

Update of Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee
on General Education

February 4, 2016

I. Why Change Is Needed Now

Our current general education program needs to be significantly redesigned and refocused.

The purpose, policies, and academic goals of our current program are vague and unclear; therefore, its outcomes are unachievable.

II. Goals

1. To establish a clear, meaningful purpose that aligns with WMU's stated vision, mission, and Strategic Plan.
2. To adopt a structure and learning outcomes that are easily understood and traceable across the curriculum by simplifying, reorganizing and refining the current lengthy, menu-driven structure of General Education.
3. To strike a balance between skills and content while prioritizing student learning outcomes that prepare our students to succeed in an ever-changing 21st-century world.

III. Essential Structural Components

Intellectual and practical skills scaffolded across the curriculum:

- 1. Foundations**
- 2. Integration and application of knowledge** through additional content courses, and addressing “big questions” and real-world problems.
- 3. Connecting to the major** (capstone, etc.)

Statement from Faculty to Students

The hallmarks of an educated person are intellectual curiosity and adaptability. The WMU General Education program strives to awaken that curiosity while giving you the adaptive skills that will help you achieve your full potential. When you successfully complete our General Education program, you will have a knowledge base, critical thinking skills and the ability to communicate your ideas with clarity and precision both in writing and speaking. You will possess knowledge of the physical and natural world and human impact on it. You will be able to apply the scientific method of inquiry and to work with quantitative data. You will possess a historical perspective and an appreciation of the diversity of human cultures and their varied expressions. You will be able to apply the knowledge and skills necessary to promote your own wellness, and to be a fully engaged and responsible citizen in a diverse and multi-lingual global society. So our goal is not to complete your education, but to ensure you will have the necessary information, skills, and perspectives to adapt to change in a self-directed learning process throughout your life, in whatever you choose to do.

Learning Outcomes Succinctly Stated for Web Use

The General Education program at Western Michigan University provides students with foundational and applied skills, content knowledge and perspectives that enable students to learn and adapt throughout their lives, be thoughtful citizens in a democracy, and have an awareness of and respect for world issues and cultures.

IV. Essential Learning Outcomes

*Through learner-centered approaches,
the General Education program will enable students to*

1. Expand their understanding of human cultures and the physical and natural world
2. Enhance their intellectual and practical skills
3. Exercise personal and social responsibility
4. Exhibit integrative and applied learning

IV. Essential Learning Outcomes

1. Expand their understanding of human cultures and the physical and natural world

- Increase their foundational knowledge of the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts
- Apply different methods of intellectual inquiry, investigation, and discovery

IV. Essential Learning Outcomes

2. Enhance their intellectual and practical skills

- Demonstrate effective and appropriate oral, written, and digital communication
- Develop creative and critical thinking
- Apply information literacy
- Analyze and interpret quantitative data

IV. Essential Learning Outcomes

3. Exercise personal and social responsibility

- Develop global awareness
- Practice sensitivity to diversity and inclusion
- Take part in civic engagement locally and globally
- Gain familiarity with a language other than English
- Develop practices for personal wellness and planetary sustainability

IV. Essential Learning Outcomes

4. Exhibit integrative and applied learning

- Apply ethical, critical, and informed thought within and across disciplines
- Work both independently and in collaboration with others to achieve goals
- Become lifelong learners

V. Next Step

2016-17 academic year:

The Faculty Senate should appoint a "Design Team" **that is given a maximum of one (1) academic year** to create working models that include all the features approved in the April 2016 MOA. This Design Team will have several small subteams—each focused on one specific module that addresses and resolves its critical issues and concerns.

In addition, during the 2016-17 academic year, WMU students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni will propose/choose a **new name for the program** that is more descriptive of what it does.