlin, Political Science  
Carol Cook, Education  
David Swenson, Student Activities

Hilda Ladner, Equity, Diversity, and Intercultural Programs  
Heather James, Library  
Zachary Van Cleve, Student  
Luciana Ranelli, Student

The subcommittee met six times throughout the spring semester of 2011. What is contained in this report is a summary of the research and discussions we had as a group and in smaller subgroups.

As our first set of tasks, we developed a list of distinctive qualities of UMM and a set of purposes for general education, based on our discussions and research. Each list is presented below.

### ***Distinctive Qualities of UMM***

In an attempt to capture what is distinctive about our campus and the members of the UMM community, we brainstormed a list of approximately 30 attributes that members of the subcommittee thought describe our campus. Each member of the subcommittee was asked to choose the most important five attributes from the list. From that effort, the following seven distinctive qualities of the UMM campus emerged.

1. Our students are humble and curious.
2. Our students are civically engaged and interested in developing leadership potential.
3. Our faculty and staff believe in individualized and personalized attention to our students (“we know our students”).
4. Our mission as a “public liberal arts college” emphasizes access for students of all economic means to a high quality liberal arts education at substantially less cost.
5. Students are actively engaged in co-curricular activities, group, clubs, organizations that complement their in-class learning activities.
6. Our campus has a unique history and mission.
7. Our location is important – we are a small campus in a small community in a rural setting on the prairie.

Most of these qualities are not unique to UMM – often they are represented on campuses with similar educational approaches. Others are, in fact, particular to our campus, our mission, and our community (faculty, staff, and students). However, taken together, they provide a very interesting picture of our community, our campus, and our educational approach.

### ***Purposes of General Education***

As part of discussions and our research, we felt we needed to clarify the purposes of general education. The subcommittee defined four general purposes of general education at a liberal arts college.

1. To expose students to different ways of thinking and systems of thought across multiple fields of inquiry, and to learn to make connections and distinctions between those ways of thinking;
2. To offer a curriculum with generally accepted principles of learning that are shared by all students, that links to the public mission of the institution and that develops various levels of depth both within and outside a major;

3. To foster an ethic of what to think about (not just how to think) within a climate that fosters intellectual versatility; and
4. To develop personal, intellectual, and practical skills, such as interpersonal communication, writing, quantitative reasoning, intercultural competence, and communication across disciplines and in various modes.

### ***Approaches to General Education***

Next, we identified from the literature broad categories and approaches to general education -- we referred to these as “typologies.” We describe those in the second section of this report.

Finally, we investigated over 30 different schools’ general education programs – we learned about these programs from the literature, from website searches, from our own experiences, and from attendance at conferences and events. From that list, we narrowed our focus to provide a brief summary of the general education programs of six schools. We chose these six schools because they collectively capture the seven distinctive qualities of UMM that emerged from our discussion (see above). Some of these schools have complete general education programs that are intentionally unique from other approaches. Others have notable elements of their programs that members of the subcommittee felt were useful for the report. In all instances, these case studies are designed to stimulate ideas and campus-wide thinking about what a renewed approach to general education might look like at UMM.

The appendix of this report is a summary of the general education approaches across the Morris 14 comparison schools and the 25 Council on Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) schools. These summaries provide additional background information for consideration in the campus conversation about general education.

## **Typologies of General Education**

The subcommittee discussed, in varying degrees of detail, three approaches to General Education requirements: an open curriculum, a core curriculum, and distribution requirements. All three approaches are described in this section; all attempt, in different ways, to balance the depth required for a major with the breadth that is widely considered necessary to produce critical thinkers and well-rounded citizens. UMM currently uses a system of distribution requirements, which is by far the most common of the three models. A fuller understanding of all the forms the distribution model takes as well as alternatives will be helpful for the college as we go forward reviewing our general education program.

### ***Open curriculum***

#### **Description**

An open curriculum requires completion of a major and a specified number of credits, but no specific courses or program of courses aside from, perhaps, a first-year seminar or writing-intensive course (see the examples below). At schools using this model, students develop their

own programs of study outside the major in conjunction with their academic advisors. “Such a model does not necessarily imply that the institution does not value general education but may indeed indicate that the general education differs so much by individual student that only by crafting the entire educational program of study for the student can you truly develop breadth and depth in student learning most fully” (Bourke et al. 2009, 227-28).

An open curriculum allows maximum flexibility for students, but offers them the least guidance in choosing courses. It relies heavily on strong advising relationships between students and faculty; perhaps less obviously, it privileges those students who arrive at college with a strong understanding of multiple academic disciplines, the relationships and differences among those disciplines, and the value of broad as well as deep learning.

## **Principles**

“An open curriculum is based on the assumption that students learn best what they choose to study and that students should be regarded as active learners rather than passive recipients of information. A related value of the open curriculum is the belief that students will be best prepared for the opportunities and uncertainties of the future by developing confidence in their ability to explore and respond to difficult issues without a pre-given road map” (Teagle Foundation, 2006, as cited in Bourke et al., 2009, 229).

## **Examples**

As described in Bourke et al. (2009), the open curriculum system is used by only three of the twenty-five top-ranked liberal arts colleges (Amherst, Grinnell, Smith) and one of the twenty-six top-ranked national universities (Brown). It is worth noting that each of these four institutions does require one course of all students. Amherst requires a First-Year Seminar and Grinnell a first-year Tutorial. Smith requires completion of a writing-intensive course; Brown requires “competence in writing,” and students who fail to demonstrate such competence “are referred to an agent of the Dean of the College to develop a plan for bettering their writing,” which may “include placement in a designated writing course” (Brown University Office of the Registrar, n.d.).

