

Report to the Faculty Senate

by the

Gen Ed Task Force

December 14, 2010

Overview

In Fall 2009, at the request of the General Education Committee, the Faculty Senate created the Gen Ed Task Force and charged it with reviewing the existing Gen Ed program and proposing revised learning outcomes, curricular structures and assessment processes. The Gen Ed Task Force (GETF), with representation from all of the Colleges and academic councils, worked throughout the 2009-2010 academic year to review and assess the existing program. During Fall 2010, the GETF developed new learning outcomes and a revised curriculum.

In this report, the GETF presents its recommendation for a new general education program. This program would go by a new name, University Studies, and would be integrated into a broader framework of student learning that includes college requirements, departmental majors and co-curricular activities. This framework, called the Engaged Community, builds on the foundation represented by the UMD Commitment to Student Learning, which was formerly known as the ISLO (Integrated Student Learning Outcomes) statement.

The University Studies curriculum reflects a desire to make general education more meaningful and relevant to students, and it draws heavily from contemporary initiatives on gen ed in higher education. It relies on a basic distribution model, in which students fulfill a set of requirements by taking approved courses in various areas. These requirements are organized into five Clusters, each of which has substantive coherence and a shared set of goals. Each requirement within the Clusters is defined by a set of specific learning outcomes, which courses must target in order to be approved. These learning outcomes focus on content- and domain-specific learning, but, just as importantly, they integrate the acquisition of a variety of skills and capacities, such as writing, critical thinking, information literacy and so forth. As a result, the University Studies (US) curriculum will promote not only the breadth of learning inherent in a distribution model, but also will encourage the development of abilities that are the hallmark of a liberal education and that are woven throughout the UMD Commitment to Student Learning.

As part of its work, the GETF is also discussing an administrative structure to oversee the program, assess its effectiveness and make changes as the program develops. The General Education Committee, which is charged with reviewing and making recommendations about general education, would be renamed the University Studies Committee and would maintain its oversight role. A Director of University Studies would provide leadership and coordination across all areas of the program, including assessment. In addition, Cluster Coordinators would be identified to focus on the courses, curricula and assessment within the Clusters.

Assessment would unfold on a four-year cycle for each Cluster, with the cycles staggered across the Clusters. These cycles allow for the design, implementation and review of assessment activities and would provide a regular basis to make adjustments or changes to the Cluster curricula. There would be flexibility regarding the exact nature of the assessment activities in any cycle, but the course approval process will assure that course artifacts (papers, exams, assignments) are available to assessors that allow an evaluation of students' success meeting the defined learning outcomes.

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The Engaged Community

All students at UMass Dartmouth participate in the *Engaged Community*, a nested and integrated set of learning experiences that provides a liberal education and fulfills the UMass Dartmouth Commitment to Student Learning, defined by the following statement:

A University of Massachusetts Dartmouth education is a foundation from which graduates continually engage and impact their community, both locally and globally. In all aspects of their lives, UMass Dartmouth graduates skillfully locate, analyze, synthesize and evaluate information and can communicate their knowledge effectively and creatively. They have depth in a field of study and broad knowledge across many areas of inquiry, and they continue after graduation to explore and to acquire understanding within and beyond their field of study. UMass Dartmouth graduates think critically and possess the confidence to integrate and apply their learning to solving complex problems. They have excellent interpersonal skills and a sense of purpose. Guided by empathy and integrity, UMass Dartmouth graduates respond constructively to changing personal, professional and societal challenges in a diverse world.

The *Engaged Community* consists of four major components:

University Studies – Courses that impart knowledge, competencies and skills in areas that are critical to intellectual, professional and personal development. These courses form a vital part of a liberal education, because they transform students into university-educated citizens with the capacities to engage in the various professional, social, economic, cultural and political communities in which they will be a part for the rest of their lives.

College Studies – A key part of liberal education is in-depth study in a particular field. Toward that end, students in each of the University's Colleges and Schools will take specialized courses that relate to the special demands and competencies of those broad areas of study.

Major Studies – The capacity for comprehensive and integrated learning is a critical part of a liberal education. All students will develop this capacity by completing a sequence of courses that forms a Major area of study. These Majors are designed by faculty in the various academic departments to foster the development of general and specialized skills as well as in-depth knowledge in a particular field.

