

Listed below are comments on the Step 4c, GEP Structural Components Proposal provided to the committee during the Open Forums, sent by email, or posted to the committee's Web site.

Open Forum, Dec. 16, 2009:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/media/admin/ACAAFF/GenEdReview2009/index.aspx>

Open Forum, Jan. 19, 2010:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/media/admin/ACAAFF/GenEdReview2010/index.aspx>

Emailed Comments

Posted: 12/4/2009 9:07 PM

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Guay, Don

Don:

My comments about the proposed general education model follow below. I discussed my opinions about the general education model with my colleagues in the Fisheries and Water Resources Discipline and they fully supported my comments. As you can see below, my support for the general education model at this stage of the process hinges strongly on details that will follow later. The process used to develop the general education program was seriously flawed from the outset, in my opinion, so comments about the proposal must necessarily be contingent on elements not yet defined. In any case, my comments are as follows:

**Foundation: Developing Fundamental Skills**

The proposal calls for First Year Seminar (3 credits), Written and Oral Communication (9 credits), Quantitative Literacy (3 credits), and Wellness (1 credit), which is one credit more than our current GDR program. The proposal differs from our current GDR model primarily in 3 new credits for First Year Seminar. I can only support the First Year Seminar if individual colleges or departments are permitted to design their own courses to fulfill the requirement. If such courses are delegated to individual departments, then we (CNR) could design part of our core curriculum to fulfill the requirements of a First Year Seminar (e.g. redesign NR 150 as a First Year Seminar). Other components of this segment of the proposal are largely unchanged: Written and Oral Communication

increases from 8 credits to 9 credits by making Communication 101 a 3-credit class instead of a 2-credit class; Quantitative Literacy decreases from 7 credits to 3 credits, though the change does not affect any of our majors that already require 3-6 credits of calculus; and Wellness decreases from 3 credits to 1 credit. ***In conclusion, I support requirements of this program element only if First Year Seminar is delegated to the College level for development within specific programs of study.***

### **Investigation: Understanding the Physical, Social, and Cultural Worlds**

The proposal calls for 21 total credits, with 3-6 credits in each of five areas, including Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Historical Perspectives, and Natural Sciences, which is (on the surface) much lower than our current requirement for 33-36 credits. Closer inspection shows that the proposal could result in no change in the number of credits taken by our students. First, 3-6 credits in Arts and 3-6 credits in Humanities is no different than 6-12 credits currently required in Humanities (which includes Arts and Humanities). Second, 3-6 credits in Social Sciences could be no different than 6-12 credits in Social Sciences (at least 6 of which must be in SS1 courses and up to 6 can be in SS2 courses), if the new proposal transports only SS1 courses into the new Social Science category. Third, 3-6 credits in Historical Perspectives is no different than 3 credits currently required in History. Fourth, 3-6 credits in Natural Sciences is lower than 12-15 credits currently required in Critical Thinking/Natural Sciences, but the reduction would not affect students like ours that are required to make many more courses than the minimum number required by the GDR program. ***In conclusion, I suggest that Arts and Humanities be combined into a single category, Humanities (3 credits), AND that any course currently designated as SS1 or SS2 be enabled as a Social Science course, AND that total credits required in this component be reduced from 21 credits to 12 credits (3 credits within each topic area, including Humanities, Social Sciences, History, and Natural Sciences).***

### **Integration: Applying Knowledge and Skills**

The proposal calls for 3 total credits, including one 3-credit

Interdisciplinary Course OR an Interdisciplinary Minor OR an Interdisciplinary Certificate, and courses in Experiential Learning, Communicating in the Major, and a Capstone Experience in the Major. This component of the overall model is nebulous, so will largely hinge on details to follow at the next stage of development. For example, a 3-credit Interdisciplinary Course is a good idea if course development is delegated to individual Colleges, Departments, or programs. For example, we could design a 3-credit Interdisciplinary Course that would simultaneously fulfill the requirement for a Capstone Experience in the Major (i.e. kills two birds with one stone). Further, we presently require students to take courses within our major that could qualify as Communicating in the Major (e.g. Water 483 – Fishery Research). Last, we presently offer Internships (Water 381) that could qualify as Experiential Learning. In conclusion, this component of the model could minimally impact on our students, but only if implementation details are delegated to us. ***In conclusion, I support requirements of this program element, but only if implementation is delegated to the College level for development within specific programs of study.***

The most disturbing discovery of my review of the general education model is that the new program could result in virtually no change in total credits required of our students (depending on how courses are defined for inclusion under various elements of the program)! This outcome would seem to defy the reason that the general education program is being revised!