## ***Core curriculum***

### **Description**

A core curriculum “mandates individual courses in which every student enrolls”; these courses “are general in scope and meet fundamental and broad-based objectives” (Bourke et al., 2009, 226). At schools using this model, all students on campus complete a series of shared courses, often moving through these classes together as a cohort. The Great Books curriculum is one well-known example of this model.

Because core curricula are typically organized around ideas, issues, problems, or “great texts” rather than individual academic fields, the specific courses required are often interdisciplinary in approach. Latzer (as cited in Bourke et al., 2009, 220) suggests that this interdisciplinarity has contributed to the decline of core curricula: at schools where faculty are expected to teach courses focused on narrow subfields rather than broad areas of general inquiry, the model becomes unsustainable. The shift away from the model can also be attributed to a growing “lack of consensus as to what constitutes the canon of Great Books” (Bourke et al., 2009, 221).

## **Principles**

The core curriculum system is based on the assumption that distribution alone is not enough. Specific courses are tailored to provide a coherent and comprehensive introduction to key concepts with which students are expected to engage. The system prioritizes shared experience, common learning across academic specializations, and the investigation and preservation of a canon of (usually Western) ideas and values; it “emphasizes the unique value of studying original texts and of formulating original problems based on the study of those texts” (University of Chicago, n.d.) and “seeks to convey to students an understanding of the fundamental problems that human beings have to face today and at all times” (St. John’s College, n.d.).

## **Examples**

Columbia University’s Columbia College requires nine specific courses: Literature (2), Contemporary Civilization (2), Frontiers of Science, University Writing, Art, Music, and Science. Four terms of a foreign language, two terms from a list of Global Core courses, two additional science courses, and two terms of physical education are also required.

The University of Chicago requires course sequences (2-3 courses, often interdisciplinary) rather than individual courses. Sequences are required in Humanities, Civilization Studies, and the Arts (6 quarters), Natural and Mathematical Sciences (6 quarters), and Social Sciences (3 quarters); students must also “demonstrate competence in a language other than English.” Students have some choice of sequences; for example, there are seven separate three-course Humanities sequences and an additional two-course sequence from which students may choose.

The Great Books curriculum at St. John’s College requires all students to read a shared list of full-length works by approximately one hundred authors, plus supplemental essays and other shorter works. The list includes works of literature, philosophy, rhetoric, theology, science and mathematics, music, and law. “The first year is devoted to Greek authors and their pioneering understanding of the liberal arts; the second year contains books from the Roman, medieval, and Renaissance periods; the third year has books of the 17th and 18th centuries, most of which were written in modern languages; the fourth year brings the reading into the 19th and 20th centuries” (St. John’s College, n.d.). These readings are discussed and tested in a series of seminars, laboratories, and tutorials.

## ***Distribution requirements***

### **Description**

Distribution requirements attempt to ensure that students are exposed to a broad range of ideas and issues outside their fields of specialization and at the same time to allow considerable flexibility in determining both the exact content and the timing of this exposure. Courses taken to fulfill these requirements are most often introductory (Bourke et al., 2009, 219) but vary widely in their attention to the needs and interests of non-specialists. Though distribution requirements were developed to increase the consistency of students’ experiences (Bourke et al., 2009, 222), it remains the case that, under this system, students receiving the same degree from the same institution may have taken entirely different courses.

At its best, the distribution requirement system allows students significant freedom to determine and pursue their own interests and thus to develop individualized general education programs that both complement their majors and enhance their understanding of a wide variety of topics. At its worst, the system results in a series of apparently arbitrary hoops through which students must jump: a fragmented, incoherent collection of courses undertaken as individual exercises and not synthesized into a broader understanding of intellectual issues, problems, or methods of inquiry.

## **Principles**

The distribution requirement system is based on the assumptions that “the breadth of courses offered across various disciplines is significantly formative in and of itself” (Bourke et al., 2009, 221) and that “students will somehow draw together the disparate elements of their educational experience” (Ferren 2010, 27). By allowing students the freedom to choose their own courses within fields, it “seeks to draw on the knowledge base of whole disciplines rather than the narrowly tailored foci of individual courses” (Bourke et al., 2009, 221).

## **Examples**

SUNY Geneseo offers students the opportunity to choose from multiple courses in nearly all of its focus areas. These areas include Natural Sciences (2 lab courses, 8 credits), Social Science (6 credits), Fine Arts (6 credits), for which courses from students’ major department may not be counted, and Non-Western Traditions, Numeric/Symbolic Reasoning, U.S. Histories (1 course each), for which students may count courses offered by their major departments. A Critical Writing/Reading course (3 credits) is required - students may choose from a variety of topics offered in this course - as well as a two semester sequence on Western Humanities (8 credits). All candidates for a Bachelor’s degree at SUNY Geneseo must complete the General Education curriculum in its entirety.

# **Sample General Education Programs**

In the sections below, we provide a brief description of six general education programs at other universities across the U.S. These schools were chosen because they represent in one way or another the various distinctive qualities we saw in our campus and their general education program is designed in some ways to reflect those qualities. The following is a summary of the UMM distinctive qualities and the schools whose general education program captures some portion of that attribute.

