

# Progress Report of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee on General Education

December 3, 2015

# Need for Revision of WMU's Current General Education Curriculum

- Learner-centered but currently lacks student engagement
- Dissatisfaction among students, faculty and advisors with current curriculum
- Limited focus on learning outcomes
- Opportunity to enhance undergraduate experience
- Accreditation requirements (lack of assessment)
- Connect to WMU Signature initiative
- Incorporate best practices

# Proposed Concept

- Increase student engagement
- Maintain about the same number of credit hours as current curriculum
- “Purposeful” in both structure and content
- Students will develop skills while learning content
- Some courses will deal with “big questions”
  - Team-taught, inter-disciplinary first-year course to introduce the big questions
- Content areas for “breadth and balance”
- Capstone courses link majors to general education learning outcomes

# Proposed Concept

- Faculty development programs that include part-time instructors and graduate assistants
- Won't be called general education
  - University Studies?
  - University Curriculum?
  - University Education?
  - University Core?
  - Liberal Education?
  - Gold Standard?
  - Gold-Standard Education?
  - Balance and Breadth?
  - Foundations for a Respected Education & Degree

# Improvements Over Current General Education Curriculum

- Merges proficiencies and content areas
- Uses big questions to stimulate engagement and commitment to life-long learning
- Develops skills through content knowledge
- Provides structure for course sequencing

# Design Framework for General Education

## Draft: Revised November 30, 2015

		The Required Student Skills and Perspectives											
		Communicate				Think and Reason					Personal and Social Responsibility		
		Oral	Written	Language in Addition to English	Collaborate	Creative	Critical	Information Literacy	Quantitative Problem Posing & Solving	Historical Perspective	Ethics & Social/Civic Engagement	Business & Entrepreneur- ship	Diversity
The 9 Required Knowledge Areas	Fine Arts												
	Humanities												
	Social & Behavioral Science												
	Science & Technology												
	Natural Science with Lab												
	Mathematics & Statistics												
	World Culture												
	U.S. Culture												
	Health & Wellness												

Note: For each course, instructor would choose only one of the 9 required knowledge areas, but the course could focus on multiple skills and perspectives in its learning outcomes.

Other features: Competency-based learning outcomes; Emphasize big questions that cut across a variety of disciplines

Year One:

Revised FYE introduces "big questions." Common read for critical thinking & written communication.

Inter-disciplinary team-taught course to extend treatment of "big questions"

Other introductory general education courses (e.g., ENGL 1050) designed so they can be taken concurrently

Year 2-4: Courses that provide broad disciplinary perspectives & refine, integrate & apply core skills (indicated in columns above)

Committee still working out how to describe these "content areas" where skills are taught.

Year 3-4: Capstone course ties together major & general education, perhaps by posing students with a big question challenge?

# How FCS 3150 Global Ecology of the Family (Area IV) Fits Proposed Design Framework for General Education

How FCS 3150 Global Economy of the Family (Area IV) Fits into the Proposed WMU General Education Design Framework

		The Required Student Skills and Perspectives											
		Communicate			Think and Reason					Personal and Social Responsibility			
		Oral	Written	Language in Addition to English	Collaborate	Creative	Critical	Information Literacy	Quantitative Problem Posing & Solving	Historical Perspective	Business & Entrepreneurship	Ethics & Social/Civic Engagement	Diversity
Required Knowledge Area	World Culture	*	*			*			*			*	
	Written Communication:	Research of another country of the student's choice and compare/contrast with our understanding of the U.S. This includes political systems, religion, social economic structure, class structure, habits/customs, health and general perspectives on child raising and family structure. Presented in a written paper using APA citation, reference list and specified number of sources from scholarly resources.											
	Oral Communication:	Material from written project is presented to the class in a review of their paper, resources and conclusions.											
	Critical Thinking:	Use research as a way of pushing assumptions into deeper thinking. In-class small groups take on the perspective representative of one ethnic group and face the assumptions made about family, economics, child raising methods/style, family structure. Defend and explain the misconceptions based our on American perspective of family, economics and so on. Interview a community member who works with diverse families. Included in the questions is an inquiry of who does that community member solve problems intrinsic to their work with the diverse community while showing respect for the diversity of the individuals they are called on to work within their career position.											
	Historical Perspective:	Via lecture and whole group discussion, students are led to look back at the changes in family since pre-colonial days to the present, for example child labor, division of labor and gender based roles and social class. How have war, disaster, political and social change influenced families from the past to the present? Reflect personally on how students' individual experiences within their families have influenced them now as young adults in the college setting. For example religion, socio-economic status, ethnic background and so on.											
	Diversity:	Study of families in the global environment, using social construction theory. Includes an examination of the following factors and influences on families: religion, ethnicity, education, economics, socio-political, family structure and dynamics, gender roles, meals/food preferences, access to healthcare, housing and geographic location, mass-media, relationships with other people (friendships, community and networking systems), and issues related to globalization and tribalism. A social constructionist perspective guides explanation of families from a variety of world cultures.											