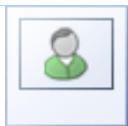
Mike

Michael J. Hansen

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Don,  
I have a comment that is related to GEP but is mostly related to the meeting comments. The following comment:

Guay, Don

“There are several existing courses focusing culture and cross-cultural subjects by instructors who are experts in those areas (example: Middle Eastern history). Strong concern was raised about “diluting” courses on culture if they are to be taught by those who do not have expertise in the subject matter. If instructors who do not have established knowledge/expertise, then they need proper and extensive training. How would this be accomplished? “

This does not seem to be in the nature of inter-disciplinary collaboration and frankly is a bit demeaning. I can see the potential to offer at least two of my courses (Native American Forestry and International Resource Management) as courses focusing on culture. I expect that in both cases these will be hard to push through the committees based on thought-processes (i.e. turf protection) like those presented in this comment. I am not a specialist on Native American Forestry (although I know more on the topic than most other faculty members on this campus) and I am equally not an International Resource Management specialist (whatever that would be) but I can talk about the impacts of CITES, NAFTA and the relationship to resources utilization without the course being “diluted.” In both cases, students would be hearing from a “expert” (which is by the way, a word that I hate) in natural resources discussing the impacts of cultural factors on management, not an “expert” in culture. This student would be more likely to consider this to be something they need to know, if a person that has worked in the field that the student hopes to someday work in, knows it, than if someone that can’t identify mahogany from eucalypt (this is not being disrespectful, it is simply stating a fact, because there is more than one “way of knowing” and this demonstrates another “way of knowing”), tells them that debt servicing is cause deforestation. This is the nature of GEP classes, there are things that EVERYONE needs to know, not just some “experts.”

That is my take on this, maybe a bit negative, but I am being proactive on this because frankly, when I submit my courses for approval to cover these topics (which I intend to do, as soon as a process for approval exists), I do not want somebody claiming that my teaching a course of this nature would be “diluting” the requirements. This lack of understanding of the knowledge base that is present in other field-of-study on this campus is incredibly disheartening and this disrespect needs to be corrected before it becomes a mantra.

MCD

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Posted: 12/18/2009 11:36 AM

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Guay, Don

Dear Don,

How are you? I hope the end of the semester finds you well. I wanted to send a couple of thoughts about the GEPRC Proposal 4c:

1. I worry about the wording used in the passages about the courses: "Upon completion of these credits, students will be able to:" I am concerned about this wording because it sounds like a guarantee. I have known too many seniors in mid-upper division classes who cannot read and understand articles about science for the educated public, who exhibit little precision or accuracy in their written language on assignments, or who cannot construct grammatically correct sentences. Perhaps I would feel more comfortable with "upon successful completion..." If students cannot do all of these things when they finish the courses, will they fail? Will they get a C and move on anyway? I am only wondering how these ideas will be implemented, enforced, or assessed, and how students (and faculty) will be held accountable to the goals set forth in the proposal.

2. I know the current program cuts the number of credits required overall. In the Biology department, people have expressed the strong need for all freshmen to take intro bio and chem classes their first and second semester. Because these classes are currently all 5 credits, students are faced with 10 credits of science (and perhaps 3 additional credits of Math). Personally, I am not sure if it is necessary to make these courses 5 credits, but I don't know the history behind that (may have to do with how much work professors are asked to put into such courses?). Either way, this leaves students with perhaps 16 credits (with FYS) their first semester, and no room for anything except perhaps wellness in addition, without taking an overload. I think the system has to change more broadly to accommodate the new plan, but I fear that people in the departments will oppose any such changes. I do not oppose them.

3. I am happy that the FYS will be required, and that you recognize the need for training and compensation for faculty who take part. I am nervous that the implementation of such a program will require more than our currently-required numbers of hours in class and prep, and that we will be asked to do this without additional compensation or relief from some other teaching duties while teaching this. That said, if it is done in such a way as to treat faculty fairly, I think it is a great idea, and I would be interested in contributing to such a course (teaching a section, etc.).

Overall, I think the proposal is really well constructed, and well thought out. I really appreciate all of the time you are putting into this--it is an incredibly daunting (Herculean?) task, and the committee is doing an amazing job.