1. Our students are humble and curious (Berea College, Portland State, and Fort Lewis College)
2. Our students are civically engaged and interested in developing into leaders (James Madison University and University of North Dakota)
3. Our faculty and staff believe in individualized and personalized attention to our students (Berea College and Fort Lewis College)
4. Our mission as a “public liberal arts college” emphasizes access for students of all economic means to a high quality liberal arts education at substantially less cost (Berea College, Fort Lewis College, and University of North Dakota)

5. Students are actively engaged in co-curricular activities, group, clubs, organizations that complements their in-class learning activities (James Madison University, Elon University, and University of North Dakota)
6. Our campus has a unique history and a mission that has evolved into its current iteration (Berea College, Fort Lewis College)
7. Our location is important – we are a small campus in a small community in a rural setting on the prairie (Berea College and Fort Lewis College)

## ***Berea College***

Berea College is a small college with an enrollment of 1500 students in the 2010-2011 school year. It is a comprehensive faith-based college located in the Appalachian region of Kentucky. While it includes some pre-professional programs such as hotel management and nursing, it is founded in the liberal arts. The college's distinctive mission is encapsulated in its "Great Commitments" (<http://www.berea.edu/about/mission.asp>).

Berea is distinctive from many other small colleges for three reasons relevant to UMM's general education interests. First, it was founded primarily to serve students from Appalachia and it still maintains this regional enrollment focus with 71% of the students coming from the Appalachian region and ¼ of the students from historically under-represented domestic groups. Second, its student profile is somewhat similar to UMM's-- one half of its students rank in the top 20% of their graduating high school classes, 60% of the students are first-generation college students and the financial need of the student body is very high: 95% of students are eligible for Pell grants. Third, Berea is one of seven work colleges remaining in the United States. This designation as a work college means that students who attend Berea do not pay tuition, rather all students work 10-15 hours a week in campus and community jobs. This helps prepare students for future careers, gives them funds for food, books, etc. and teaches "appreciation for the dignity and utility of labor." There is actually an upper limit on family income for students to enroll at Berea as well.

Berea's general education program is linked to a set of clear learning outcomes (<http://www.berea.edu/cataloghandbook/academics/academicprogram/gep/aims.asp>) that are, in turn, directly connected to its mission. Included among these learning outcomes is that their general education program will "help students understand religion" and the college's "historical and ongoing commitments to racial and gender equality as well as the Appalachian region."

The general education requirements are as follows:

- one semester of Writing-- *Writing Seminar I: Critical thinking in the liberal arts*
- a second sophomore level semester of writing-- *Writing Seminar II: Identity and diversity in the United States*
- a 3000 level religion course-- *Understandings of Christianity*
- a single 3000 level course--*Scientific Knowledge and Inquiry* or two approved natural science courses one of which must be a lab
- a 4000 level senior course --*Senior Seminar in Contemporary Global Issues*
- Practical reasoning (two courses, one of which must be in math or statistics)
- Six perspective areas (students must take at least one course in each of these perspective areas)

- i. arts
  - ii. social science
  - iii. western history
  - iv. religion
  - v. African-American, Appalachian and women's studies
  - vi. international (2 semesters of the same world language or courses on world cultures)
- Lifetime health and fitness (a 1/2 credit course during their first year and then take 2 ¼ credit courses in a variety of physical skill areas)
  - Active Learning Experience (Can be fulfilled by undergraduate research, work, practicum courses, service learning or internship experiences)
  - Developmental mathematics requirement (Can be waived by test scores)
  - Twenty credits outside the major
  - Convocation requirement (Students are required to attend a set number of convocations for seven of their eight terms at Berea and receive a ¼ credit for each term's attendance.)

Further description of each of these requirements can be found at <http://www.berea.edu/cataloghandbook/academics/academicprogram/gep/reqs.asp>. We originally chose Berea because it is a small college which has managed to incorporate its distinctive mission into its general education program, but there are multiple interesting aspects of this curriculum:

- Students cannot test out of or transfer in credits to take the place of the following courses: Writing Seminar II, Understandings of Christianity or the Global Issues seminar. The result is that all students who graduate from Berea have some curricula in common.
- The first five general education requirements appear to be sequential so that students are engaged in common discussions outside their major throughout their careers.
- The active learning requirement fits with the college's mission as a work college as the required Christianity course reflects its faith-based roots.
- The Perspectives requirement that offers coursework related to Appalachian studies as an option is directly related to the college's mission of serving Appalachia. Similarly, the same Perspectives requirement offers African-American studies as an option because of the college's unique history as one of the first integrated colleges in the country.
- Courses which might count for both the Major and a General Education requirement are applied only to the Major; one course cannot meet both sets of requirements.
- Berea requires a co-curricular learning component through the Convocations element in the general education program.

## ***Elon University***

<http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/generalstudies/>

### **Description**

Elon University is a private liberal arts campus in North Carolina with a student body of 5,000. EU prides itself upon a strong foundation in the liberal arts, integrated learning across

disciplines, and putting learning into practice. The Elon University General Studies Program is a very clearly articulated, sequenced four-year program, comprising the “First-Year Core,” “Liberal Studies,” “Advanced Studies,” and an experiential learning requirement. Although it is not integral to the general studies program, all students at Elon must demonstrate proficiency in a world language through the second semester.

To take each component in turn, the **First-Year Core** comprises four courses, a first-year seminar themed “The Global Experience,” ( 4 semester hours) College Writing (4 s.h.), General Stats or Calculus (4 s.h), and Wellness (2 s.h).

The **Liberal Studies** portion of the program consists of distribution requirements (8 s.h) in each of the following areas:

Expression: literature, philosophy, and fine arts. (Chosen from at least two of the areas. At least one course must be literature.)

