



BOARD OF REGENTS

SUMMARY OF ITEM FOR ACTION, INFORMATION OR DISCUSSION

TOPIC: Report on General Education

COMMITTEE: Education Policy

DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING: September 16, 2010

SUMMARY: Given the development of the new USM Strategic Plan and the System and state focus on competitiveness and workforce development, it is critical at this time that the governing board take responsibility for understanding general education requirements in the state and at the different USM institutions to ensure that we have in place high-quality educational programs to meet statewide needs.. To assist the members of the Committee on Education Policy in understanding the general education component of academic programs, there will be a series of presentations by the institutions during the 2010-2011 academic year. At today's meeting, Ms. Teri Hollander, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, will explain the general principles upon which general education requirements are based and the statewide parameters outlined in the Code of Maryland Academic Regulations (COMAR). The relevant section of COMAR, along with statements from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, are attached.

The agenda also includes the first institutional report on general education. The University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) completely redesigned its general education program as part of its strategic planning process; the redesign was one of the plan's four strategic priorities and strategic initiatives. Dr. Betsy Beise, who led the subcommittee that addressed this issue and staffed a Provost-Senate Task Force chaired by Dr. Ira Berlin, will make a presentation to the Committee concerning the new general education scheme. A brief summary of UMCP's plans for general education is attached.

Dr. Beise will respond to questions from the Committee following her presentation. Future meetings will feature presentations about general education programs at Towson University (November) and the University of Baltimore (January).

ALTERNATIVE(S): This is an information item only.

FISCAL IMPACT: This is an information item only.

CHANCELLOR'S RECOMMENDATION: This is an information item only.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Received as information. DATE: September 16, 2010

BOARD ACTION: DATE:

SUBMITTED BY: Irwin L. Goldstein (301) 445-1992 irv@usmd.edu

Excerpt from Middle States Commission on Higher Education “Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation” Standard 12 – General Education

Institutions should identify and provide a recognizable core of general education that:

- expresses the educational philosophy of the institution for each undergraduate degree program or cluster of degree programs;
- incorporates essential knowledge, cognitive abilities, and an understanding of values and ethics;
- enhances students’ intellectual growth; and
- draws students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and sensitivity, and preparing them to make

Fundamental Elements of General Education

An accredited institution offering undergraduate degrees and some graduate institutions are expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

- a program of general education of sufficient scope to enhance students’ intellectual growth, and equivalent to at least 15 semester hours for associate degree programs and 30 semester hours for baccalaureate programs; (An institution also may demonstrate how an alternative approach fulfills the intent of this fundamental element.)
- a program of general education where the skills and abilities developed in general education are applied in the major or concentration;
- consistent with institutional mission, a program of general education that incorporates study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives;
- institutional requirements assuring that, upon degree completion, students are proficient in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and technological competency appropriate to the discipline;
- general education requirements clearly and accurately described in official publications of the institution; and
- assessment of general education outcomes within the institution’s overall plan for assessing student learning, and evidence that such assessment results are utilized for curricular improvement.

Excerpt from COMAR 13B.06.01.03 General Education Requirements for Public Institutions.

A. While public institutions have the autonomy to design their general education program to meet their unique needs and mission, that program shall conform to the definitions and common standards in this chapter. A public institution shall satisfy the general education requirement by:

(1) Requiring each program leading to the A.A. or A.S. degree to include not less than 30 and not more than 36 semester hours, and each baccalaureate degree program to include not less than 40 and not more than 46 semester hours of required core courses, with the core requiring, at a minimum, course work in each of the following five areas:

- (a) Arts and humanities,
- (b) Social and behavioral sciences,
- (c) Biological and physical sciences,
- (d) Mathematics, and
- (e) English composition; or

(2) Conforming with COMAR 13B.02.02.16D(2)(b)----(c).

B. Each core course used to satisfy the distribution requirements of §A(1) of this regulation shall carry at least 3 semester hours.

C. General education programs of public institutions shall require at least:

- (1) One course in each of two disciplines in arts and humanities;
- (2) One course in each of two disciplines in social and behavioral sciences;
- (3) Two science courses, at least one of which shall be a laboratory course;
- (4) One course in mathematics at or above the level of college algebra; and
- (5) One course in English composition.

D. Interdisciplinary and Emerging Issues.

(1) In addition to the five required areas in §A of this regulation, a public institution may include up to 8 semester hours in a sixth category that addresses emerging issues that institutions have identified as essential to a full program of general education for their students. These courses may:

- (a) Be integrated into other general education courses or may be presented as separate courses; and
- (b) Include courses that:
 - (i) Provide an interdisciplinary examination of issues across the five areas, or
 - (ii) Address other categories of knowledge, skills, and values that lie outside of the five areas.