Engagement Beyond the Classroom – The experiences that develop engaged citizens, with the skills, knowledge and characteristics promised in the UMD Commitment to Student Learning, are not developed only in the classroom. Co-curricular activities and other campus events are integral to student development. While at UMD, students will have ample opportunities to engage beyond the classroom in meaningful activities that foster their intellectual and personal development.

The University Studies Curriculum

The University Studies component of the *Engaged Community* is defined primarily by a set of required courses in various areas. These areas are constructed so that students will be exposed to academic experiences that will help them achieve the outcomes in the UMD Commitment to Student Learning.

There are five Clusters in the University Studies Curriculum:

1. Foundations for Engagement: Skills for the 21st Century
2. The Natural World: Scientific Inquiry and Understanding
3. The Cultural World: Aesthetic and Interpretive Understanding
4. The Social World: Humanity and Society
5. The Educated and Engaged Citizen: Integrating the UMD Experience

Each Cluster has a set of required courses:

1. Foundations for Engagement: Skills for the 21st Century
 - A. Critical Writing and Reading I – ENL 101 (3 credits)
 - B. Critical Writing and Reading II – ENL 102 (3 credits)
 - C. Intermediate Writing (3 credits)
 - D. Mathematics (3 credits)
 - E. Foundation for Learning through Engagement (variable credit)
2. The Natural World: Scientific Inquiry and Understanding
 - A. Science of the Natural World (3 credits)
 - B. Science in the Engaged Community (3 credits)
3. The Cultural World: Aesthetic and Interpretive Understanding
 - A. Literature (3 credits)
 - B. Visual and Performing Arts (3 credits)
4. The Social World: Humanity and Society
 - A. Human Questions and Contexts (3 credits)
 - B. The Nature of US Society (3 credits)
 - C. The Nature of the Global Society (3 credits)
5. The Educated and Engaged Citizen: Integrating the UMD Experience
 - A. Capstone Study (3 credits)
 - B. Learning Through Engagement (variable credit)

Cluster 1 – Foundations for Engagement: Skills for the 21st Century

Cluster 1 brings together basic skills in thinking, reading, writing and quantitative reasoning and challenges students to apply the skills they develop as engaged citizens of a community that spans the classroom, campus, and the local, regional and global communities beyond. This cluster introduces students to the UMD Commitment to Student Learning and builds a foundation for engagement and integration of knowledge, skills and capacities that will develop throughout the UMD experience.

Goals:

- I. To introduce students to the concepts of the engaged citizen and engaged learning.
- II. To emphasize the use of critical thinking, reading, and writing and communication as vehicles for engaged learning.
- III. To foster students' ability to use technology to enhance learning.
- IV. To develop students' ability to reason using quantitative and mathematical information.

A. *Critical Writing and Reading I – ENL 101*

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Produce college level writing that addresses needs of audience, situation and purpose.
2. Analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources.
3. Incorporate and accurately document outside sources using proper documentation format.
4. Demonstrate control of syntax, grammar, punctuation and spelling.

B. *Critical Writing and Reading II – ENL 102*

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Write essays that satisfy the specific needs of audiences in the disciplines of the sciences, social sciences and humanities.
2. Write effective syntheses that demonstrate effective critical reading.
3. Select, effectively integrate and document appropriate resource materials from library databases and print holdings.
4. Demonstrate discipline-specific control of language, style, structure, format, syntax, grammar and mechanics.

C. *Intermediate Writing*

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Read with comprehension and critically interpret and evaluate written work in discipline-specific contexts.
2. Demonstrate rhetorically effective, discipline-specific writing for appropriate audiences.
3. Demonstrate, at an advanced level of competence, use of discipline-specific control of language, modes of development and formal conventions.
4. Demonstrate intermediate information literacy skills by selecting, evaluating, integrating and documenting information gathered from multiple sources into discipline-specific writing.

D. Mathematics

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Recognize when to apply mathematical concepts and methods to specific problems.
2. Manipulate mathematical expressions to solve for particular variables.
3. Draw conclusions from quantitative information and communicate these conclusions verbally and graphically.
4. Implement mathematical models to obtain accurate or approximate solutions using appropriate tools.
5. Apply mathematical techniques to social and scientific problems.

