



# **WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM**



**Submitted by the General Education Review Task Force October 18,  
2011**

**Endorsed by the University Senate May 15, 2012**

## CONTEXT

In the fall of 2008, Provost Barbara Burch convened the General Education Review Task Force to undertake a systematic review of Western Kentucky University's current General Education program. Over the past three years, twenty-three faculty leaders and administrators from across the university have served on the Task Force.

Both WKU and higher education in the United States have changed dramatically in the decade since the implementation of the current General Education program in 2001. The Task Force spent much of its time attempting to identify and articulate basic guiding principles and goals for General Education at WKU. In keeping with the original charge, the committee worked diligently to “develop an imaginative and innovative core curriculum that best serves the education needs of our students” in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In particular, the Task Force considered several central questions:

- **What do students need to know?** What are the essential skills and knowledge base required of every WKU graduate? And what role does General Education play in meeting those educational needs?
- **Why do students need those skills and that knowledge?** How can WKU build a more cohesive and intentional General Education program that articulates both for students and faculty our shared academic goals and intellectual values?
- **Can we build a better General Education program to foster those values and promote student learning?** Are there more imaginative and creative ways to deliver General Education that engender interdisciplinary thinking, experiential learning, and social responsibility? How can the General Education program complement and support the existing disciplines and majors across the university? How will WKU's program address state concerns over transferability?
- **How will we know that they have learned?** What governance structure and assessment mechanism will best serve the institution to achieve our goals? How can the spirit of these reforms be maintained over a long period?

Several internal and external factors influenced the initiation, development, and timing of this report. The Task Force worked within the framework of the institutional goals articulated in the 2005 Quality Enhancement Plan developed for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), as well as the WKU Strategic Plan. More recently, the work of the Coordinating Council on Global Education and the Sustainability Committee brought forward new university initiatives that must be incorporated into a larger curricular framework. The Task Force also sought to address the concern of the most recent SACS

report regarding the need to develop a more robust assessment plan for General Education as a program. And finally, the recently approved (June 2011) statewide General Education Transfer Policy forced the Task Force to consider a plan that would conform to those new guidelines.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Recent work by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), a leading association of more than 1100 colleges and universities in North America, guided the thinking of the Task Force. In 2005, the AAC&U sponsored the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Initiative as a national effort to identify the "essential aims, learning outcomes, and guiding principles for a twenty-first century college education" (see <http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm>). The work of the National Leadership Council for LEAP published its findings in *College Learning for the New Global Century* (2007). In concert with the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, the Task Force recommended adoption of the LEAP "Essential Learning Outcomes" as the cornerstone of an effective core curriculum, including general education. Those outcomes were adapted for WKU:

- 1. Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, including**
  - a. An informed acquaintance with major achievements in the arts and the humanities
  - b. An appreciation of the complexity and variety of the world's cultures;
  - c. An understanding of the scientific method and a knowledge of natural science and its relevance in our lives;
  - d. A historical perspective and an understanding of connections between past and present.
- 2. Intellectual and practical skills, including**
  - a. The capacity for critical and logical thinking;
  - b. Proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking;
  - c. The ability to understand and apply mathematical skills and concepts.
- 3. Personal and social responsibility, including**
  - a. An understanding of society and human behavior;
  - b. An understanding of factors that enhance health, well-being, and quality of life.
- 4. Integrative Learning, including**

Synthesis and advanced accomplishments across general and specialized studies.

## ***WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM: Ways of Knowing and Understanding***

### **PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY**

The Task Force believes that General Education at Western Kentucky University is the core of the undergraduate experience and provides students with a broad education in important areas of human knowledge. Through the integration of knowledge across multiple disciplines students will gain the fundamental skills and intellectual perspectives necessary to meet the challenges presented by a global society. The General Education program teaches students to think critically, solve problems, and communicate effectively; it encourages students to explore connections among different areas of study in order to understand better their roles as students and citizens; and it promotes intellectual curiosity and a love of learning.