Civilization: history, foreign languages, and religion. (Chosen from at least two of the areas.)

Society: economics, geography, political science, psychology, and sociology/anthropology. (Chosen from at least two of the areas.)

Science: mathematics, science, and computer science. (At least one course must be a physical or biological laboratory science.)

To meet the **Advanced Studies** requirement, students must complete 8 s.h. at the 3000-4000 level, outside of their major field of study.

Finally, students must fulfill an **experiential learning requirement** that includes seven different options, some of which are recognized automatically (i.e. study abroad or student teaching), others of which require documentation.

## **Strengths**

The subcommittee included Elon’s general education program in its profile group for its formal recognition of co-curricular opportunities and leadership through the experiential learning requirement, but other aspects of the program are noteworthy. This program, like others (also JMU), has a director whose contact information is available on the program website. The program is clearly sequenced, the requirements for each step in the program very clearly articulated. The first-year core ensures that students acquire the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in college, the liberal studies tier ensures breadth, and the advanced studies component ensures that students achieve depth. However, the program’s greatest strength may be in its “packaging”: the program’s content and structure are captured in both narrative and graphic formats. The program offers a distinct mission statement that includes a list of specific program goals that are then explored and expanded as a series of learning outcomes; each learning outcome is linked to one or more courses in the general education program. It is abundantly clear that students complete each step in the program with particular objectives in mind and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

## **Fort Lewis College**

<http://explore.fortlewis.edu/>

Fort Lewis College is a selective public liberal arts college in Durango, Colorado. Fort Lewis College and Morris share a similar history: both originated as American Indian boarding schools, and in both cases, the land was turned over to the state with the stipulation that they remain institutions of learning and provide a tuition-free education for qualified “Indian pupils.” Both then became schools with an agricultural focus before being established as liberal arts institutions.

Fort Lewis College has an enrollment of 3,700 students and a student to faculty ratio of 17:1. Like Morris, Fort Lewis offers an American Indian tuition waiver, and 22% of its students are American Indian. Its hallmarks are “the remarkably close relationships between students and faculty, the freedom of intellectual exploration, and the challenge of experiential learning.”  
[http://explore.fortlewis.edu/images/FLC\\_Facts.pdf](http://explore.fortlewis.edu/images/FLC_Facts.pdf)

## **Description**

General Education Requirements are met through a distribution model called the Liberal Arts Core. Most of the courses are lower division except for the Education for Global Citizenship.  
<http://catalog.fortlewis.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=128>

The Liberal Arts Core is designed to complement the specialization provided by the majors. Exploration of different areas of knowledge and ways of understanding the world combined with the development of competencies in communication, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning are the primary objectives of the lower-division courses; development of a global perspective is the primary focus of the upper-division courses in general education.

- Communication (two courses from a list of 9 courses)
- Mathematics (one course from a list of 10 courses)
- Arts and Humanities, History, and Social and Behavioral Sciences (minimum of four courses and 15 credits); study of a world language is an optional component of this requirement
- Natural and Physical Sciences (two courses, one with an associated laboratory)
- Physical Well-Being (one course)
- Education for Global Citizenship (two courses)

## **Strengths**

One of the interesting aspects of the general education requirements at Fort Lewis College is the requirement of two upper division courses in the Education for Global Citizenship (EGC.) EGC courses “help students develop an awareness of global relationships by critically analyzing global problems or topics using knowledge from multiple disciplines and diverse cultural perspectives. Because Education for Global Citizenship courses are the capstone experience of general education, students are expected to demonstrate advanced skills in inquiry, critical thinking and communication.” Students may earn credit for one of these requirements through a study abroad experience.

Two other interesting pieces found in the review of Fort Lewis College are that 1) they have a Common Reading Experience <http://library.fortlewis.edu/CRE/index.html> and 2) they have implemented a Civic Engagement transcript <http://www2.fortlewis.edu/civicservice/CivicEngagementTranscript.aspx>

## ***James Madison University***

<http://www.jmu.edu/gened/>

## Description

James Madison University, in Harrisonburg, VA, is a campus of more than 17,000 undergraduate students. Despite its size, the JMU general education program offers many strengths that are worthy of consideration. Bearing the broad theme of *The Human Community*, the general education program comprises five clusters.

1) *Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (9 credit hours; 3 courses and two Information Literacy tests must be completed in first year):

Cluster One brings together the basic skills in reasoning, writing, and oral communication and responds to the contemporary need for effective information literacy within diverse contexts of human communication and decision making. Students must complete one course from each of the three areas: Critical Thinking, Human Communication, and Writing; pass the Technology Competency test at the end of semester 1 and the Information Seeking Skills Test by the end of semester 2.

2) *Arts and Humanities* (9 credit hours)

Cluster 2 shows students what it means to live lives enriched by reflection, imagination, and creativity. Choose one course from each of the following three areas: Human Questions and Contexts, Visual and Performing Arts, Literature.

3) *The Natural World* (10 credit hours)

Scientific investigations into the natural world use analytical methods to evaluate evidence, build and test models based on that evidence, and develop theories. Courses in this cluster provide students with the opportunity to develop problem-solving skills in science and mathematics at the college level; requires one course from each of three categories, at least one of which must be a lab course.

4) *Social and Cultural Processes* (7 credit hours)

Cluster Four courses help students become critical thinkers about their own societies and the larger global community. These courses examine the key social and cultural processes and structures that shape the human experience. Students must complete one course on "The American Experience" and another on "The Global Experience." The two courses must be in different academic disciplines.