Take care,

Tracy S. Feldman

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Posted: 12/18/2009 11:37 AM

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Guay, Don

Don,

I am covering Urgent Care for our health service at the time of your meetings. I strongly recommend that UWSP maintain a multi-credit requirement that assists students in learning the life skills that will result in improved personal wellness at the time of graduation. For about 20 years, I assisted John Munson in teaching the Healthy American course. As part of that course, each student had several individual evaluations of their personal well being. One of the evaluations included an assessment of strength, flexibility, endurance, percent body fat, blood pressure and heart rate. It is unfortunate that our society has norms that result in steady worsening levels of well being among the first year students.

In my 37 years of work in college health, I have observed an increasing need for time spent on the task of assisting student learning in the area of personal well being. We now see undergraduate students with adult onset diabetes.

James Albertson had a vision that this campus should not only teach the academic disciplines, but it should also help students learn how to live their lives successfully. That philosophy is what helped begin a process that resulted in UWSP become known nationally as a "Center of Excellence" in wellness.

We have methods to actually measure student well being. When it comes to wellness, behaviors are essential. Facts alone will not promote useful longevity. The majority of Americans who die prematurely, die as a result of poor decisions they have made with regard to their lifestyle choices. For every person who dies prematurely, there are several who don't die early, but do live a life of

reduced capacity to do things they wish they could do. This is a terrible, preventable loss.

I encourage your committee to weave "the value of personal wellness" throughout the college career. It takes Time on Task ("TOT") to help shift cultural norms. There are huge pressures from multiple sources that attempt to sidetrack wellness choices. Our campus could continue to try to resist those cultural norms. Time on task (TOT) is essential. TOT need not occur in any special college or school.

If I were able to give students one understanding during their career at UWSP, it would be the gift of perspective. Helping students learn that their behavioral choices do matter, more later than now, is a difficult task. But, it is a task worthy of a few credits distributed throughout the college career.

Enjoy the deliberations.

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Posted: 12/30/2009 10:16 AM

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Guay, Don

Dear Don,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the latest changes in the General Education Proposal online.

I also looked at the comments that were recently given.

Overall, the proposal and rationale are presented well in a clear, concise manner. I think it has strengths that the different majors can build on. I especially support the First Year Experience 3-credit course. I also agree with one of the comments that this course would do well based with in the major when possible.

I look forward to attending the Forum on this proposal and sorry that today's was cancelled.

In appreciation for all of the work by the committee for a quality education, thank you.  
Sincerely,  
Kathe Julin

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Posted: 12/30/2009 12:08 PM

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Guay, Don

Don,  
I applaud the look of this proposal overall. I have only one question. Will those teaching both writing and speaking in the major courses be given training for doing this, much the way we have the WE training course now? I hope so. Those of us with extensive experience with the pedagogy and practice of teaching speaking skills know that it's not something just anyone can jump into. At the very least, examples of clear rubrics helping to distinguish between average, excellent, and inadequate performance should be provided, and opportunities to watch and critique different types of presentations should be given. Naturally, the different majors will need to adapt these to meet the specific needs of their disciplines; however, a good starting place is essential.

Rhonda

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Posted: 12/30/2009 12:13 PM

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Guay, Don

Drat! Chances are good that I'll be administering a final at that time. I will, however, be able to attend the open forum on Jan 19 and I'll leave feedback on the website as soon as I can.

First reactions:

- 1) Good job!
- 2) There are not (contrary to rumors of rumors) too many credits at the investigation level.
- 3) I like the approach to interdiscipinarity.
- 4) I like the three credit FYS.



Thanks for all your work on this!

Dona

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Posted: 12/30/2009 12:16 PM

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Guay, Don

**Comments & Suggestions from Eric Yonke,  
2009-2010 Academic Affairs Committee Chair**  
December 29, 2009

**Defining Core Values of the University Degree—or What We Believe All UWSP Graduates Should Know Regardless of their Major**

The **Cultural and Environmental Awareness** area of the GEP proposal provides one set of educational priorities, themes and topics that we will require all students to study. Students will be required to take courses on these “issues” because we are arguing that studying them will “better prepar[e] students for responsible citizenship.” I would suggest re-titling the **Cultural and Environmental Awareness** section to focus on responsible citizenship.

1. Global Studies is justified in the proposal by arguing that students can learn to “appreciate the key differences . . . and reach a better understanding of the human condition on a global scale. Moreover, this understanding will prepare students to act thoughtfully and responsibly in a global society” (11).
2. Environmental Responsibility, like Global Studies, is justified by arguing that students NEED to learn environmental responsibility: It is “essential to responsible global citizenship.”
3. U.S. Diversity Studies is not defended as forcefully as Global Studies or Environmental Responsibility. It is justified in the proposal because students can learn “to consider the role of diversity in American life . . .” But

where is the statement, as explained in Global Studies, that argues U.S. Diversity Studies is intended to prepare students to act thoughtfully and responsibly?