E. Foundation for Learning through Engagement

College/major/disciplinary base course. Approved courses may include foundation and introductory courses within the major (e.g. CVPA foundations, MLS introductory course, EGR 101, etc.) or new, broadly conceived foundation courses in humanities, sciences, social sciences, business, education, etc.

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Express the rationale for a broad education, as described in the UMD Commitment to Student Learning.
2. Define engaged learning in the context of their major, discipline or community.
3. Apply the concept of engaged learning to their personal goals.
4. Explain how perspectives within one or more academic disciplines impact the community.
5. Explain how issues in the community can be understood within an academic discipline.

Cluster 2 –The Natural World: Scientific Inquiry and Understanding

In the 21st Century it is impossible to engage successfully with the broader community without having fundamental knowledge of the scientific method and basic facts about the natural world. In our communities of work and in our community of citizenship, it is increasingly necessary to develop familiarity with scientific methods and acquire knowledge of science to comprehend and solve the problems we face.

Goals:

- I. To expose students to the process of scientific inquiry and scientific methods.
- II. To introduce students to the extant body of knowledge in one or more fields of science.
- III. To increase students' confidence and competence in their ability to apply scientific principles and knowledge.
- IV. To enhance students' ability to incorporate knowledge of science into problem solving strategies.

One course each from:

A. *Science of the Natural World*

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Recount the fundamental concepts and methods in one or more specific fields of science.
2. Explain how the scientific method is used to produce knowledge.
3. Successfully use quantitative information to communicate their understanding of scientific knowledge.
4. Use appropriate scientific knowledge to solve problems.

B. *Science in the Engaged Community*

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze and evaluate the use of scientific information in the context of social, economic, environmental or political issues.
2. Apply scientific theories and knowledge to real-world problems.
3. Effectively communicate scientific information in writing.

Cluster 3 – The Cultural World: Aesthetic and Interpretive Understanding

Successful engagement in the community requires an understanding of culture and the various ways it is expressed. People are shaped by their culture at the same time they help to construct it. Key to understanding culture is the ability to understand how to interpret and make sense of cultural expressions found in literature and the visual and performing arts.

Goals:

- I. To understand works of art and literature within their cultural and historical contexts.
- II. To understand how works of human expression shape individual and cultural identities, values and behaviors.
- III. To analyze creative processes and engage in critiques.
- IV. To experience cultural events to foster appreciation of the aesthetic and formal qualities of literary, visual and performing arts.

One course each from:

A. *Literature*

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate how literature (fiction, poetry, drama and literary nonfiction) both reflects and helps shape culture, society and history.
2. Explain how a text's literary form, style and content express its meanings using appropriate disciplinary terminology.
3. Evaluate the rhetorical and contextual elements of ideas presented by literary texts and respond to them critically and analytically.
4. Explain the ways in which literature expresses the values that humans attach to their experiences.

B. Visual and Performing Arts

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate the cultural context, history and formal and conceptual aspects of the art form studied.
2. Interpret and create informed responses (via writing, presentation, performance or artifact) to the art form studied through the analysis of the form, content, context and methods of production using appropriate disciplinary terminology.
3. Explain the ways in which the art form expresses the values that humans attach to their experiences.

Cluster 4 –The Social World: Humanity and Society

Cluster 4 focuses on the individual in relation to the world and to others. Students are challenged to consider how their perspectives and beliefs are formed and how differing perspectives come together to create the complex social world in which we live. Our curriculum considers these processes within the context of personal experience and as a member of both US society and the global community.

Goals:

- I. To introduce students to questions about human knowledge and the human condition, as well as the relationship of the individual to the broader world.
- II. To foster an understanding of the diversity within US society.
- III. To encourage a deeper understanding of one’s place and role in US society.
- IV. To engage students in critical thinking about humanity and society.
- V. To foster awareness of global cultural perspectives.

