

On November 19, 2008 the Faculty Senate approved the following step-by-step procedure for considering and approving a new General Education Program.

1) Articulate the mission of the General Education Program (GEP) at UWSP.

✓ Approved May 2008

2) Develop the explicit goals and program outcomes of the GEP.

✓ Approved February 2009

3) Identify the GEP model (core, distribution, decentralized, etc.) including its relationship to degree types (BA, BS, BFA, BM).

✓ Approved April 2009

4) Identify the structural components of the GEP and specify measurable learning outcomes for each.

5) Develop course criteria for the GEP.

6) Make recommendations regarding the administration of the GEP.

GEPRC Proposal, Step 4: Identify the structural components of the GEP and specify measurable learning outcomes for each.

With Step 4 begins the critical process of crafting the details of the new General Education Program. Whatever the structural components and learning outcomes wind up being in the end, it is clear that this step must be completed in stages. With this in mind, we have circulated this proposal as an admittedly incomplete rough draft in order to begin the conversation.

Please note that our purpose as a committee is not to create the new GEP. Rather, it is to assist the campus in creating the new GEP. Consequently, we are eager to receive as much input and constructive advice as possible on the ideas outlined below. Our intent is to collect feedback between now and the end of the summer, to spend the summer considering the advice we receive, and to submit a more detailed, revised proposal to the campus for comment at the beginning of the fall semester.

The proposal is comprised of three sections: 1) a graphic representation of our proposed GEP illustrating the structural components which might comprise the curriculum; 2) an explanation of the structure we propose; and 3) a curriculum map suggesting how each component might be linked to the approved Program Outcomes.

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point General Education Program

Integration:

Becoming a Global Citizen

Environmental
Responsibility

Inclusive
Excellence

Experiential
Learning

Themes

Select one theme. Choose three courses from three different disciplines within the selected theme. Only one course may be at the 100-200 level. *Examples may include:*

- Human Rights
- Language and Culture
- Ethics and Decision-making
- Science and Society
- Gender and Sexuality
- Personal Wellness
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Capstone
Seminar in the
major

Writing in the
major

Investigation:

Understanding the Physical, Social, and Cultural Worlds

The Arts

Humanities

Social and
Behavioral
Sciences

Historical
Perspectives

Natural
Sciences

Foundation:

Developing Fundamental Skills

First Year
Experience

Writing,
Speaking, &
Information
Literacy

Quantitative
Literacy

Foreign
Language

Explanation of Proposal

In February 2009, Faculty Senate approved the following Program Goals and Outcomes for the new GEP:

UWSP General Education Program

Mission Statement: The General Education Program provides the framework of a liberal education, equipping students with the knowledge and skills to facilitate intellectual and personal growth, pursue their advanced studies, and improve the world in which they live.

At UWSP, we believe that a liberal education is essential to living in today's global society. We also believe that global citizenship must begin at home with individuals learning to see the world from perspectives other than their own. Some of these perspectives are cultural and develop from the study of other languages, ethnicities, and beliefs. Some perspectives come from honing new intellectual skills, by learning math and science, for example, or cultivating an understanding of the past and an appreciation of the arts and literature. And some perspectives are the products of unique experiences such as getting involved in a community or studying abroad.

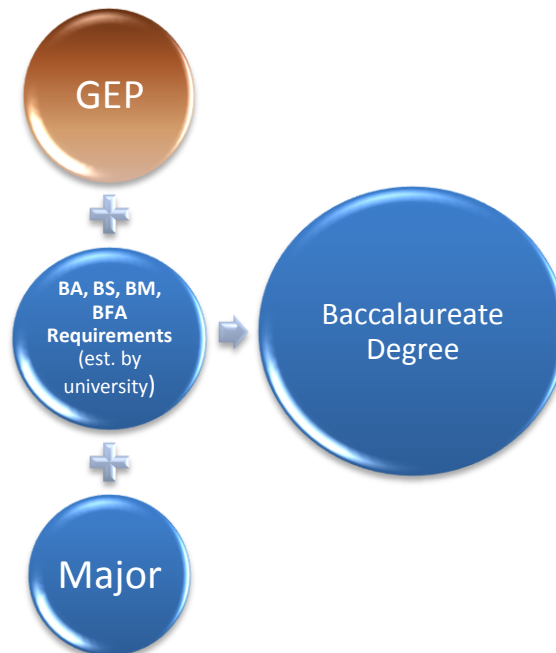
Ultimately, the more students are encouraged to step outside their familiar habits and beliefs, the more they gain the wisdom to see connections between themselves and the world around them, the generosity to empathize with the differences they encounter, and the willingness to place their newfound abilities in the service of a larger community. In this way, a liberal education at UWSP prepares students to be responsible global citizens.