(2) Public institutions may not include the courses in this section in a general education program unless they provide academic content and rigor equivalent to the areas in §A(1) of this regulation.

E. General education programs leading to the A.A.S. degree shall include at least 20 semester hours from the same course list designated by the sending institution for the A.A. and A.S. degrees. The A.A.S. degree shall include at least one 3-semester-hour course from each of the five areas listed in §A(1) of this regulation.

F. A course in a discipline listed in more than one of the areas of general education may be applied only to one area of general education.

G. A public institution may allow a speech communication or foreign language course to be part of the arts and humanities category.

H. Composition and literature courses may be placed in the arts and humanities area if literature is included as part of the content of the course.

I. Public institutions may not include physical education skills courses as part of the general education requirements.

J. General education courses shall reflect current scholarship in the discipline and provide reference to theoretical frameworks and methods of inquiry appropriate to academic disciplines.

K. Courses that are theoretical may include applications, but all applications courses shall include theoretical components if they are to be included as meeting general education requirements.

L. Public institutions may incorporate knowledge and skills involving the use of quantitative data, effective writing, information retrieval, and information literacy when possible in the general education program.

M. Notwithstanding §A(1) of this regulation, a public 4-year institution may require 48 semester hours of required core courses if courses upon which the institution's curriculum is based carry 4 semester hours.

N. Public institutions shall develop systems to ensure that courses approved for inclusion on the list of general education courses are designed and assessed to comply with the requirements of this chapter.



The New General Education Program at the University of Maryland College Park

Betsy Beise

Associate Provost for Academic Programs
for

Nariman Farvardin

Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
and Acting President

Sept 16, 2010





The General Education Task Force

In 2009, a Task Force was charged by the UMCP Provost and the Chair of the University Senate to design a new General Education that:

- aligns with the priorities of UM's Strategic Plan
- serves the needs of our students
- calls for an intellectually rigorous and demanding curriculum
- is easily understandable and increases flexibility
- prepares students for an increasingly more connected world
- aims to reduce class size
- considers out-of-classroom experiences
- enhances opportunities for innovative and improved teaching methods

The Task Force worked from March 2009 to March 2010. The plan was approved by the University Senate in April 2010. An implementation plan is currently under development and will also be presented to the University Senate.



The Purpose of General Education

- Provide the skills necessary for all students to succeed in their academic careers and professional lives.
- Complement and strengthen students' major areas of study.
- Endow students with a broad view of civilizations past and present.
- Enhance the ability of students to thrive both intellectually and materially to support themselves, their families, and their community through a broad understanding of the world in which they live and work.
- Engage students in defining the ethical imperatives necessary to create a just society, in their own communities and in the larger world.
- Foster intellectual dexterity



The Goals of UMCP's new GenEd Program

- Ensure that students have the basic skills in written and oral communication and in mathematical analysis that are critical to their success across the curriculum and in their professional lives: **FUNDAMENTAL STUDIES**
- Provide students with breadth of knowledge and disciplinary diversity: **DISTRIBUTIVE STUDIES**
- Allow students to explore unfamiliar fields and ignite new intellectual and professional passions through traditional disciplines, established interdisciplinary programs, and emergent trans-disciplinary fields: **THE I-SERIES**
- Promote self-understanding and understanding of others. Sharpen students' awareness of the consequences, intended and unintended, of previous generations' decisions and, by so doing, alert them to the significance of their own choices: **DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE**



Outline of the new GenEd Plan

There are 4 major areas of the plan:

1. **Fundamental Studies** (writing, math, oral communication, and analytic reasoning) [5 courses, 15 credits]
2. **Distributive Studies** (two courses each in Arts and Humanities, Natural Sciences, History and Social Sciences, and "Scholarship in Practice") [8 courses, 25 credits]
3. **The I-Series courses** [2 courses, can be double counted w/Dist. Studies]
4. **Plural Societies and Cultural Competency** [2 courses, can be double counted w/ Dist. Studies]

Total number of credits: minimum 40, typically 40-46.

The Signature -- I-Series: Issues, Imagination, Intellect, Inspiration, Innovation, Implementation

The I-series inverts the common pedagogical pyramid. Rather than starting with a survey of existing knowledge, approach large problems from particular (inter)disciplinary perspectives.

While I-series courses ask questions, they are not meant to answer them. Rather, they aim to examine the ways in which diverse intellectual traditions and disciplinary protocols address big questions.



