



Report of the General Education Review Task Force



Submitted October 18, 2011

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, as appointed by the college deans and the University Senate.

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 has spent much of the past three years attempting to identify and articulate basic guiding principles and goals for General Education at WKU. In keeping with the original charge, the committee has worked diligently to "develop an imaginative and innovative core curriculum that best serves the education needs of our students" in the 21st century.

In particular, we have 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 the institutional goals articulated in the 2005 Quality Enhancement Plan developed for 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 General Education Transfer Policy

(June 2011) forced our committee to consider a plan that would conform to those new statewide 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 recommends adoption of the LEAP "Essential Learning Outcomes" as the cornerstone of an effective core curriculum, including general education. Those outcomes have been 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.

After much discussion and work, the General Education Review Task Force has 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 proposes “***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. It will include both a 30-hour General Education Core and a 9-hour Baccalaureate requirement. The ***WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM*** seeks to embody the goals and learning outcomes stated above, blending both distributional elements and core curricular structures.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

THE COLONNADE PROGRAM credit hour requirements are as follows:

- **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.)

WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM

<i>GENERAL EDUCATION CORE REQUIREMENTS (30 hours)</i>		<i>BACCALAUREATE REQUIREMENTS (9 hours)</i>
FOUNDATIONS (18 hours) <i>Intellectual and Practical Skills</i>	EXPLORATIONS (12 hours) <i>Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World</i>	CONNECTIONS (9 hours) <i>Understanding Individual and Social Responsibility</i>
College Composition ENG 100 (3 hours) *Students with English ACT of 29 or above will receive credit for this requirement. Writing in the Disciplines ENG 300, or 200-level or higher writing in the discipline course. (3 hours)	Arts & Humanities (3 hours)	Social and Cultural (3 hours)
Human Communication COMM 145 or other approved courses. (3 hours)	Social and Behavioral Sciences (3 hours)	Local to Global (3 hours)
Quantitative Reasoning MATH 109, 116, or other approved courses. (3 hours) *Students with Math ACT of 26 or above will receive credit for this requirement.	Natural and Physical Sciences (Minimum of 6 hours, including one course with an essential applied/lab component. Two different disciplines must be taken.)	Systems (3 hours)
Literary Studies ENG 200 or other approved courses. (3 hours)		
World History HIST 101 or 102 (3 hours)		

***Please note: WORLD LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

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

WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM

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

ENG 100 (3 hours)

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

ENG 300 or approved "Writing in the Discipline" course (3 hours)

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

COMM 145 or other approved courses (3 hours)

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

MATH 109, 116, or other approved courses. (3 hours)

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

ENG 200 or other approved courses. (3 hours)

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. Read, comprehend, and analyze primary texts independently and proficiently.

World History

HIST 101 or 102. (3 hours)

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 History 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. 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 upper-division classes designed for the general student population, and should be taken after students have earned at least 24 hours in General Education.

Connections courses may not have graduate components or prerequisites other than approved courses within the General Education portion of the ***WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM***. Students will take one course from each of the three following areas. Courses selected must be from three different disciplines. (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 Task Force recommends full implementation the **WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM** beginning with the fall 2013 semester. The plan will be submitted to the General Education Committee in October 2011, which will then submit its recommendation to the University Senate for approval. Once approved, departments will then be able to move forward with the revision/creation of courses for inclusion in the new program. This will require cooperation between the standing university curricular bodies and whatever new body may need to be established to facilitate this implementation.

Several implementation issues will need to be addressed over the next 18 months to assure a seamless transition to the new core curriculum.

Curricular Issues

- **World Language.** The Task Force recommends that the World Language requirement be considered a graduation requirement met through a demonstrated proficiency of “Novice Mid.” This is equivalent to the Kentucky Department of Education and CPE standards for students completing two years of language study in high school as part of the pre-college curriculum. Should the statewide competency level rise to “Novice High” by 2016 as proposed, the Task Force further recommends that WKU’s requirement likewise increase. Students may demonstrate this level of proficiency prior to their enrollment in WKU by one of several nationally-normed performance indicators to be identified. Once admitted, students should fulfill this requirement prior to the completion of 60 hours of coursework. Those failing to reach this proficiency level may remediate the deficiency by completing an appropriate language course (e.g. SPAN 102 or other approved course), or completion of a two-semester sequence in a different language.
- **Quantitative Reasoning.** The Task Force recommends the inclusion of all Mathematics courses currently approved for general education credit in this sub-category. However, the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science has indicated its intention to drop MATH 116 (College Algebra) and MATH 117 (Trigonometry) as approved general education courses. Should this occur, other mathematics courses would be revised and considered as suitable replacements for those dropped. The Task Force also recommends the inclusion of Logic in this category.