5) *Individuals in the Human Community* (6 credit hours)

Students learn about themselves as individuals and as members of different communities. Students explore how individuals develop and function in the social, psychological, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions.

Although not integrated into the JMU general education program, completion of two years of college-level world language (or its equivalent) is required for graduation with a B.A.

## Strengths

Over 80% of JMU students engage in experiential learning. Moreover, the JMU General Education Program received the 2009 Association for General and Liberal Studies Exemplary Program Award. The program offers a clear and concise mission, philosophy, and list of objectives. Each cluster requirement is well-defined and linked to a specific list of courses as well as learning outcomes, all of which is clearly articulated in its presentation. While its

structure seems a bit onerous (especially for a campus the size of UMM), it effectively guarantees broad and sustained support across the campus community. Each cluster has a director that serves on the General Education Council, a very large group that includes administrators, faculty, staff, and students. In addition, a Diversity Board is charged with ensuring that courses across the General Education program are infused with diversity-related content. An annual Liberal Education Institute, now in its eighth year, ensures that faculty members understand the objectives and outcomes of the program; a clear plan for regular review ensures that the program will evolve with the campus and student needs.

### ***Portland State University***

<http://www.pdx.edu/admissions/general-education>

Portland State University is a large urban university enrolling 22,706 undergraduate students and 7,112 graduate students in the 2010-2011 academic year. However, the university is distinct from many others of a similar size with 42.5% of the total student body enrolled on a part-time basis, and diversity and equality are outspoken priorities of the university. PSU's general education program is divided into two tracks; the primary track is the University Studies program, which has been awarded or recognized 26 times since 1996. Among these, the Pew Leadership Award for the Renewal of Undergraduate Education, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Award, the Association for General and Liberal Studies Award for the Improvement of General Education, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation's award for Progress in Student Learning Outcomes. The alternate track, University Honors Program, is capped at a maximum enrollment of 200 students and is focused toward the needs of highly motivated students who plan to attend professional or graduate schools post-baccalaureate. Descriptions of the two programs can be found at the university's main page for general education (<http://www.pdx.edu/admissions/general-education>).

The University Studies program can be found at the university's webpage (<http://www.pdx.edu/unst/university-studies-program-overview>). As stated there, it is the pathway most commonly taken by entering freshmen and transfer students to PSU. This program is a sequential model that accounts for courses taken at every level of the students' college career. Beginning with the Freshman Inquiry courses which are capped at no more than 36 students per class, students are introduced to the general education goals of the university through classes that are theme-based and interactive in their interdisciplinary approaches. Faculty members from various disciplines lead sessions that meet twice weekly and are augmented twice per week by mentored inquiry sessions led by student peer mentors. As students progress into their second year, and depending upon the amount of credits carried in by transfer students, they enter the Sophomore Inquiry courses which are also usually capped at 35 students per section and include two meetings per week led by faculty and augmented by peer mentor-led inquiry sessions focused on dialogue between students. The Sophomore Inquiry courses are considered the gateway classes that introduce students to the concepts, questions, methods, and other content that are to be further explored in the Upper Division Cluster and simultaneously offer students an opportunity to explore topics that may be different from, yet complementary to, their intended majors. Students who enter PSU as freshmen are required to take three Sophomore Inquiry courses. From the Sophomore Inquiry courses students go on to select three classes, which are usually 4 credits each, from the same Upper Division Cluster to complete this portion of the University Studies requirement. In the Upper Division Clusters, students can design an individualized program based on the theme they found most interesting in their Sophomore Inquiry courses as well as on their overall academic goals. By this time in

their academic career(s), students are expected to be proficient in writing, research, discussion, computer and inquiry skills such that they can delve into deeper lines of inquiry building on the foundations they developed in their Freshman and Sophomore Inquiries. The program culminates with the Senior Capstone course in which students must collaborate with their peers by building cooperative learning communities that tackle projects beyond the classroom environment. These communities include students from various majors and backgrounds as well as collaborating faculty and community leaders. The goals of this capstone are to take on issues that are of concern to the students and hone skills that are vital to engaged citizens.

Projects for Senior Capstone courses require both a theoretical and disciplinary understanding of broad issues as well as hands-on experience with the populations involved. Examples include the administration of the local shelter that serves homeless and transitional youth in Portland and language and literacy issues for African refugees resettling in the area.

Throughout the four years of the University Studies program, learning outcomes are a priority with assessment being continuously evaluated and the tools refined. The four goals of the general education program, each having its own rubric to facilitate assessment are:

### **University Studies Goals**

- **Inquiry and Critical Thinking**

Students will learn various modes of inquiry through interdisciplinary curricula—problem-posing, investigating, conceptualizing—in order to become active, self-motivated, and empowered learners.

- **Communication** – including a writing rubric and quantitative literacy rubric

Students will enhance their capacity to communicate in various ways—writing, graphics, numeracy, and other visual and oral means—to collaborate effectively with others in group work, and to be competent in appropriate communication technologies.

- **The Diversity of Human Experience**

Students will enhance their appreciation for and understanding of the rich complexity of the human experience through the study of differences in ethnic and cultural perspectives, class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability.

- **Ethics and Social Responsibility**

Students will expand their understanding of the impact and value of individuals and their choices on society, both intellectually and socially, through group projects and collaboration in learning communities.

Portland State does not have a universal foreign language requirement; instead, individual majors include a specific requirement.