These three priorities are essentially *values for responsible citizenship*, and they constitute a core statement of what this GEP wants to achieve positively.

**Further Suggestions:**

- Consider making the language more consistent, possibly parallel, for all three items to emphasize responsible citizenship.
- Consider titling these items similarly by dropping “studies”—which can imply commitment to a specific interdisciplinary academic unit—and emphasizing the intended outcome: Global Awareness, Environmental Responsibility, and Diversity & Inclusion. I chose “inclusion” because it moves beyond the rather neutral recognition of diversity to put forward a positive societal value of inclusion.
- Consider moving Wellness to this category of responsible citizenship. Wellness is a framework of personal values outlined in the “Seven Dimensions of Wellness”. A general education program can help by introducing students to the concepts of wellness and help students develop the habits of wellness as part of preparing them to be responsible citizens.

The GEP proposal includes three interconnected sets of priorities: values for responsible citizenship, skills & knowledge essential for advanced university study, and learning experiences critical to a well-rounded education. The following comments and suggestions are based on examining these three sets.

**Structure and Logic Within the Areas of Foundation, Integration, and Investigation: Do the Components Within Each Area Fit Logically with One Another?**

Each area currently mixes skills & knowledge with modes of learning and educational values. This creates problems in comparing goals, learning outcomes, and types of

measurement .

1. Under **Foundation: Developing Fundamental Skills**, communication skills and mathematical skills (quantitative literacy) are definable and measurable in academic terms. But
  - a. First Year Seminar is a mode of learning/instruction rather than a skill set.
  - b. Wellness is a set of values to develop a set of personal lifestyle habits.
2. Under **Investigation: Understanding the Physical, Social, and Cultural Worlds**, the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences are recognized academic areas. Historical “perspectives” is not.
3. Under **Integration: Applying Knowledge and Skills**, experiential learning, interdisciplinary studies, and a capstone experience in the major are all modes of learning/instruction/delivery. Communicating in the major is a measurable set of skills. Further,
  - a. Experiential Learning can be both integrative and investigative. A senior internship can be integrative. A sophomore service learning experience is investigative as much as integrative.
    - 1) Nothing under the listed experiential learning outcomes suggests that it is necessarily integrative, cumulative or capstone.
    - 2) It is integrative in the sense of the GEP’s general outcomes bullet #4 – “applying knowledge & skills, working in interdisciplinary ways to solve problems.” Any externship or applied experiential learning beyond the lecture hall or lab requires the person to draw on **all** of her skills and knowledge—

not just those learned within a single discipline.

3) It is not a measurable skill or knowledge base.

b. Interdisciplinary Studies are not necessarily cumulative or capstone. The outcomes statement focuses on identifying an “issue,” which shares a common theme-based approach with the first year seminar.

**Suggestions:**

- Delineate skills & knowledge, modes of learning/instruction/delivery, and core values so that we can examine and compare items appropriately within the GEP. The Foundation and Investigation areas focus on skills and knowledge logically.
- Consider focusing the Integration: Applying Knowledge and Skills area solely on modes of learning, types of instruction, and course delivery. This area would encompass the first year seminar, experiential learning, interdisciplinary *learning*, a capstone experience (within the major).
- Consider renaming the “Cultural and Environmental Awareness” area to clarify and encompass all of the core values being promoted by the GEP. (See above section).
- Consider moving Wellness to core values. (See above section.)
- Move the First Year Seminar to modes of learning/instruction/delivery as described above. These seminars will focus on certain skills at a foundational level and can serve as the venue for the collection of baseline data for measurement of GEP outcomes. But given the thematic approach to these seminars, their content will also provide the first integrative educational experience.
- Rename Historical Perspectives. Is it History or not? The GEPRC should create a separate category for History or place History in the humanities & social sciences categories. My vote is for History as a separate category.

- Place Interdisciplinary Studies under Integration (modes of learning/instruction/delivery).
- Place Communicating in the Major under skills & knowledge. This isn't really integrative or "capstone" as much as it is a discrete skill development.

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Posted: 1/15/2010 11:55 AM

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Guay, Don

Happy New Year Don,

Thank you all for all the work on the GED over the past several years which is generally coming along well. Thank you also for the opportunity for input along the way.