GEP Learning Outcomes

The General Education Program seeks to develop these qualities of global citizenship in four distinct ways. After completing the general education curriculum, students will:

- Demonstrate critical thinking, quantitative, and communication skills necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing global society.
- Acquire broad knowledge of the physical, social, and cultural worlds as well as the methods by which this knowledge is produced.
- Recognize that responsible global citizenship involves personal accountability, social equity, and environmental sustainability.
- Apply their knowledge and skills, working in interdisciplinary ways to solve problems.

In April 2009, the Faculty Senate agreed to use a distribution model to create a new GEP curriculum, and to develop a distinct set of degree requirements as outlined below:



The current proposal is our first effort at creating a structure to satisfy these goals and outcomes for the GEP (highlighted above). In proposing this structure, we sought first to avoid creating a GEP that was comprised by a simple menu of categories and courses that are disconnected from one another. Among the clearest trends in general education is to create programs that function as cohesive curricula. In other words, a general education curriculum should be defined by clear learning outcomes that encapsulate what students will know, do, value, and appreciate when they complete the program; it should require students to move logically from the introduction and development of these outcomes toward their potential mastery; and finally, it should be connected as seamlessly as possible to the degrees and majors that students pursue.

Our proposed curricular structure is intended to accomplish each of these aims. Students begin with a First Year Experience that introduces them to academic study at a university and the skills they will need to pursue their education. Students then proceed through a series of courses that develop these skills and introduce the core methodologies necessary to understand the physical, social, and cultural worlds. Having acquired this knowledge and basic skills, students would then proceed into more specialized coursework aimed at developing the personal, social, and environmental responsibility by which we have defined global citizenship at UWSP. These courses include several organized by themes that carry general education into

upper-level coursework and offer students the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the context of a topic of their choosing. Finally, a capstone seminar in the major serves as a culminating experience.

Combined, the various components of this structure would make possible a well-defined curriculum that moves far beyond the simple menu of courses that comprise our current General Degree Requirements. Instead, students would fulfill the GEP Outcomes in a purposeful, step-by-step manner in which courses could build logically on one another, moving from introduction through development and toward mastery of the intended learning outcomes. This structure would also provide numerous opportunities for departments and programs to build on the knowledge and skills that students would acquire through the GEP.

It has been difficult for all of us at UWSP, members GEPRC included, to avoid thinking of the new GEP in terms of our current General Degree Requirements—and especially how our own courses might be affected by the reforms underway. **Yet if we are to succeed in this endeavor and create a program that will serve our students well for several decades, it is vital that we set aside the constraints of the status quo in order to imagine what is possible. It bears repeating that this “proposal” is merely a rough draft. There are no credits attached to the categories we suggest, nor particular courses specified. Rather, we intend our proposal to outline in the broadest possible terms one potential way of organizing the GEP curriculum. The committee is eager to hear comments and suggestions from the campus community.**

What follows below are brief rationales for each of the structural components that we suggest.

Foundation: Developing Fundamental Skills

Courses listed under this category are intended to provide students with the basic skills necessary to succeed in their studies at UWSP. These include, in particular, the “critical thinking, quantitative, and communication skills” referred to in the first Program Outcome, as well as foreign language.

First Year Experience

A First Year Experience is an academically rigorous foundational course for incoming first year students. The course is designed to introduce critical thinking skills, orientate students to the academic community and campus life, and equip incoming freshman with other skills necessary to be a successful student. The course will foster intellectual inquiry and self-assessment and help students begin the process of taking responsibility for their education, career choices and personal development.

Writing, Speaking, and Information Literacy

First year writing classes provide a foundation of communication skills on which students can build throughout the rest of their university careers and beyond. They develop students' skills in analyzing audience, structuring written documents, and understanding and applying the conventions of effective writing. Subsequent writing courses build upon these skills by helping students learn to locate sources, critically analyze information, and synthesize their ideas with those of others to write well-supported academic arguments. They also provide an essential starting point for the more specialized writing students will be expected to do in the future within their fields of study.

Oral communication is an essential part of a liberal arts education. However, effective communication in today's society requires more than the acquisition of oral presentation skills. UWSP also expects students to develop skills in using visual communications technologies and other media tools in order to enhance presentations and connect more meaningfully with audiences.