### **PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS**

After much discussion and work, the General Education Review Task Force produced a draft proposal for the revision of the WKU Core curriculum. In an effort to distinguish it from the previous general education program and move it in a new direction, the Task Force proposed "***WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM***" as the name for this new curriculum. The name intends to invoke the symbolism of WKU's past, while pointing to the essential and foundational quality of the university core curriculum. The ***WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM*** seeks to embody the goals and learning outcomes stated above, blending both distributional elements and core curricular structures.

The 39-hour ***WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM*** consists of the following required coursework:

- **Foundations:** Practical and Intellectual Skills (18 hrs.)
- **Explorations:** Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World (12 hrs.)
- **Connections:** Understanding Individual and Social Responsibility (9 hrs.)

All coursework in the ***WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM*** is categorized as General Education coursework.

**WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM**

<b>FOUNDATIONS</b> (18 hours)  <i>Intellectual and Practical Skills</i>	<b>EXPLORATIONS</b> (12 hours)  <i>Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World</i>	<b>CONNECTIONS</b> (9 hours)  <i>Understanding Individual and Social Responsibility</i>
<b>College Composition</b> (ENG 100) *Students with English ACT of 29 or above will receive credit for this requirement.  <b>Writing in the Disciplines</b> (ENG 300, or 200-level or higher writing in the discipline course)	<b>Arts &amp; Humanities</b> (3 hours)	<b>Social and Cultural</b> (3 hours)
<b>Human Communication</b> (COMM 145 or other approved courses)	<b>Social and Behavioral Sciences</b> (3 hours)	<b>Local to Global</b> (3 hours)
<b>Quantitative Reasoning</b> (MATH 109, 116, or other approved courses) *Students with Math ACT of 26 or above will receive credit for this requirement.	<b>Natural and Physical Sciences</b> (Minimum of 6 hours, including one course with an essential applied/lab component. Two different disciplines must be taken.)	<b>Systems</b> (3 hours)
<b>Literary Studies</b> (ENG 200 or other approved courses)		
<b>World History</b> (HIST 101/102)		

**\*WORLD LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

Admitted students are expected to demonstrate language proficiency at the “Novice high” level before completing 60 hours of coursework. Additional courses may be taken to meet this proficiency.

**WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM CORE REQUIREMENTS****Foundations: Practical and Intellectual Skills**

*Foundations* courses ensure that students begin their education with the practical and intellectual skills necessary for college success and lifelong learning. Students become adept at critical and analytical thinking, written and oral expression, interpretation of evidence and data, and evaluation of the artifacts of human expression and experience. *Foundations* courses prepare students for success in *Explorations*, *Connections*, and in their major field of study. (18 hours)

**College Composition** (3 hours)

ENG 100

English 100 introduces students to college-level writing and critical reading, gives students instruction and practice in writing and reading college-level essays, and makes students aware of how various audiences and rhetorical situations call for different choices in language, structure, format, and tone. Assignments stress how and why writers make rhetorical choices and are designed both to immerse students in written language and to develop critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. Students with English ACT of 29 or higher will receive 3 hours credit for this requirement

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Write clear and effective prose in several forms, using conventions appropriate to audience (including academic audiences), purpose, and genre.
2. Find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, including academic databases, to prepare written texts.
3. Identify, analyze, and evaluate statements, assumptions, and conclusions representing diverse points of view, and construct informed, sustained, and ethical arguments in response.
4. Plan, organize, revise, practice, edit, and proofread to improve the development and clarity of ideas.

**Writing in the Disciplines** (3 hours)

ENG 300 or approved “Writing in the Discipline” course

Writing in the Disciplines courses give students advanced instruction and practice in writing and reading essays within an academic discipline and make students aware of how disciplinary conventions and rhetorical situations call for different choices in language, structure, format, tone, citation, and documentation. Students conduct investigations into writing and reading conventions in their fields and receive advanced instruction in planning, drafting, arranging, revising, and editing discipline-specific essays.