I do find issue with the investigation level of the proposed Curriculum:

**Investigation: Understanding the Physical, Social, and Cultural Worlds** requires 21 credits includes 3-6 credits in each of the following boxed categories: **1) Arts, 2) Humanities, 3) Social Sciences, 4) Historical Perspectives** and finally **5) Natural Sciences**. I strongly opposed the notion that the social, cultural and historical fields are so well endowed in this proposal at the expense of Natural Sciences. As Historical perspectives are fundamentally important in each of the other four categories listed above, there is absolutely no reason to cite "historical perspectives" as a separate category. The investigation level is supposed to focus on global studies—we could well argue for a separate boxed category for "Geographical Perspectives" but we would not because that would be self-serving to the Geography-Geol Department. It is a widely understood fact that American undergraduate students are not well trained in Natural Science. This proposal does nothing to improve upon this sad fact.

Therefore, I urge you to **eliminate a separate "historical perspectives category"** and **require at least 6 credits to the Natural Science** field which would be in better balance with the social and cultural fields.

Thank you

Kevin Hefferan

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Guay, Don

Don and Jeff

I am trying to follow up on the recommendation on the reduction of wellness credits from 3 to 1 in regard to the GDR committee work.

First, I hope you follow the fitness testing in school proposal link provided below.

In Wisconsin we are in trouble fitness-wise in K-12 schools. Kids aren't getting what they need, and now the new GDR proposal as is will ensure they won't get it at UWSP either.

Second, at the last meeting I was somewhat insulted by the comment that "well I took aerobic activities here, and they weren't very rigorous - they were fun classes" (note this was televised) I don't want to name courses in the same way, but trust me when I tell you that there are many required GDR courses offered here in other areas "non-western, env. studies, minority studies, etc. That aren't rigorous either, and plus they aren't fun.

I certainly will admit that we can alter the way we offer either aerobic activity or health enhancement courses, but up till now we have followed the university guidelines that we needed to. We are more than willing to change the curriculum to fit the vision presented in the new GDR proposal. In addition, the wellness courses offered in HPHW are currently much more aligned already to fit within this scope.

Personally what I have gotten out of this process is that we have taken 4 major areas: **Minority studies, non-western, environmental literacy** and wellness, and for three of them (the red ones) allowed the same number of credits, while throwing wellness curriculum out as being not as important.

I truly believe that this is being by size of colleges, because there is no way how I can see that wellness as a topic, could be rated as less important than the other three areas. Certainly not an area which was told to me that students can just pick up thru the remainder of their college years (again on TV).

What I would propose is that these 4 areas be allowed the same status, and that you allow the students to choose the 3 areas that they

want to demonstrate inclusive excellence in, and allow them to choose one of these areas to just be introduced. I doubt this would happen, because that would give the students choice, and we can't have that.

Sorry for the sarcasm, but we can't seem to reach the committee on our views, we will once again force students to choose what we think they should demonstrate is important in inclusive excellence.

Thanks you for your time, and I hope that you follow the TV link.

Rory Suomi

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Posted: 1/18/2010 8:36 AM

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Olsen, Gary

#### Dona Warren's Comments on Step 4C.

I must commend the Committee for what I find to be a very well-conceived and clearly articulated proposal! What follows is brief discussion of what I especially like and some suggestions for change. I start by considering the diagram of the curriculum itself, and then I work my way up it.

##### 1) Thoughts about the Diagram

I have always liked the graphical representations that you've provided for the general education curriculum. They are exceptionally helpful!

I would strongly recommend that these diagrams be distributed and discussed in all sections of the first year seminar. This would go a long way, I believe, toward introducing students to the structure that will guide their study here at UWSP.

I would also recommend that "historical perspectives" be placed between "humanities" and "social sciences" in this diagram. Not only would this allow the social sciences and natural sciences categories to adjoin each other, but it would reflect the fact that history (at least as I understand it) has some affinities to the humanities and some affinities to the social sciences. I see this level of the diagram as looking like:

[Arts] [Humanities] [History (or Hist. Understanding)] [Social Science] [Natural Science]

##### 2) Thoughts about the First Year Seminar

I think it's a very good idea to have the First Year Seminar carry

three credits and to require these courses to place some meaningful emphasis on critical thinking. By including the application of critical thinking skills as a learning outcome for this course, we will help to ensure that students approach subsequent classes with a basic grasp of some essential skills, and by having the First Year Seminar be a three-credit course, instructors will enjoy ample opportunity to tailor these classes to their own passions.