- **World History and Literary Studies.** Given the prominence of ENG 200 and HIST 101/102 in the *Foundations* category of the general education portion of the program, those disciplines will not offer courses in the *Explorations* category of electives. The Task Force believes that these courses constitute an essential part of the core curriculum, but recognize the need to promote student exploration of other disciplinary perspectives in the second category. Course content and assignments will be designed to incorporate pedagogical methods to promote student reading skills.
- **Writing-in-the-Disciplines (WID).** The Task Force recommends the development of upper-level writing courses appropriate to the needs of specific disciplines or colleges (e.g. “Writing in the Natural Sciences”). This would move responsibility for such skills back to the disciplines themselves. The current ENG 300 course will remain in place for those majors or disciplines that do not wish to develop their own. Likewise, the English Department or a newly created Writing-in-the-Disciplines (WID) office would provide support for faculty in those disciplines on best practices in writing instruction.
- **Integrative learning.** The Task Force designed the program to facilitate a shared educational experience that is cumulative and makes intentional connections *between* disciplines on significant social and environmental issues. The *Connections* category allows students to go beyond foundational knowledge and skills by completing 9 hours of upper-division coursework in three specific areas that are synthetic and integrative by design. The Task Force encourages departments to develop courses that will appeal to a broad student population, applying that specific disciplinary knowledge to important issues of global citizenship.

Resources and Administrative Support

Successful implementation of the **WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM** will require university support in terms of resources and flexibility on staffing and faculty workload.

- **Workload/Credit Hour Production.** Faculty and department heads have repeatedly pointed to this issue as the biggest potential obstacle to revision. The current method of counting and rewarding SCHP may act as a disincentive to innovation and interdisciplinary cooperation. In order to support more integrative learning experiences, departments need to know

that they will not be penalized for doing so through a possible drop in SCHP. The implementation of this more robust core curriculum will necessitate the creation of new courses, and, therefore, may also require additional faculty.

- **Faculty Development.** The successful implementation of a new core curriculum will require the support and commitment of significant resources, both human and financial. Academic Affairs should commit to a minimum of \$100,000 in professional development funding to support the initial training and support of faculty for the new WID and literacy initiatives in *Foundations*. There will also be the need of ongoing support for faculty development, including the possible need of new faculty positions to fully implement and sustain the program. In addition, the *Connections* category will benefit from multi-disciplinary collaboration on potential course clusters pursuing thematic issues across disciplines (e.g. “sustainability” as a theme). Sponsoring faculty workgroups to explore such opportunities would enhance the new curriculum.

Governance and Assessment Challenges

- **Transition.** The Task Force recommends that all currently approved general education courses be decertified. Programs wishing to have courses included in the new **WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM** must submit proposals demonstrating that those courses meet the newly approved student learning outcomes in the appropriate areas.
- The Task Force further recommends the creation of an **Interim Colonnade Implementation Committee** to facilitate the implementation of the new plan and oversee an orderly transition from the old plan to the new. Composition of the Interim Committee should include voting members selected from the Task Force and the General Education Committee, and *ex officio* non-voting representatives from the Offices of the Registrar and Provost.
- **Governance and Assessment.** The Task Force recommends that the University Senate develop a new, permanent governing and approval body for the **WKU COLONNADE PROGRAM**. The Task Force feels strongly that the current General Education Committee of the Senate is not structured to handle the ongoing maintenance and oversight of this more robust curricular program. A central task of the new governance body must be the development of an effective and sustainable assessment plan as per the recommendation of SACS. The Task Force further recommends that all approved courses be reviewed and recertified as part of the regular program review process (currently every 6 years) to ensure consistency and adherence to the stated goals.

GENERAL EDUCATION REVIEW TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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