### **Overview of Assessment Findings**

As reported by the university, “based on course evaluations, students report high satisfaction with Freshman and Sophomore Inquiry and Senior Capstones courses... Institutional data has

shown that students who begin in Freshman Inquiry achieve higher GPAs, carry more credits, and are retained in higher numbers than transfer students. Based on the year-long FRINQ portfolio review, students perform at or above the expectation for first year students. They score higher in key program goals, including writing and critical thinking, and at acceptable levels in social responsibility, quantitative literacy and diversity of human experience. In 2003-04, students' scores in the diversity of human experience, critical thinking, and social responsibility and ethical issues improved significantly over previous years.

In the Senior Capstones, significant percentages (over 50 percent or over 850 students) of students report that their capstone course improved their:

- ability to think critically,
- understanding of the diversity of human experience and cultures,
- understanding of social problems facing their community and the nation,
- leadership abilities,
- understanding of themselves,
- interpersonal skills,
- ability to work cooperatively,
- tolerance of others with different beliefs,
- sense of personal ethics,
- awareness of their own prejudices,
- commitment to civic responsibility,
- desire to promote social justice and equity,
- view of themselves as active citizens,
- openness to having their views challenged, and
- ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues.

[According to the institution,] these findings demonstrate that the University Studies Program is successful in helping students achieve the four goals of PSU's general education program.”

### ***University of North Dakota***

<http://www.und.edu/dept/registrar/EssentialStudies>

UND received the 2008 Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) Award for General Education Improvement.

Their general education program is called *Essential Studies* (ES) and is linked to their Learning Outcomes. UNDs four outcomes are: Thinking and Reasoning, Communication, Information Literacy, and Diversity. Instructors who wish to offer an ES course must submit a proposal to the ES Committee. The proposal must clearly explain how it meets the Special Emphasis (see below) and how it aligns with one of the four learning outcomes. Courses have to be revalidated by the ES Committee every three years. UND narrowed its learning outcomes to those they could effectively assess. They have an assessment process in place.

Essential Studies requires graduates to complete 36 credits plus a 3 credit upper division Essential Studies capstone for a total of 39 Essential Studies credits.

The Essential Studies Requirements includes four components:

1. Communication Requirements
  - a. 6 credits written communication, including English 110 (College Composition I) and either English 120 (College Composition II) or English 125 (Technical and Business Writing).
  - b. 3 credits oral communication

2. Breadth: Required Areas of Study:

Students take two courses from four broad areas of study. In each area of study, the classes must be taken in two or more different departments:

- a. 9 credits Communication (described above)
- b. 9 credits Arts and Humanities (including at least 3 credits in Fine Arts and 3 credits in Humanities)
- c. 9 credits Social Sciences
- d. 9 credits Math, Science, & Technology (including at least one 4-credit science class with a lab)

3. Special Emphasis Requirements:

When choosing Essential Studies courses (listed above), students must include the following specially designated courses:

- a. A quantitative reasoning course (designated with a Q)
- b. Two social-cultural diversity courses, one designated with a U and addressing diversity within the United States, and one designated with a G and addressing global diversity
- c. An advanced communication course (numbered 200 or higher and designated with an A)
- d. Quantitative reasoning (Q), social-cultural diversity (U and G), and advanced communication (A) courses may be selected from the list of Essential Studies courses with a A, U, G, or A designation.

4. Upper Division Essential Requirements (a graduation requirement for all UND students, including those who have transferred Essential Studies credits from other institutions)

- a. 3 credit senior Essential Studies capstone (A department may offer an ES capstone which students may be required to take. However, other capstone courses are open to students from all majors. Students check with their department to find out which capstone options are open and recommended.)

Although UND has no universal world language proficiency requirement, many programs within the College require proficiency in another language, either two or four semesters of college-level study.

It took UND three years to adopt its new ES program. In those three years the task force analyzed student assessment data, attended general education AACU and AGLS conferences, surveyed the faculty and students, personally meet with every department on campus, and met individually with many professors. Because the work of the task force demonstrated the need for an ES Director, UND added a half-time Essential Studies Director. They also have a person responsible for assessment.

## Concluding Thoughts

The consensus of the subcommittee is that a distribution model remains the most appropriate for UMM students. Specific curricular requirements, however, vary widely from school to school; UMM could continue to use the distribution requirements model while changing specific requirements quite dramatically to achieve synergy between UMM's mission, general education program, and learning outcomes and to better prepare its graduates to meet the complex challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We very much look forward to this discussion as it moves forward in the UMM community.

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# Morris 14 General Ed Info

School	Gen Ed Type	GE:Total credits	Distinctive Qualities	Link
Ramapo College of New Jersey	Core	1:3 (42:128) *if all 8 classes are 4 credits	-Require certain courses during certain years (some for Fr, So, Jr) -students to take 1 course in 2 <sup>nd</sup> /3 <sup>rd</sup> year outside of major. Says "if sci major, you can take a class in ___ or ___" -3 writing intensive (fr, so, jr)	<a href="http://www.ramapo.edu/catalog_11_12/general-education.html">http://www.ramapo.edu/catalog_11_12/general-education.html</a>
Macalester College	Distribution	1:3 (At least 40:128) Could be higher, up to 60 if count 16 cr of language prof. and 3 courses quantitative reasoning (1:2)	-28 credits divisional distribution, and then specific skill or experience sets (first year, internationalism, writing, quantitative thinking, 4 semester proficiency language)	Grad. Requirements: <a href="http://www.macalester.edu/academic/catalog/ap2.html">http://www.macalester.edu/academic/catalog/ap2.html</a>  Gen Ed course list: <a href="http://www.macalester.edu/registrar/GenEdMain.html">http://www.macalester.edu/registrar/GenEdMain.html</a>
Carleton College	Core and distribution aspects	1:2 (102:210) Classes have a 6 cr base. # includes 4 language classes.	-physical ed. Requirement (4 terms), sports and intramurals count -trimesters, 3-terms per academic year	Grad. Requirements: <a href="http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/registrar/catalog/current/programs/">http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/registrar/catalog/current/programs/</a>
St. Mary's College of Maryland	See COPLAC			<a href="http://www.smcm.edu/corecurriculum/index.html">http://www.smcm.edu/corecurriculum/index.html</a>