I noticed that the Committee recommends that the First Year Seminar remain optional for a period of five years in order to give the campus sufficient time to implement the program. This might be a good idea, but I'm concerned that an optional First Year Seminar will not attract sufficient student interest to fill the (hopefully increasing) number of these sections that we offer. To avoid this difficulty, I suggest that the First Year Seminar be allowed to carry "investigation level" credit – as an arts, humanities, history, social science, or natural science class – until (and only until) the First Year Seminar is required of all students.

### 3) Thoughts about the Investigation Level in General and about Humanities in Particular

The integration level promises to provide students with a solid introduction to the major areas of study that constitute a liberal education, and it does so in what is probably the fewest number of credits suitable to the purpose.

At the integration level, both the description of humanities and the humanities outcomes have undergone very nice development. I do, however, have some (possibly minor) suggestions:

The description reads: "The humanities explore the fundamental ideas and values shaping cultures and civilization..." I might suggest revising this to read "The humanities explore the fundamental ideas and values shaping cultures, civilization, and worldviews..." My thinking here is that "cultures" and "civilizations" are both social units. It's not possible for a culture or civilization to be enacted or instantiated by only person. It is, however, possible for an individual to have a worldview that is shared by no one else, and I think that humanities are important at least in part because they help individuals to understand and redefine their own, possibly idiosyncratic, perspective on things. In fact, I think that the ability of the humanities to do exactly this is what attracts many students to these disciplines.

Further on, the description reads: "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.” I think that this is fairly good, but I’m not clear on the difference between “thought” and “belief” and I think that humanities introduces students to important new concepts beyond ethical notions. Concepts like “innate ideas,” “empiricism,” and “materialism,” for example, aren’t ethical concepts but they are nonetheless very powerful tools that enable individuals to conceptualize their experiences in new and useful ways. I would suggest revising this sentence in the humanities description to read, “By introducing students to concepts and beliefs 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.”

The first learning outcome for humanities is “Demonstrate an understanding of the human condition by reading carefully, speaking clearly, thinking critically, or writing persuasively about cultures and cultural works/artifacts (including: texts, images, performances, and technologies, as well as other aspects of culture).” This is quite good, it seems to me! I would, however, reorder the verbs to place the performances of writing and speaking together and to place reading next to writing. I might also change the “and” to an “or” between “cultures” and “cultural works.” I recommend the following: “Demonstrate an understanding of the human condition by thinking critically, reading carefully, writing persuasively, or speaking clearly about cultures or cultural works/artifacts (including: texts, images, performances, and technologies, as well as other aspects of culture).”

Having changed the “and” to an “or” in the first learning outcome, I would recommend the same change in the second outcome, moving from “Identify and analyze how beliefs, values, languages, theories, or laws shape cultures and cultural works/artifacts” to “Identify and analyze how beliefs, values, languages, theories, or laws shape cultures or cultural works/artifacts.”

I would carry this change from “and” to “or” into the third outcome as well, but I would also recommend some more substantial revisions here. In particular, it seems to me that devoting one of three humanities outcomes to broadly “value theoretical” evaluations of a moral, ethical, or aesthetic nature gives such assessments inappropriate weight. At least in my own work in the humanities, I’m actually more concerned with evaluations of a widely “logical” sort – examining the degree to which various presuppositions are logically consistent with each other, for example. To allow for the varieties of assessments that can be brought to bear on the objects of study taken up by the humanities, I would suggest striking reference to specific frameworks of evaluation, changing the outcome “Critically engage a variety of ideas and worldviews by formulating

reflective and informed moral, ethical, or aesthetic evaluations of cultures and cultural works/artifacts” to “Critically engage a variety of ideas and worldviews by formulating reflective and informed evaluations of cultures and cultural works/artifacts.”

#### 4) Thoughts about the Integration Level

I'm fairly enthusiastic about the elimination of themes and the recommendation that the interdisciplinary learning outcomes be addressed by an interdisciplinary course or by an interdisciplinary major, minor, or certificate. I think this is all a very good idea.

I am concerned, however, that without an infusion of resources, existing interdisciplinary minors will be unable to meet the student demand created by such a requirement. To make it easier for students to complete this requirement, perhaps interdisciplinary learning objectives could also be satisfied by allowing students who have a double major in “sufficiently different” disciplines (e.g. biology and philosophy) or who have a minor in a discipline that's quite different from their major, to write a paper in which they identify an issue or question related to these different disciplines, describe what each discipline contributes to an understanding of that issue, and explain the benefits of being able to combine these contributions.