# How MUS 3500 American Music of the Twentieth Century (Area III) Fits Proposed General Education Design Framework

How MUS 3500 American Music of the Twentieth Century (Area III) Fits the Proposed General Education Design Framework													
		The Required Students Skills and Perspectives											
		Communicate				Think and Reason					Personal and Social Responsibility		
		Oral	Written	Language in Addition to English	Collaborate	Creative	Critical	Information Literacy	Quantitative Problem Posing & Solving	Historical Perspective	Ethics & Social/Civic Engagement	Business & Entrepreneurship	Diversity
Required Knowledge Area	Fine Arts		*			*	*			*			*
Written Communication:	<p>Each student writes a term paper worth 20% of their final course grade, with a specific rubric that requires the student to choose any piece of American Music written after 2000, and discuss: I. "What makes this work "American"?; II. How does it compare the works we have studied?; III. What is it saying about American culture and values in our time as compared to past trends in the 20th century. This paper has a specific format, 5-page minimum, and must use formal citations and a reference list in one of the standard formats (MLA, APA, Chicago Manual, etc). It must combine discussions of historical background, evaluation of the artistic/creative essence of the work as compared to works we studied in class, and then the student's own critical thinking and argument about how their chosen piece fits into the continuum of American music since 1900, and what it is saying/promoting about American culture and values.</p> <p>In addition, all three exams focus on items I and II above, and Exam 2 and the final exam also have essay sections that are worth another 10% of the final course grade, focusing on all of the items above.</p>												
Creative & Critical Thinking:	See discussion of the aspects of the term paper and the exam essays.												
Historical Perspective:	Students learn how America changed decade-by-decade throughout the 20th century, by studying and reflecting on the interrelationship of major social, political, technological, and musical developments. This constitutes a significant portion of each exam.												
Diversity:	By exploring over 150 musical works from 25 different major categories of Roots Music, Popular Music, and Art-Music, students understand how America defines and continually redefines itself through artistic/creative expressions of race, ethnicity, gender, age, heritage, and social class that challenge or maintain the boundaries of personal expression, language, style, and attitudes. This also constitutes a significant portion of each exam.												



# Increasing Student Engagement

- Revised and required First-Year Experience explicitly promotes general education, explains its importance and introduces “big questions”
- Team-taught, inter-disciplinary, first-year course uses big questions to build student enthusiasm
- Capstone courses connect majors with general education learning outcomes
- Preparation for life after college including civic and community engagement

# Methods and Implementation

- Involvement of people currently teaching general education courses
  - How/where does their course fit into the revised structure?
    - What knowledge, skills and perspectives does their course contribute to student learning outcomes
- Accelerated process for granting courses “general education” status under revised structure
- Implementation time frame
  - MOA on curriculum structure by March 2016
  - Implementation roll-out by Fall 2018

# Challenges

- Need to change student, advisor, faculty and administrator attitudes
- Resources and pedagogy for team-taught, interdisciplinary course and required FYE
- Connecting majors with general education learning outcomes
- Development and support for teachers
- Some departments devote a lot of resources to delivering current general education curriculum
- Transfer credits