School	Gen Ed Type	GE:Total credits	Distinctive Qualities	Link
Hamline University	Core requirements, and distribution	1:2 (92?:166?) Couldn't find explicit credits to graduate	writing intensive course for every year in attendance -core=First year seminar, writing, skill sets (oral and computer), leadership... -distribution=breadth across disciplines -4 cr class base	Gen Ed information: <a href="http://bulletin.hamline.edu/content.php?catoid=7&amp;navoid=148#grad_req">http://bulletin.hamline.edu/content.php?catoid=7&amp;navoid=148#grad_req</a>  CLA homepage: <a href="http://www.hamline.edu/cla/acad/index.html">http://www.hamline.edu/cla/acad/index.html</a>
University of North Carolina at Asheville	core and distribution requirements			
St. Olaf College	Not distribution. Guidelines and intended learning outcomes.	1:2.3 (15:35) -1 cr per class basis -major consists of 8-10 credits, electives 10-12, gen ed 14-16	-18 cr must be over level I in course level -writing in context -physical movement -"foundation", "core", "integrating" are headings for gen ed courses	Grad Requirements: <a href="http://www.stolaf.edu/catalog/1011/academiclife/general-requirements.html">http://www.stolaf.edu/catalog/1011/academiclife/general-requirements.html</a>  Gen Ed: <a href="http://www.stolaf.edu/catalog/1011/academiclife/geafteraug08.html">http://www.stolaf.edu/catalog/1011/academiclife/geafteraug08.html</a>
University of Mary Washington	See COPLAC			
Concordia College (Moorhead)	Distribution and Core	1:2 (54:126)	-call it a "core curriculum", divided into (1) Inquiry, core, (2) Exploration, breadth so distribution, (3) Perspectives, and (4) Capstone	Grad Requirements: <a href="http://www.cord.edu/Academics/Catalog/graduation_req.php">http://www.cord.edu/Academics/Catalog/graduation_req.php</a>  Liberal Arts Core Curriculum: <a href="http://www.cord.edu/Academics/Catalog/core.php">http://www.cord.edu/Academics/Catalog/core.php</a>

School	Gen Ed Type	GE:Total credits	Distinctive Qualities	Link
St. John's University	Distribution	1:1 (100:124) *check this math. Counted courses needed for core curric and x4 (since 4 cr. Per class)	-core curriculum -require 8 "Fine Arts Events) attendance -divided into (1) Cross-disciplinary, (2) Disciplinary, distribution for sure, (3) Global language proficiency, (4) Fine Arts Events	Common Curriculum: <a href="http://www.csbsju.edu/Common-Curriculum.htm">http://www.csbsju.edu/Common-Curriculum.htm</a>  confusing and not helpful website, if interested, maybe call?
Gustavus Adolphus College	Mainly distribution, core available	Hard to calculate	- Two options for core curriculum: distribution and integrated core. IC available by application to 60 students per incoming class -Writing is a requirement OUTSIDE of core curriculum. To grad., need 3 writing desig courses from at least 2 diff departments, like one in first year, one writing intensive, one writing in discipline)	Grad. Requirements: GREAT document, click on pdf for explanation of everything  <a href="https://gustavus.edu/general_catalog/">https://gustavus.edu/general_catalog/</a>
University of Maine at Farmington	See COPLAC list			
St. Benedict College	Distribution	See St. John's	See St. John's	Common Curriculum: <a href="http://www.csbsju.edu/Common-Curriculum.htm">http://www.csbsju.edu/Common-Curriculum.htm</a>
Evergreen State College	See COPLAC list			

# COPLAC General Ed Info

School	Gen Ed Type	GE:Total credits	Distinctive Qualities	Link
Eastern Connecticut State University	Tiered Core of Gen Ed	46:120		<a href="http://www.easternct.edu/lapc/">http://www.easternct.edu/lapc/</a>
The Evergreen State College		No Grades, no credits		<a href="http://www.evergreen.edu/about/expectations.htm">http://www.evergreen.edu/about/expectations.htm</a>
Fort Lewis College	Core Gen Ed Categories	39:120	Called A Liberal Arts Core - Physical Well Being Category – Gym for college	<a href="http://catalog.fortlewis.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=5&amp;poid=631">http://catalog.fortlewis.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=5&amp;poid=631</a>
Georgia College & State University	Core Gen Ed Categories	42:120	Must have 11 Science and math credits, three categories – for non science majors, for science majors and for health professions.	<a href="http://catalog.gcsu.edu/ugrad/core-curriculum.htm">http://catalog.gcsu.edu/ugrad/core-curriculum.htm</a>
Henderson State University				<a href="http://www.hsu.edu/degrees.aspx">http://www.hsu.edu/degrees.aspx</a>
Keene State College	Core Gen Ed Categories	44:120	Making Connections category	<a href="http://www.keene.edu/isp/">http://www.keene.edu/isp/</a>
Massachusetts College of liberal Arts				<a href="http://www.mcla.edu/Undergraduate/Experience/corecurriculum/">http://www.mcla.edu/Undergraduate/Experience/corecurriculum/</a>
Midwestern State University				<a href="http://academics.mwsu.edu/supportcenter/CoreCurriculum.asp">http://academics.mwsu.edu/supportcenter/CoreCurriculum.asp</a>
New College of Florida	Liberal Arts Core		Must take at least eight courses from the Gen Ed Core but no real standardized Core in existence	<a href="http://www.ncf.edu/online-general-catalog#General%20Education%20Requirements">http://www.ncf.edu/online-general-catalog#General%20Education%20Requirements</a>

