

DRAFT Proposal of the New
General Education Program at
the University of Maryland

updated March 12, 2010

Developed by the
University Task Force
on General Education

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The Charge to the Task Force

- In 2009, the Task Force was charged by the Provost and the Chair of the Campus Senate to design a new General Education that:
 - aligns with the priorities of the 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

General Education should be a distinguishing feature of a University of Maryland education

Process of the GEN ED Task Force

- The Task Force, created in spring 2009, has met weekly to develop a *proposal* for transforming undergraduate education at the University of Maryland.
- We conducted extensive research on Gen Ed models at other institutions, and met with specialists in undergraduate pedagogy from across the University and elsewhere.
- We reviewed data gathered about challenges facing the existing CORE program at UMD.
- We considered a wide range of options, taking into consideration the intellectual diversity of our campus the characteristics of our students, and the existing needs of our baccalaureate programs.

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.

GOALS of the new GEN ED 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 GEN ED program

The following slides outline 5 major areas of the proposal:

1. **Fundamental Studies** (writing, math, oral communication, and analytical reasoning) [5 courses, 15 credits]
2. **The “I” Series courses** [2 courses, double count w/Dist. Studies]
3. **Distributive Studies** (including requirements in Arts and Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and “Scholarship in Practice”) [8 courses, 25 credits]
4. **Diversity and Cultural Competency** [2 courses, double count w/ Dist. Studies]
5. Recommendations for incorporating **Experiential Learning**

Fundamental Studies

- In formulating its plan of General Education, the Task Force has increased the rigor of the University's requirements in **writing** and **mathematics**. It has also added requirements in **oral communication** and **analytical reasoning**.
- *The slides that follow offer a breakdown of the separate areas of Fundamental Studies.*

Fundamental Studies: *Writing*

- Retain the requirement that students take both Academic and Professional Writing.
- Remove the exemption from English 101 (Academic Writing) based on SAT scores.
- Increase the variety of specialized offerings in English 39X (Professional Writing)
- Expand the valuable Writing Center services through the creation and implementation of a Course Tutors initiative.
- Create a campus-wide Writing Board, a forum which facilitates and reinforces engagement between Writing Program directors and faculty.
 - Writing courses that fulfill the Fundamental Studies requirement should offer students intense, targeted, and even individualized instruction. Done by: Linked Courses (involving I-Courses and concurrent enrollment in sections of Academic Writing); Special Professional Writing Sections; Graduate (or advanced undergrad) tutors;

Fundamental Studies: *Oral Communication*

- Require one oral communication course for all undergraduates.
 - could be implemented with a variety of courses across campus (Communication, Journalism, Theatre, Hearing and Speech; others)
- Include oral communication as an enhancement factor to its list of courses that satisfy the Distributive Studies requirements.
- A committee should oversee the overall administration of the Oral Communication Fundamental Studies requirement.
- Develop a student skills assessment tool.
 - Students enter the University with a range of experience in oral communication. Identifying their strengths and needs will help steer them towards courses that will provide the greatest benefit.

Fundamental Studies: *Mathematics*

- Continue the current 3-credit, 1-course requirement.
 - Can be fulfilled by one of the courses currently included in the Mathematics Fundamental Studies Requirement.
- Target the Math 110 curriculum towards Arts & Humanities majors
- Remove the SAT exemption from the Mathematics Requirement (AP/IB and placement exemptions remain).
- Institute a policy whereby, with rare exceptions, transfers are admitted only if they enter having satisfied the Mathematics Fundamental Studies requirement.

NOTE: The vast majority of students already meet this requirement.

Fundamental Studies: *Analytical Reasoning*

- Require 1 course (beyond Math Fundamental Studies) whose focus is logical and/or analytical reasoning
- Courses introduce students to conceptual and theoretical methods used in reasoning and problem solving
- Some courses that are presently in the “MS” CORE category would satisfy this requirement
- Additional existing math and statistics courses not currently in the “MS” CORE category, as well as courses involving other forms of reasoning would satisfy this requirement

This requirement is already being met by the majority of our students, but the new GEN ED would formalize it.