One course each from:

A. Human Questions and Contexts

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain different perspectives on: a) what it means to be human and how the significance of human existence has been understood; b) the nature of human relationships and how these relationships are evidenced in regard to the broader world; or c) how knowledge is obtained, maintained and changed, as well as how individuals come to understand and think about the world around them.
2. Recognize ethical issues in complex contexts and evaluate the ethical positions taken by themselves and others.
3. Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources.
4. Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on human questions and contexts.

B. *The Nature of US Society*

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain: a) the development of US culture and sub-culture from different perspectives; b) US social and cultural domains in relationship to other regions of the world; or c) the different facets of citizenship in the United States.
2. Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources.
3. Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on US society.

C. *The Nature of the Global Society*

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain basic problems faced by societies and cultures outside the US or issues that shape societies globally.
2. Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources.
3. Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on global society.

Cluster 5 – The Educated and Engaged Citizen: Integrating the UMD Experience

Cluster 5 requires students to apply the knowledge, skills and capacities gained throughout the UMD experience and to reflect on the interaction of these and their own professional and personal development.

One course and certification of engagement activity:

A. *Capstone Study*

Approved courses will give students the opportunity to integrate their learning and produce an original expression of knowledge or understanding. Students will also demonstrate mastery of both written and oral communication.

Upon completion of the capstone study, students will be able to:

1. Synthesize the knowledge and skills gained within major courses, independently complete a research-based project or creative work and integrate the results of both in an open-ended project or experience (projects within the major are encouraged).
2. Integrate knowledge and principles from the field of study with those of the broader University Studies curriculum.
3. Demonstrate advanced information literacy skills by selecting, evaluating, integrating and documenting information gathered from multiple sources into discipline-specific writing.
4. Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, the results of the project or experience.

B. *Learning Through Engagement*

Through engagement, students deepen their understanding and appreciation of their academic study, while also reflecting on the connections between their learning and the broader communities of which they are a part. These communities may be professional, scholarly, social, cultural, economic or political. These activities provide an opportunity for students to better understand their roles as members of these communities. Service learning courses, internships, study abroad programs, independent research or creative work and experiential learning courses or practica that foster engagement and reflection may be used to meet this requirement. Capstone courses may also qualify.

Upon completion of this requirement, students will be able to:

1. Identify the needs and resources of the communities to which they belong.
2. Apply knowledge and skills gained through academic study to real problems and/or opportunities within their communities.
3. Describe the connections between learning on campus and the issues and needs of broader academic, professional or civic communities.
4. Articulate the value of engagement to other members of their communities.

APPENDIXES

Administration

Administrative Structure

Oversight and coordination of the US program will be provided by the Director of University Studies, who will work closely with the University Studies Committee and Coordinators for each Cluster. The Director will make efforts to assure there are adequate course offerings in each requirement of the Clusters. The Director will be responsible for overseeing the US assessment process and will be responsible for writing summary assessment reports that will be shared with the USC and the Cluster Coordinators. In addition, the Director will manage the content of the US website, promote the US program and, with the Office of Faculty Development, coordinate professional development opportunities for faculty teaching US courses.

Each Cluster will have a Cluster Coordinator who is responsible for identifying and encouraging the submission of US Course Approvals for requirements in the Cluster. The Coordinators will also help develop the assessment strategy for the Cluster and make recommendations to the US Committee regarding changes to the Cluster's curriculum. Coordinators will be identified by the Director with the advice and consent of the US Committee.

- University Studies Committee
 - approves all courses for University Studies (US) credit
 - designs assessments
 - reviews assessment results
 - makes recommendations for changes to US curriculum
- Director of University Studies
 - assures adequate courses and seats are available for all requirements
 - oversees assessment process
 - writes and presents assessment reports
 - collects and reviews syllabi for all courses taught
 - makes recommendation to US Committee regarding curriculum and assessment
 - coordinates with Office of Faculty Development to offer professional development
 - maintains the US website and promotes the US program
- Cluster Coordinators
 - identify and encourage submission of courses for US approval
 - make recommendations to US Committee regarding curriculum and assessment
 - provide a line of communication among faculty teaching in the Cluster and the US Committee and Director
 - assist Director in assuring adequate courses and seats are available for Cluster requirements

Course Approvals

All courses, with the exception of ENL 101 and 102, will need approval by the US Committee to be accepted for University Studies credit. In granting this approval, the US Committee shall require the submission of a Master Syllabus that will serve as a guiding document for all future sections of that course taught by any instructor. To be approved, a Master Syllabus must contain the following:

- Explicit learning outcomes that include the learning outcomes designated for the requirement in the University Studies curriculum for which the course seeks approval (there may be other learning outcomes in addition to these).
- Examples of assignments that will provide evidence about the extent to which students are achieving the University Studies learning outcomes.
- General synopsis of the topics to be covered in the course.

