

Faculty Senate Action Item

No: 10-16

General Education Proposal

We propose the approval of Phase I items as listed below with implementation to be delayed. These items will be implemented when Phase II items have been acted on.

The items in this phase received the most scrutiny by faculty who participated in surveys, workshops, forums, committees, and wiki discussions. As such the members of the Academic Affairs committee are presenting these five items for your approval.

Phase II items will address additional elements of the proposal from the General Education Committee. Phase II items are listed in the “questions still to be answered” document (to be presented at the Faculty Senate meeting.) Approving Phase I now will allow us to progress toward presenting additional proposal items arising from comprehensive General Education reform.

Phase I

ITEM 1: General Education Statement

It is recommended that the current General Education Statement from the 2009-2010 University Catalog (p. 70, shown below):

The primary function of a liberal education is to teach those students who have the capacity and the desire to learn how to learn. Washburn University believes that a good education is the shared responsibility of the primary and secondary schools and the university. The foundation for a liberal education must be developed in the pre-college years. The university must strengthen and build on this foundation. The goals of a liberal education can be divided into two areas — intellectual skills and areas of knowledge.

be replaced with the following:

The General Education component of higher education specifically focuses on introducing students to ways of knowing, integrative knowledge, appreciation of historical context, common themes of human experience, social responsibility, analytical reasoning, civic engagement, and the development of practical skills and reflective habits of mind. The General Education requirements at Washburn University are designed with the intent of providing students with a grounding in liberal arts and sciences and shaping an informed, capable citizenry through a broad education in a range of disciplines. These courses ensure that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage with our rapidly-changing world over their lifetimes.

ITEM 2: General Education Learning Outcomes

It is recommended that the 9 General Education skills in Washburn University’s General Education program be replaced with the following 5 Learning Outcomes:

1. Communication (COM)
2. Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning and Literacy (QSRL)
3. Information Literacy and Technology (ILT)
4. Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT)
5. Global Citizenship, Ethics and Diversity (GCED)

ITEM 3: Learning Outcome Descriptions

It is recommended that the following 5 new Learning Outcome descriptions be adopted.

Communication

Communications skills involve the ability to clearly express and understand ideas in written, oral and non-verbal forms. Communication includes the practical exchange of information, which can include the ability to listen, comprehend and respond to others, as well as the creative expression of ideas in the visual, written and performing arts. In oral and written communication, students will demonstrate the ability to shape a central thesis, organize an argument, and formally support that argument. Students will be able to understand and interpret creative expression based on knowledge of the forms and principles of various expressive media.

Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning and Literacy

Quantitative reasoning involves the ability to work with numerical data and the higher-order thinking skills required to make and understand mathematical arguments. Scientific literacy involves the acquisition and application of skills and knowledge necessary to understand the nature and content of science, and to evaluate scientific arguments using evidence-based reasoning. Students will be able to understand and develop arguments supported by quantitative evidence, clearly communicate those arguments in a variety of formats (using words, tables, graphs, statistical inference, mathematical equations and functions, etc., as appropriate), and apply mathematical and scientific methods to solve problems from a wide array of contexts and everyday situations.

Information Literacy and Technology

Information Literacy and Technology involves the ability to locate, select, use and evaluate information obtained from appropriate electronic and/or printed resources, including a critical analysis of the information and the credibility of the sources of information. It also involves the ability to use technology to research, organize, present and/or communicate information in meaningful ways. Additionally, Information Literacy and Technology includes skills such as the ability to understand the development of technology and its impact on society, the ability to understand and use existing technologies and information to address real-world issues, and the ability to recognize emerging technological trends and their possible impact on the future.

Critical and Creative Thinking

Critical Thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of assessing and evaluating ideas and forms. It involves clarifying questions, reflecting upon meaning, comparing multiple viewpoints, and evaluating evidence to make an informed judgment. Creative Thinking involves the production of original ideas, forms or works by making connections, generating alternatives, and elaborating or exploring new applications of accepted practices through innovation and/or invention. Critical and creative thinkers gather information from experience, observation, reasoning, reflection and communication. They explore and synthesize related ideas, connect them to prior knowledge, and apply them to new contexts.

Global Citizenship, Ethics and Diversity

Global Citizenship refers to the broad understanding of peoples and cultures in the United States and around the world, and to humankind's place and effects in the world. Global Citizenship includes a respect for the commonalities and differences in peoples, including an understanding of values, beliefs and customs. It places an emphasis on the economic, religious, political, geographic, linguistic, historic, environmental and social aspects that define cultures. It places an emphasis on ethics, equality and human rights, an appreciation for diversity, the interconnectedness of societies and cultures, and a commitment to finding solutions to problems that can affect the world.

ITEM 4: General Education Distribution Requirements [Breadth of Knowledge]

Washburn's General Education program is designed to provide all students with a breadth of knowledge in the traditional areas of 1.) Arts and Humanities; 2.) Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics; and 3.) Social Sciences. It is recommended that the total number of credit hours students are required to complete in each Liberal Studies category be determined by the individual student's specific degree programs (BA, BS, BFA, etc.). The minimum number of Liberal Studies courses in a degree remains unchanged.

ITEM 7: University Requirements

It is recommended that Washburn University eliminate the term "University Requirements" and substitute the term "Core Courses" instead. This term is 1.) broader in scope, 2.) used in a similar manner at many other universities, and 3.) allows for greater flexibility in the Washburn curriculum. The definition of a Core Course — a course taken by all, or virtually all students that emphasizes a set of skills that exemplify a set of basic University values.

Date: April 26, 2010

Proposed by: Academic Affairs