I admire the way in which Global Studies, US Diversity Studies, and Environmental Responsibility are incorporated into the curriculum as cross-listed requirements and I strongly endorse the statement regarding the importance of foreign language in subsequent BA requirements.

Thank you all for your hard work!

Dona

Posted: 1/20/2010 3:46 PM

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Guay, Don

#### Comments on Step 4C.

First thanks to the GERC committee's hard work. This document is really helpful. I have some hopefully helpful comments to add to the discussion.

1. On the outcomes for the “Arts”: I notice that the outcomes for the arts includes “demonstrates an understanding of creative expression by critiquing, creating or collaborating on a

specific work of art.” If I’m not mistaken, this outcome presents a significant innovation in the way we think about GDR courses. Usually, the creation of art is not included in Gen Ed curriculums. Could we have some background on the discussion and rationale behind this innovation?

Further, the outcomes for art do not clarify what a “work of art” is. For example, is literature one of the arts? Is the ability to produce works of art in the form of literature included in the “Arts” category?

I’m also not clear on how this outcome concerning the creation of art ties into the four program outcomes for the entire revised GDR.

The addition of “Arts” as a distinct category, and the expansion into the skill of art creation as a GDR skill, comes at the expense of the rest of the Humanities, a point that I don’t see clearly noted in the responses posted thus far. Our existing GDR structure asks students to select courses from 4 areas within the humanities, one of which is the arts. The proposal offered in Step 4c combines areas 2, 3 and 4 into one category, and requires students to select one course from these. This effectively secures the arts as a requirement for all students, and then asks students to pick just one course from all the other areas with the humanities (philosophy, religious studies, political theory, English literature, comparative literature, area studies, etc.). This proposal therefore gives a pride of place to courses in the Arts (e.g., theatre, music, art history, dance) while reducing our requirements in other Humanities disciplines. This is unfortunate, since it is in precisely those Humanities disciplines that students learn specifically to encounter worlds of meaning different from their own and to develop a capacity for empathetic understanding and productive communication across the boundaries of philosophical, religious, and/or cultural differences. This goal, specific to courses in the Humanities, is also clearly stated as an overarching goal of the revised GDR program in its preamble. The reduction of humanities offerings in this step 4c proposal goes against the stated purpose of the new GDRs.

2. On “Interdisciplinary Studies”: I worry that we, as a campus, do not have a agreed upon definition for “interdisciplinary,” which could lead to all kinds of confusion in the long run. Could the committee please define what constitutes “interdisciplinary” and clarify how interdisciplinary a course needs to be to qualify as fulfilling this requirement.

Further, I worry that we do not have the resources as a campus to serve this requirement. The committee points to minors already in place as resources for fulfilling this requirement, but these minors – e.g., Women’s Studies, Peace Studies, International Studies, and Ethnobotany – are all scraping by with marginal university support and do not have the seats or the faculty to serve a GDR requirement for all students. For example, Women’s Studies is presently allocated a 1/8 FTE release (1 course per year) for administration and 1/4 (2 courses per year) dedicated FTE for teaching Women’s Studies classes. The Dean of L&S and the VC have worked hard to provide additional sections of WS 105 as they can, but the university lacks any dedicated faculty in the WS program, and most sections are staffed by academic staff. This program cannot handle the influx of dozens of new students without additional FTE.

3. The requirement of a capstone experience in the major seems to go beyond the scope of the charge to the GDR committee. Shouldn’t departments make the decision about whether their program needs a capstone course?

4. “Historical perspectives” is a vague term. If we mean courses in the discipline of history, could we just say “history”?

5. The description under “oral communication” says that students need to “develop skills in visual communication technologies and other media tools.” The outcomes for this requirement however do not say anything about developing such skills.

6. Why has wellness been reduced to one credit? Wellness courses provide all kinds of benefits for students, and I’m not sure what the rationale is for reducing existing credits in this category.

Thank you for posting these comments.

Sincerely,

Alice Keefe

Prof. of Religious Studies

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Here are a few comments/rants about random parts of the current proposal:

Quantitative skills: 3 credits is woefully inadequate. We should be working to increase all of our students quantitative abilities. Maybe one of the Math faculty could clarify this for me but it seems to me we don't currently have a 3 credit math class that adequately covers all three of the learning outcomes listed in this section.