A Request for US Course Approval should be completed by one or more faculty who are likely to teach the course over the next several years. Once a course is approved, the Master Syllabus should be the basis of the regular course syllabus for all sections of that course, regardless of instructor. Individual faculty may tailor the content, course design and assessment as they see fit, but all regular course syllabi must contain the US learning outcomes for that requirement, and all courses must include at least one assignment that demonstrates student proficiency on those outcomes.

As part of the US assessment process, the US Committee will reconsider all of the approved courses in each Cluster every 4 years.

Assessment

The Learning Outcomes in the Clusters will be assessed on staggered, four-year cycles:

Year 1: Designing the assessment process.

Year 2: Conducting the assessment.

Year 3: Reporting assessment results.

Year 4: Adjusting the curriculum.

The assessment process will be shaped by the University Studies Committee, in consultation with the Director of University Studies and the Cluster Coordinators. Because all approved courses must include assignments demonstrating student achievement on the designated learning outcomes, these course artifacts will likely be an important way in which the US program is assessed.

In addition, all approved courses will need to be re-submitted at the end of the 4-year cycle and will be considered anew by the US Committee in light of any adjustments to the learning outcomes, the results of a syllabus review undertaken by the Director and any other considerations related to the delivery of courses in that Cluster.

Timeline

Spring 2011

- Gen Ed Task Force determines a process for receiving US Course Approval Requests.
- Gen Ed Task Force proposes a policy for handling transition issues.
- Public forums to explain the new curriculum.
- Submission of US Course Approval Requests begins.
- Cluster Coordinators are identified to begin in the Fall.

2011-2012

- Submission of US Course Approval Requests continues.
- Approval of courses by US Committee begins (US Committee may adopt subcommittees to aid with review).
- The US Committee designs assessment for Cluster 1.

2012-2013

- New students matriculate under the new US program.
- Assessment of Cluster 1 is undertaken.
- The US Committee designs assessment for Cluster 2.

Gen Ed Task Force Charge and Membership

Charge:

- Review all aspects of the existing Gen Ed program.
- Examine and evaluate the various models of general education; study the gen ed programs at other institutions of higher education.
- If deemed appropriate, propose a revised set of learning outcomes for the Gen Ed program.
- If deemed appropriate, propose new structures and assessment processes for the Gen Ed curriculum.

Membership:

Business

Susanne Scott
Shouhong Wang

Engineering

Peter Friedman
Phil Viall

Humanities

Cristina Mehrrens
Chris Eisenhart (AY09-10)
Stan Harrison (AY10-11)

Nursing

Carol Mailloux
Sonja Peterson

Science

Bal Ram Singh
Frank Scarano (AY09-10)
Biyoung Luo (AY10-11)

Social Science

Rob Darst
Tom Boone

VPA

Alma Davenport
Yoon Soo Lee

SEPPCE

Matt Roy
Dean Moosavi (AY09-10)

Library

Kari Mofford

Administration

Magali Carrera
Tefay Meresi
Charlotte Hamlin (AY09-10)
Heather Bentz (AY10-11)
Sharon Sousa
Karen Dixon

First Year English

Jen Riley
Michelle LaFrance (AY10-11)

Office of Faculty Development

Cathy Gardner

Institutional Research/Assessment

Dick Panofsky

Gen Ed Director

Doug Roscoe

LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages and the arts.

***Focused** by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring*

Intellectual and Practical Skills, including

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

***Practiced extensively**, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects and standards for performance*

Personal and Social Responsibility, including

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

***Anchored** through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges*

Integrative Learning, including

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

Source: College Learning for the New Global Century: A Report From the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise. Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007.