School	Gen Ed Type	GE:Total credits	Distinctive Qualities	Link
Ramapo College of New Jersey	Required Gen Ed Core	Ten Courses	Split between first through third year, social science and humanities heavy	<a href="http://www.ramapo.edu/catalog_11_12/general-education.html">http://www.ramapo.edu/catalog_11_12/general-education.html</a>
Shepherd University	Two tiered core to be completed in the first two years of study	42 Credits total	Adopted from the LEAP Plan with minor adjustments including a first year experience course	<a href="http://www.shepherd.edu/employees/senate/general_studies/framework.pdf">http://www.shepherd.edu/employees/senate/general_studies/framework.pdf</a>
Sonoma State University	Core gen ed program	48:120	Have Medieval and Renaissance Studies and Visions of California category	<a href="http://www.sonoma.edu/university/classsched/images/11fall_classched.pdf">http://www.sonoma.edu/university/classsched/images/11fall_classched.pdf</a>
Southern Oregon University	Liberal Arts Core	60-68:180	Similar to Morris, more math and science heavy	<a href="http://www.sou.edu/access/acadvisinq/freshmen.shtml">http://www.sou.edu/access/acadvisinq/freshmen.shtml</a> <a href="http://www.sou.edu/access/acadvisinq/pdf/limesheet0910.pdf">http://www.sou.edu/access/acadvisinq/pdf/limesheet0910.pdf</a>
St. Mary's College of Maryland	Liberal Arts Core	?:128	Required Liberal Arts Seminar (FYS but second, more advanced course for transfer students); world language requirement = 1 semester beyond placement test level	<a href="http://www.smcm.edu/catalog/_assets/images/catalog1011a_web.pdf">http://www.smcm.edu/catalog/_assets/images/catalog1011a_web.pdf</a>
SUNY College at Geneseo	Liberal Arts Core	31-47:120	The General Education curriculum at SUNY Geneseo provides the broad knowledge and fundamental skills that are the necessary possession of an educated citizen and the proper foundation for specialized study in a particular discipline.	<a href="http://www.geneseo.edu/~gened/pdfs/gened_curr.pdf">http://www.geneseo.edu/~gened/pdfs/gened_curr.pdf</a>
Truman State University	Liberal Arts Core	31-57:120	Essential Skills (8-16 credit hours), Modes of Inquiry (19-24 credit hours), Interconnecting Perspectives (4-17 credit hours) categories	<a href="http://catalog.truman.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=5&amp;poid=550">http://catalog.truman.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=5&amp;poid=550</a>
University of Alberta, Augustana Campus				

School	Gen Ed Type	GE:Total credits	Distinctive Qualities	Link
University of Illinois at Springfield	Liberal arts core	42:120	2 required English classes	<a href="http://www.uis.edu/generaleducation/curriculum/requirements.html">http://www.uis.edu/generaleducation/curriculum/requirements.html</a>
University of Maine at Farmington	Liberal arts core	36:120	PE required, but no credit given.	<a href="http://catalog.umf.maine.edu/show.php?type=subcategory&amp;id=28&amp;version=2010-2011">http://catalog.umf.maine.edu/show.php?type=subcategory&amp;id=28&amp;version=2010-2011</a>
University of Mary Washington	Liberal arts core	25:120	Study Abroad fulfills one requirement	<a href="http://www.umw.edu/cas/bls/requirements/academic/general_education/requirem/default.php">http://www.umw.edu/cas/bls/requirements/academic/general_education/requirem/default.php</a>
University of Montevallo				Could not find information on website
University of North Carolina Asheville	Core with an intensive branch into field of study	14 Courses	Makes use of cluster courses and that be from major or elective that bunch together a group of three courses in the same field as part of gen ed core; cool name: Integrative Liberal Studies	<a href="http://www2.unca.edu/ils/Foundation/s/foundations.html">http://www2.unca.edu/ils/Foundation/s/foundations.html</a>
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma	Gen Ed Core	50 credit hours over entire stay at USAO	All students take the same courses, do not get to choose from categories, begin with self learning and move onto larger picture (philosophy/world politics)	<a href="http://www.usao.edu/home/usao-ids/courses">http://www.usao.edu/home/usao-ids/courses</a>
University of Virginia's College at Wise	Academic gen ed core	53 semester hours	Students must attend 4 cultural activities each of their freshman and junior years	<a href="http://www.wise.virginia.edu/academics/advising/gen_ed">http://www.wise.virginia.edu/academics/advising/gen_ed</a>
University of Wisconsin - Superior	Liberal arts core	Still making a complete transfer to Liberal arts school so unclear as of yet	Integrates service learning, global awareness, and freshman and senior experience courses	<a href="http://www.uwsuper.edu/aboutuwsuper/liberal_arts/index.cfm">http://www.uwsuper.edu/aboutuwsuper/liberal_arts/index.cfm</a>