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Write clear and effective prose in several forms, using conventions appropriate to audience (including academic audiences), purpose, and genre.
2. Find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, including academic databases, to prepare written texts.
3. Identify, analyze, and evaluate statements, assumptions, and conclusions representing diverse points of view, and construct informed, sustained, and ethical arguments in response.
4. Plan, organize, revise, practice, edit, and proofread to improve the development and clarity of ideas.
5. Distinguish among various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.

**Human Communication** (3 hours)

COMM 145 or other approved courses

Human Communication courses develop foundational skills of critical listening, speaking, and presentation in a variety of social and cultural contexts. Students will learn to analyze arguments and to communicate ideas clearly and effectively in oral and written formats.

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Listen and speak competently in a variety of communication contexts, which may include public, interpersonal, and/or small-group settings.
2. Find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, including academic databases, to prepare speeches and written texts.
3. Identify, analyze, and evaluate statements, assumptions, and conclusions representing diverse points of view, and construct informed, sustained, and ethical arguments in response.
4. Plan, organize, revise, practice, edit, and proofread to improve the development and clarity of ideas.

**Quantitative Reasoning** (3 hours)

MATH 109, 116, or other approved courses

Quantitative Reasoning courses teach students to interpret, illustrate, and communicate mathematical and/or statistical ideas. Students will learn to model and solve problems. Students with a Math ACT of 26 or higher will receive 3 hours credit for this requirement.

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Interpret information presented in mathematical and/or statistical forms.
2. Illustrate and communicate mathematical and/or statistical information symbolically, visually and/or numerically.
3. Determine when computations are needed and execute the appropriate computations.
4. Apply an appropriate model to the problem to be solved.
5. Make inferences, evaluate assumptions, and assess limitations in estimation modeling and/or statistical analysis.

**Literary Studies** (3 hours)

ENG 200 or other approved courses.

Literary Studies courses provide an introduction to a variety of literature at the college level. Assignments encourage critique and analysis and give students introductory knowledge of key literary terms, concepts, and reading strategies. Students apply this knowledge in discussing and writing about literary texts and consider how literature inscribes the human experience. Because these classes emphasize the reading of primary texts, instructors will focus on literacy skills to supplement content course work.

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Utilize basic formal elements, techniques, concepts and vocabulary of specific disciplines within the Arts and Humanities.
2. Distinguish among various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.
3. Demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence creative expression in the Arts and Humanities.
4. Evaluate the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural, and historical contexts.
5. Evaluate enduring and contemporary issues of human experience.
6. Students will read, comprehend, and analyze primary texts independently and proficiently.

**World History** (3 hours)

HIST 101 or 102

World History introduces students to the global past while also developing their critical thinking skills. We live in a world tightly linked by webs of communication, commerce, and shared challenges. Despite these links, the world remains diverse in its cultures, ideals, and institutions. World Civilization helps students understand this integration and continuing diversity, and strengthens students' ability to evaluate sources and arguments. Because these classes emphasize the reading of primary texts, instructors will focus on literacy skills to supplement content course work

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences.
2. Apply knowledge, theories, and research methods, including ethical conduct, to analyze problems pertinent to at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences.
3. Understand and demonstrate how at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences conceptualizes diversity and the ways it shapes human experience.
4. Integrate knowledge of at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences into issues of personal or public importance.
5. Communicate effectively using the language and terminology germane to at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences.
6. Students will read, comprehend, and analyze primary texts independently and proficiently.

***Explorations:*****Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**

*Explorations* courses introduce students to discipline-specific concepts, theories, methodologies, and practices that provide a variety of ways to know and understand the world. From artistic expression to scientific experimentation, students learn how various forms of disciplinary knowledge can be applied to solve problems, to understand social interaction, and to interpret human experience through language and image. (12 hours)

**A. Arts and Humanities (3 hours)**

Students analyze concepts, theories, methodologies, and practices from the arts and humanities in order to interpret the human experience through literary, visual, and performing arts. Courses offer opportunities for students to explore cultural expressions and enduring questions about human experience.