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” 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.
- The “I” series seeks to dismantle artificial boundaries in knowledge.
- “I” courses double-count in Distributive Studies, under the appropriate categories
 - All University of Maryland students (including transfers) would be required to take at least two “I” courses.

Distributive Studies

- Ensure that all students acquire an exposure to a variety of disciplines, even as they concentrate on a chosen field.
- General Education courses should also offer students insights into the methods of the different disciplines, the kinds of questions disciplines ask, and their standards for judging the answers.
- The new Distributive Studies requirement preserves the established areas of learning in the Arts and Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences that are the essential features of CORE. Its new feature is a fourth area, identified as “Scholarship in Practice”.

The new Distributive Studies

Features of the new program are to:

1. add a fourth 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 requirements
6. incorporate 300 and 400-level courses into Distributive Studies
7. allow the possibility of sequencing for more in-depth study

Distributive Studies: *Scholarship in Practice*

- Reinforces and enhances the traditional areas in the Arts and Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences with courses that put these areas of learning into practice.
- They teach the stages required for the pursuit of a tangible goal through planning, modeling, drafting, testing, revising, perfecting, and assessing.
- They should give students an appreciation for how successful outcomes can be defined and assessed, how feasibility tempers and corrects optimistic intentions, and how realistic achievement requires discipline and hard work.

GOALS for courses in Distributive Studies

- Courses fulfilling the Distributive requirements should reinforce the Fundamental Studies competencies expected of a University of Maryland graduate. These include proficiency in oral, written, and visual communication and skills in quantitative and analytical reasoning.
- In addition, such Distributive Studies course should address broad topical themes, such as (but not limited to):
 - Globalization and interdependence
 - The environment: balance and sustainability
 - Diversity, culture and status
 - Civic engagement
 - Values and ethics

Such “enrichment factors” may change over time and should be identified by the group designated to oversee the program.

Diversity and Cultural Competency

- The centerpiece of the new Diversity requirement, *Understanding Pluralistic Societies* (UPS), speaks to both the *foundations*—cultural, psychological, historical, social and biological—of human difference and the *operation* of plural societies.

UPS courses double-count with Distributive Studies

- *Cultural Competency* serves as a practicum for UPS 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 Competency courses provide training in practical ways of dealing with human difference and navigating the complexity of pluralistic societies.

Recommendations for Cultural Competency

Four possibilities (there may be more):

1. Select a specially designed course on cultural competency [TBD]
2. Choose a study abroad experience, preceded by a “Global Competency” course [under development]
3. Choose a second course from “Understanding Pluralistic Societies”
4. Participate in an Intergroup Cultural Dialogue course, which consists of two components:
 - A didactic, lecture based component in which students develop greater personal and political *awareness* of cultural identity affiliation and difference; and
 - Small sections that employ dialogic pedagogy and an inductive, topics-based curriculum to discuss the specific and personalized nature of identity, power, and the social relations presented in the content-based lectures.

Experiential Learning in General Education

- The benefits of Experiential Learning are obvious: active learning in a unique experience, a one-on-one relationship with a faculty member working on a project related to the student's own interest, a direct experience with a foreign culture, or a hands-on service experience with social reality.
- An Experiential Learning component in General Education can take a number of forms at the University of Maryland, including especially-designed research experiences, internships, studying abroad, and service learning.
 - Research Experiences, both on- and off-campus
 - Internships
 - Study Abroad
 - Community Service-Learning

Recommendations for Experiential Learning within GEN ED

While there are many advantages for increased participation in Experiential Learning, an across-the-board requirement is not viable at the present time. 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 and Oversight

- The Task Force is not charged with developing an implementation plan. We recommend the appointment of a committee of experts from colleges.
- That Committee will establish the procedures for implementation and for the creation of the institutions that will maintain long-term oversight.
- We recommend that the Dean for Undergraduate Studies be responsible for the management of General Education, and that s/he should report to the Provost and to the University Senate.
- We recommend that the Senate CORE committee evolve into a broader oversight group, no longer responsible for approval of individual courses, but for the broad oversight of the long-term direction of General Education.