<http://iseries.umd.edu>

All academic colleges participate:

24 courses taught in a pilot program in Spring 2010

40 courses to be taught in Fall 2010

The Provost provides a financial incentive for faculty to participate



Examples of I-series course titles

ASTR 220 Collisions in Space: The Threat of Asteroid Impacts

PUAF 289I Cross-examining Climate Change

JOUR 289I Information 3.0: Exploring Technological Tools

MUSC 289I The Power of Musical Performance in Social Engagement

BMGT 289I Why Good Managers Make Bad Decisions

HIST 289A Hot Spots: Violence, Catastrophe and Civilian Conflict Worldwide in Historical Perspective

HIST 289B Carbon: Element at the Center of History

PUAF 359I Contemporary Issues in Political Leadership and Participation: The Art and Science of Philanthropy



The New Distributive Studies

Features of the new program are to:

1. Add a new area, *Scholarship in Practice*.
2. Reduce the number of courses required in each area from three to two.
3. Eliminate subcategories in each of the areas.
4. Require that two of the courses fulfilling Distributive Studies be I-series courses.
5. Incorporate individual enrichment features in all courses satisfying Distributive Studies requirements.
6. Incorporate some 300 and 400-level courses into Distributive Studies.

A maximum of 6 courses to be transferred in through AP/IB credit.



Distributive Studies: *Scholarship in Practice*

- Reinforces and enhances the traditional areas in the Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences with courses that put these areas of learning into practice.
- Teaches students how to assess and apply a body of knowledge to a creative, scholarly, or practical purpose. The resulting application should reflect an understanding of how underlying core disciplines can be brought to bear on the subject.
- Scholarship in Practice courses should go beyond the traditional survey and interpretation that culminate in, for example, a final research paper or activity often used in courses that are designed to be introductions to a specific topic or area of study.
- All academic colleges should be able to contribute courses in this area.



Plural Societies and Cultural Competence

- The centerpiece of the new Diversity requirement, *Understanding Plural Societies*, speaks to both the *foundations*—cultural, psychological, historical, social and biological—of human difference and the *operation* of plural societies. *Understanding Plural Societies courses double-count with Distributive Studies*
- *Cultural Competence* serves as a practicum for Understanding Plural Societies courses, just as a laboratory section serves as a practicum for a science course or a rehearsal serves as a practicum for a music, dance, or theater class. Cultural Competence courses provide training in practical ways of dealing with human difference and navigating the complexity of plural societies.



Recommendations for Experiential Learning

While there are many advantages for increased participation in Experiential Learning, an across-the-board requirement is not viable. Instead, students should be encouraged to participate in the following ways:

- Students should be allowed to apply one credit-bearing “out-of-classroom” experience, to one course in the appropriate category of Distributive Studies (subject to approval by the faculty committee that oversees Distributive Studies courses).
- Students should have the option of receiving academic credit for either paid or unpaid research and internship experiences.
- Students should have the option of using an appropriate course from Study Abroad to satisfy one course in the relevant Distributive Studies category.
- Faculty should be encouraged to develop courses that incorporate community service as options within the Distributive Studies portion of General Education.



Implementation of the New GenEd

- Summer 2010: 67 faculty participated in 12 committees to develop learning outcomes for each category.
- An organizing committee, led by Donna Hamilton (Associate Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Studies), developed a strategy and timeline for implementation.
- An implementation committee (mostly Associate Deans) has been established to develop a plan to present to the University Senate (December 2010).
- Many workshops will be held around campus during the Fall 2010 semester to engage faculty in all aspects of the plan.
- The goal is to begin implementation with the Fall 2011 incoming class.



The General Education Task Force

Andrew Baldwin, Associate Professor, Environmental Science and Technology

Elizabeth Beise, Professor, Physics and Interim Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Programs

Ira Berlin (Chair), Distinguished University Professor, History

Cindy Clement, Lecturer and Director of Undergraduate Studies, Economics

Thomas Corsi, Professor, Business and Management

Sheryl Ehrman, Associate Professor, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering

Jeanne Fahnstock, Professor, English

Darrell Gaskin, Associate Professor, African American Studies

Lyle Isaacs, Professor Chemistry and Biochemistry

Katherine McAdams, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies

Robyn Muncy, Associate Professor, History

Heather Nathans, Associate Professor, Theatre

Charles Olson, Professor of the Practice, Business and Management

James Osteen, Assistant Vice President, Office of Student Affairs

Sarah Peitzmeier, Undergraduate Student, Biological Sciences and Piano Performance

Robin Sawyer, Associate Professor, School of Public Health

Sally Simpson, Professor and Chair, Criminology and Criminal Justice

Konstantina Trivisa, Professor, Mathematics

Rose Weiss, Undergraduate Student, History

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