The investigation section seems heavy to me. One of the original motivations for this entire exercise was to streamline our GDR's. I think we are failing in this regard. We seem to be creeping back to the current model under another guise. My suggestion is to reduce this to three categories: Art/Humanities, History/SocialSciences and Natural Science. Reduce the requirement to 15-18 credits with a minimum of 3 from each category and allow the students the freedom to use the remaining 6-9 credits for investigating a concentration that interests them. Three credits removed from this category can go to Quantitative skills.

Capstone experience in the major should be left to Departments and not be mandated in the GDR's.

Implementing the Experiential Learning component brings nightmares to me. As chair of a program with over 400 majors and only 6 faculty I see tremendous workload issues managing this, particularly if it moves more toward doing this on an individual basis for each student (as it currently seems to be written).

With respect to my previous comment about credits, I also see a bit of a shell game going on with counting credits in the Integration category. The three requirements (Experiential, Communication, Capstone) are listed as "non-credit" at least with respect to how they will count in the GDRs. In fact fulfilling these requirements will still require credits taken in a major and given current credit caps etc. we may have to cut important content in a major to fit these in. This is less of a concern for the Communication category as we already have WE credits built in. I'd be in favor of eliminating the entire top tier while retaining the communication requirement in some form.

I like the idea of some sort of freshman experience. I'm not sure if 3 credits is necessary. This also raises the important question of whether this seminar would be taught at a department, college, or university level?

Back to grading.....

Tim Ginnett  
Wildlife

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Schmetzke, Axel

### **Response of the Library faculty to draft 4c of the General Education Program**

Information literacy involves a number of broad learning outcomes, including students' abilities to determine the nature and extent of the information needed, to access the needed information effectively and efficiently, to evaluate information and its sources critically, to use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, and to use information ethically. Each of these broad learning outcomes can be broken down into 5-10 specific performance criteria.

It is sheer impossible to teach the corresponding skills and attitudes in a few library sessions. While some basic aspects of information literacy can be introduced in the context of the First-Year Seminar, students need to be repeatedly exposed to the concepts and practice of information literacy as they advance through the curriculum—through a collaborative effort of both course instructors and librarians. If the newly evolving General Education Program is meant to produce information-literate students, its plan should reflect this intent at several stages of the plan.

Unfortunately, the latest revision is a step backwards in this regard. In the previous version (draft 4b), information literacy was relatively prominent: It was to be introduced in the First-Year-Seminar, further developed in connection with written and oral communication courses, and practiced again in the context of more subject-specific research activities at the investigation level. With the removal of "information literacy" from what is now the "Written and Oral Communication" subheading, its importance appears diminished. The complete omission of information literacy related learning outcomes from the investigation level (so distinctly present in draft 4b: "Locate, evaluate, and utilize information effectively"), gives the impression that the systematic development of information literacy is not taken particularly seriously.

We respectfully ask the General Education Program Review Committee to consider the reinstatement of some of the language of the previous draft (4b). We understand, and sympathize with the concern that the infusion of information literacy learning outcomes into all investigation-level courses may dilute the intended subject focus of certain courses. However, we disagree with the Committee's response to this concern: Instead of omitting information literacy from the investigation

level (as in draft 4c), we would like to see a more balanced response: a statement that would indicate the importance of information literacy at the investigation level without imposing its pursuit in all courses.

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Dear members of the General Education Program Review Committee:

The Department of History curriculum planning committee discussed Step 4-C of the General Education Program at our November 30 meeting. We appreciate the opportunity to share our ideas with you.

As a committee we agree with the changes to the Historical Perspectives category in Step 4-C. Thank you for being receptive to our suggestions last fall. Our major concern with Step 4-C is the language justifying Global Studies on p. 23. We suggest making the following revisions:

### *Global Studies*

As noted above, this category is intended to be very similar to the current Non-Western Culture GDR. In fact, we imagine that Global Studies courses will typically focus on “Non-Western” cultures.

~~While Canada, Great Britain, and Ancient Greece are distinct from the United States in important respects, there are still many similarities, especially with respect to our shared cultural, political, and intellectual traditions (the “Western” tradition). We hope that our students will have the opportunity to examine a culture or society that is significantly different from outside of the U.S., and by “significantly different” we intend to refer to what is commonly understood as “Non-Western” traditions.~~

Thank you all again for your hard work.

Sincerely,

Lee L. Willis  
Chair, Curriculum Planning Committee  
Department of History