Comparison of OLD and NEW General Education Program requirements

OUTLINE OF THE PROPOSED GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM WITH RECOMMENDATIONS				
PARTS	DESCRIPTION	CREDITS	CURRENT CORE	
FUNDAMENTAL STUDIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing • Math • Oral Communication 	Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep ENGL 101, possibly make multi-level, remove SAT exemption. • Keep ENGL 39X, remove exemption for students with an A in ENGL 101. Increase number of targeted professional writing courses. Have the Writing Center provide Course Tutors and expand its outreach. Math <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep MATH 110, remove SAT exemption, recommend transfer students have fulfilled their fundamental studies math requirement prior to admittance. Oral Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided by the COMM dept (COMM 107--A study of and practice in oral communication, including principles of interviewing, group discussion, listening, informative briefings, and persuasive speeches), THET, JOUR, HESP, or elsewhere. Analytical Reasoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided by classes in old MS CORE category (math, statistics, or logic), or perhaps classes in critical or research methods. 	15 credits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing (6) • Math (3) • Oral Communication (3) • Analytical Reasoning (3) 	9 credits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENGL 101 (Academic Writing) • ENGL 39X (Professional Writing) • MATH 11X, or most 100 or 200 level MATH or STAT classes 	
SIGNATURE COURSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I-Series 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New courses that are issue-driven explorations into a variety of intellectual endeavors. • Designed to promote critical thinking, effective communication skills, media literacy, technological fluency, and humane understanding. 	(6 credits) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double-counted in Distributive Studies 	N/A	
DISTRIBUTIVE STUDIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Sciences • History and Social Sciences • Humanities, Arts, and Literature • Scholarship in Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must complete 8 courses total, with 2 from each area. • Two courses must be I-Series courses. • Two of the courses must be taken at UMD (i.e. only 6 can be transfer or AP credit). • Coursework in one's major area is permitted. Natural Sciences (does not include Math, one course must have a lab component) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts and methods of the disciplines studying the natural world History and Social Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History and social science disciplines and their combination of qualitative and quantitative methods Humanities, Arts, and Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional humanities that study the origins and genres of human creativity Scholarship in Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of applying a body of knowledge in a way that leads to an outcome such as a professional practice, a product, a proficiency, a creative activity, or a work of art 	25 credits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Sciences (7) • History and Social Sciences (6) • Humanities, Arts, and Literature (6) • Scholarship in Practice (6) 	28 credits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 Humanities and the Arts credits • 10 Sciences and Math credits • 9 Social Sciences and History credits 	
ADVANCED STUDIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	6 credits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300 or 400 level, outside of major 	
DIVERSITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Competency • Understanding Pluralistic Societies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural competency and real knowledge of the meaning of human diversity and the functions of a pluralistic society Cultural Competency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfilled through either "Global Perspectives," a prerequisite to studying abroad; "Intergroup Dialogues," both content-based and built on dialogic pedagogy; or "Cultural Competency," which is similar to "Intergroup Dialogues" but removes the dialogue portion for students who are uncomfortable. Understanding Pluralistic Societies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens the current requirement by emphasizing human diversity and the functioning of pluralistic societies 	3 credits + (3 credits) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Competency (0-3) • Understanding Pluralistic Societies (3-6), 3 double-counted in Distributive Studies 	3 credits OR (3 credits) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can (but does not have to) be double-counted in Distributive Studies or Advanced Studies 	
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow students to discover new knowledge, create new approaches, and collaborate with others of diverse backgrounds • Could be fulfilled through research, internships, study abroad, or community-service learning • Experiential learning courses may be approved for any area of Distributive Studies 	(0-3 credits) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double-counted in Distributive Studies 	N/A	
<i>For more information on the current CORE program, please see: http://www.ugst.umd.edu/core/</i>		TOTALS:	43 credits	43-46 credits

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 Fahnestock, 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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