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Utilize basic formal elements, techniques, concepts and vocabulary of specific disciplines within the Arts and Humanities.
2. Distinguish between various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.
3. Demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence creative expression in the arts and humanities.
4. Evaluate the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural, and historical contexts.
5. Evaluate enduring and contemporary issues of human experience.

**B. Social and Behavioral Sciences** (3 hours)

Students explore the human experience using theories and tools of the social and behavioral sciences. Courses require students to analyze problems and conceptualize the ways in which these theories and tools inform our understanding of the individual and society.

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences.
2. Apply knowledge, theories, and research methods, including ethical conduct, to analyze problems pertinent to at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences.
3. Understand and demonstrate how at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences conceptualizes diversity and the ways it shapes human experience.
4. Integrate knowledge of at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences into issues of personal or public importance.
5. Communicate effectively using the language and terminology germane to at least one area of the social and behavioral sciences.

**C. Natural and Physical Sciences** (Minimum of 6 hours from two different disciplines)

Students use the scientific perspective to gain basic understanding of the natural and physical world and the relevance of science to issues of personal and public importance. Courses examine scientific principles through different modes and scales of observation, development of theories and hypotheses, and data collection and interpretation. Hands-on experience provides an essential applied component in this category.

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the methods of science inquiry.
2. Explain basic concepts and principles in one or more of the sciences.
3. Apply scientific principles to interpret and make predictions in one or more of the sciences.
4. Explain how scientific principles relate to issues of personal and/or public importance.

**Connections:**

**Understanding Individual and Social Responsibility**

*Connections* courses direct students to apply and integrate discipline-specific knowledge and skills to the significant issues challenging our individual and shared responsibility as global citizens. Students will learn to analyze and evaluate cultural contexts, examine issues on both a local and global scale, and apply system-level approaches to the stewardship of our social and physical environments.

Although they may be used with a major or minor program, *Connections* courses are classes at the 200-level or above designed for the general student population, and should be taken only after students have earned at least 21 hours in **WKU Colonnade Program** coursework or have achieved junior status. *Connections* courses may not have graduate components or prerequisites other than approved courses within the **WKU Colonnade Program**. Students will take one course from each of the three following areas. Courses selected must be from three different disciplines (usually defined by course prefixes). (9 hours)

**A. Social and Cultural (3 hours)**

Students will investigate ways in which individuals shape, and are shaped by, the societies and cultures within which they live. Courses will consider the ethical questions and shared cultural values that shape societal norms and behaviors, the independent and collective or collaborative artistic expression of those values, and/or the role of social and cultural institutions in developing and sustaining norms, values, and beliefs.

Students will demonstrate the ability to

1. Analyze the development of self in relation to others and society.
2. Examine diverse values that form civically engaged and informed members of society.
3. Evaluate solutions to real-world social and cultural problems.

**B. Local to Global** (3 hours)

Students will examine local and global issues within the context of an increasingly interconnected world. Courses will consider the origins and dynamics of a global society, the significance of local phenomena on a global scale, and/or material, cultural, and ethical challenges in today's world.

Students will demonstrate the ability to

1. Analyze issues on local and global scales.
2. Examine the local and global interrelationships of one or more issues.
3. Evaluate the consequences of decision-making on local and global scales.

**C. Systems** (3 hours)

Students will examine systems, whether natural or human, by breaking them down into their component parts or processes and seeing how these parts interact. Courses will consider the evolution and dynamics of a particular system or systems and the application of system-level thinking.

Students will demonstrate the ability to

1. Analyze how systems evolve.
2. Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems.
3. Evaluate how system-level thinking informs decision-making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

The General Education Review Task Force submitted its final report to the University Senate in October 2011. Following its review, the University Senate endorsed the program in May 2012. In Summer 2012, the University Senate will establish a ***WKU Colonnade Program Implementation Committee*** that will oversee the transition to the new program. Beginning in the Fall 2012 semester, departments will be able to move forward with the revision/creation of courses for inclusion in the new program. The University Senate recommends full implementation of the ***WKU Colonnade Program*** beginning in the Fall 2014 semester. The University Senate and the Provost's office will work together to assure a seamless transition to the new core curriculum.

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