Quantitative Literacy

Quantitative literacy is knowledge of and confidence with basic mathematical/analytical concepts and operations required for problem-solving, decision-making, economic productivity and real-world applications. Such skills are essential for citizens living in today's global society.

Foreign Language

The study of foreign languages introduces students to new perspectives, provides a foundation for international communication, fosters critical thinking, and imbues students with the knowledge and appreciation of other cultures—all essential preparation for living and thriving in a global society.

Please note: Requiring a year of foreign language of every student at UWSP would obviously be difficult given current staffing constraints. The committee believes that consideration should be given to including foreign language as an entrance requirement. If the university were to insist that incoming students have two years of high-school foreign language—and if it were to allow those lacking this preparation the alternate path of taking a year of language at UWSP after admission—this might prove to be the most efficient means of guaranteeing that students receive the necessary training in language skills.

Investigation: Understanding the Physical, Social, and Cultural Worlds

In addition to developing critical thinking skills in the context of various disciplines, this category in the GEP maps directly to the second Program Outcome: namely, that students will “acquire broad knowledge of the physical, social, and cultural worlds as well as the methods by which this knowledge is produced.” The specific components that comprise this category come almost directly from the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes. (See the document on our Web site: <https://committees.uwsp.edu/gedpolrev/default.aspx>.)

The Arts

The arts celebrate the human capacity to imagine, to create and to transform ideas into expressive forms. The arts provide us with a rich record of human cultures and values throughout time. They enable us to understand and enjoy the experience of our senses and to sharpen our aesthetic sense. Courses in the arts examine the process of creativity, the analysis of the artistic imagination or the relationship between artists, their works and the societies in which their works are produced. The arts challenge you to understand creativity and the distinctive intellectual process of the human imagination.

Humanities

The humanities explore the fundamental ideas and values shaping cultures and civilization, in life and as represented in the written word, using scholarly approaches that are primarily analytical, critical, or interpretive. By introducing students to thoughts, beliefs, and ethical concepts within and outside their own perspectives, courses in the humanities help students to understand and critically engage a variety of worldviews and the ideas that give them meaning.

Social and Behavioral Sciences

The social and behavioral sciences provide students with an understanding of humans and their behavior as individuals and within communities, institutions, and social structures. Courses in this category equip students to contribute to public discourse and function as responsible citizens of their professions and communities.

Historical Perspectives

An understanding of the past and the methods by which people seek to explain it are essential to finding meaning in the present. By exploring the evolution of human societies—their institutions, ideas, and values—students gain a framework for

understanding themselves and the world; and they learn to make connections between the natural sciences, the social sciences, the arts, and the humanities.

Natural Sciences

As the progress of our society becomes more dependent on science and technology, our future becomes increasingly dependent upon a scientifically literate population. Individuals today must be sufficiently knowledgeable about scientific facts, science applications, and the process of scientific inquiry in order to make reasoned decisions concerning their use in addressing society's problems. Courses in this area should contain a laboratory component to develop an understanding of scientific inquiry.

Integration: Becoming a Global Citizen

Courses in this category are meant to foster the development of global citizens as defined in the approved Program Goals and Outcomes: they help students “to see the world from perspectives other than their own,” and to “recognize that responsible global citizenship involves personal accountability, social equity, and environmental sustainability.” These courses are also meant to build on the earlier components of the GEP, giving students the opportunity to develop, integrate, and apply the knowledge and skills they learned.

Environmental Responsibility

Maintaining a sustainable natural environment is necessary to the long-term survival of all organisms, including humans. An understanding of the individual, social, cultural, and natural factors that influence and contribute to environmental sustainability and ecosystem function is, therefore, essential to responsible global citizenship.

Inclusive Excellence

The term “Inclusive Excellence” is borrowed from the UW-System initiative that replaced Plan 2008. Currently, UW System rules mandate that all universities require students to complete a minority studies course. Although it remains unclear whether this mandate will remain a part of the Inclusive Excellence initiative, the committee believes that students will continue to benefit from a deep understanding of the wide spectrum of social, ethnic, political, and cultural diversity in contemporary society.

Experiential Learning

Students benefit from opportunities to learn by reflecting on experiences outside the classroom, and by applying the knowledge and skills they gain from more traditional courses. An experiential learning requirement at UWSP could potentially be satisfied in

a number of ways, including service learning, internships, international programs, and student-involvement activities among others. By allowing students to choose from a menu of options to fulfill this requirement, we could include experiential learning as part of the new GEP while minimizing its potential burden on administration and resources.

Themes

Courses in this area give students the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the context of a topic of their choosing, and to do so in ways that encourage thinking across disciplinary lines and methodologies. (These courses could comprise an interdisciplinary experience depending on how they were integrated together and assessed.) Topics are meant to be especially relevant to developing the qualities of global citizenship outlined above. Courses within each theme should seek explicitly to develop the knowledge and skills that students acquire in earlier components of the GEP.

Please note: the list of themes provided in the graphic is meant to be suggestive, not comprehensive. In fact, among the comments we would most like to receive from faculty are further suggestions for themes that might be appropriate to this category of the GEP. We hope especially that faculty might see this proposed component of the GEP as an opportunity to work together with colleagues in other disciplines to create challenging, engaging themes from which students could select.

Writing in the Major

The committee suggests that, as part of the new GEP, departments and programs be required to create a writing-in-the-major program in order to aid students in developing their writing ability. The courses that comprise these programs need not be held to exactly the same standards as the current Writing Emphasis criteria demand. Yet they should fulfill the same basic purpose.

Among the clearest messages the committee received when we first sought input on how to reform our General Degree Requirements was that: 1) students, faculty, and staff all hoped to see strengthened requirements for effective writing; and 2) nearly everyone believed that the current Writing Emphasis requirement had become dysfunctional. The committee believes that a writing-in-the-major program could address both these concerns.

For an example of a writing-in-the-major program, see the one at UW-La Crosse: <http://www.uwlax.edu/wimp/>.

Capstone Seminar in the Major

As with writing-in-the-major, the committee suggests that all departments and programs be required to create a capstone seminar as part of the new GEP. A capstone seminar is a course designed to be offered in the final semester of a student's major. It is meant to tie together the key learning objectives that faculty expect the student to have learned during the major and to link these explicitly with the Program Outcomes of the GEP. Capstone seminars provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate how they can integrate the knowledge, abilities, and values that faculty have been teaching or demonstrating.

Request for Comment

As the members of the campus community consider this proposal, it bears repeating that the ideas outlined above comprise a rough draft intended simply to begin a conversation. The committee requests that comments be focused along two specific lines.

First, what revisions would you suggest to the structural components themselves?

- Are there components you feel are inappropriate or unjustified?
- Are there components you feel should be added?
- Are there ways in which you might reorganize the curriculum?

Second, to the extent that you favor a given structural component, what learning outcomes would you specify for the courses it might include? (For sample outcomes, please check the Web site noted below.)

- What outcomes should define the Humanities, for example?
- To what extent should students in a natural science class be able to apply the scientific method?
- In which courses should we assess critical thinking, communication, and writing?

The committee will collect feedback from now through the end of the summer. Comments can be posted on our Web site: (<https://committees.uwsp.edu/gedpolrev/Step4/default.aspx>) or emailed directly to the committee's co-chairs: Don Guay (dguay@uwsp.edu) or Greg Summers (gsummers@uwsp.edu).

UWSP General Education Program Curriculum Map

Mission Statement: <i>The General Education Program provides the framework of a liberal education, equipping students with the knowledge and skills to facilitate intellectual and personal growth, pursue their advanced studies, and improve the world in which they live.</i>															
	Foundation: Developing Fundamental Skills				Investigation: Understanding the Physical, Social, and Cultural Worlds					Integration: Becoming a Global Citizen					
Program Outcomes	<i>First Year Experience</i>	<i>Writing, Speaking, & Information Literacy</i>	<i>Quantitative Literacy</i>	<i>Foreign Language</i>	<i>The Arts</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Social & Behavioral Sciences</i>	<i>Historical Perspectives</i>	<i>Natural Sciences</i>	<i>Environmental Responsibility</i>	<i>Inclusive Excellence</i>	<i>Experiential Learning</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Writing in the Major</i>	<i>Capstone Seminar in the Major</i>
<i>Demonstrate critical thinking, quantitative, and communication skills necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing global society.</i>	I	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	M	M
<i>Acquire broad knowledge of the physical, social, and cultural worlds as well as the methods by which this knowledge is produced.</i>	I			D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D		M
<i>Recognize that responsible global citizenship involves personal accountability, social equity, and environmental sustainability.</i>	I									D	D	D	D		M
<i>Apply their knowledge and skills, working in interdisciplinary ways to solve problems.</i>					I	I	I	I	I			D	D	D	M
	I → Introduce D → Develop M → Master														