

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

# Step 4d

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## Structural Components & Measureable Learning Outcomes

**General Education Policy Review Committee**

**February 23, 2010**

A proposal for approval by faculty governance.

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## **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 requires that individuals learn 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.

### **Program Outcomes**

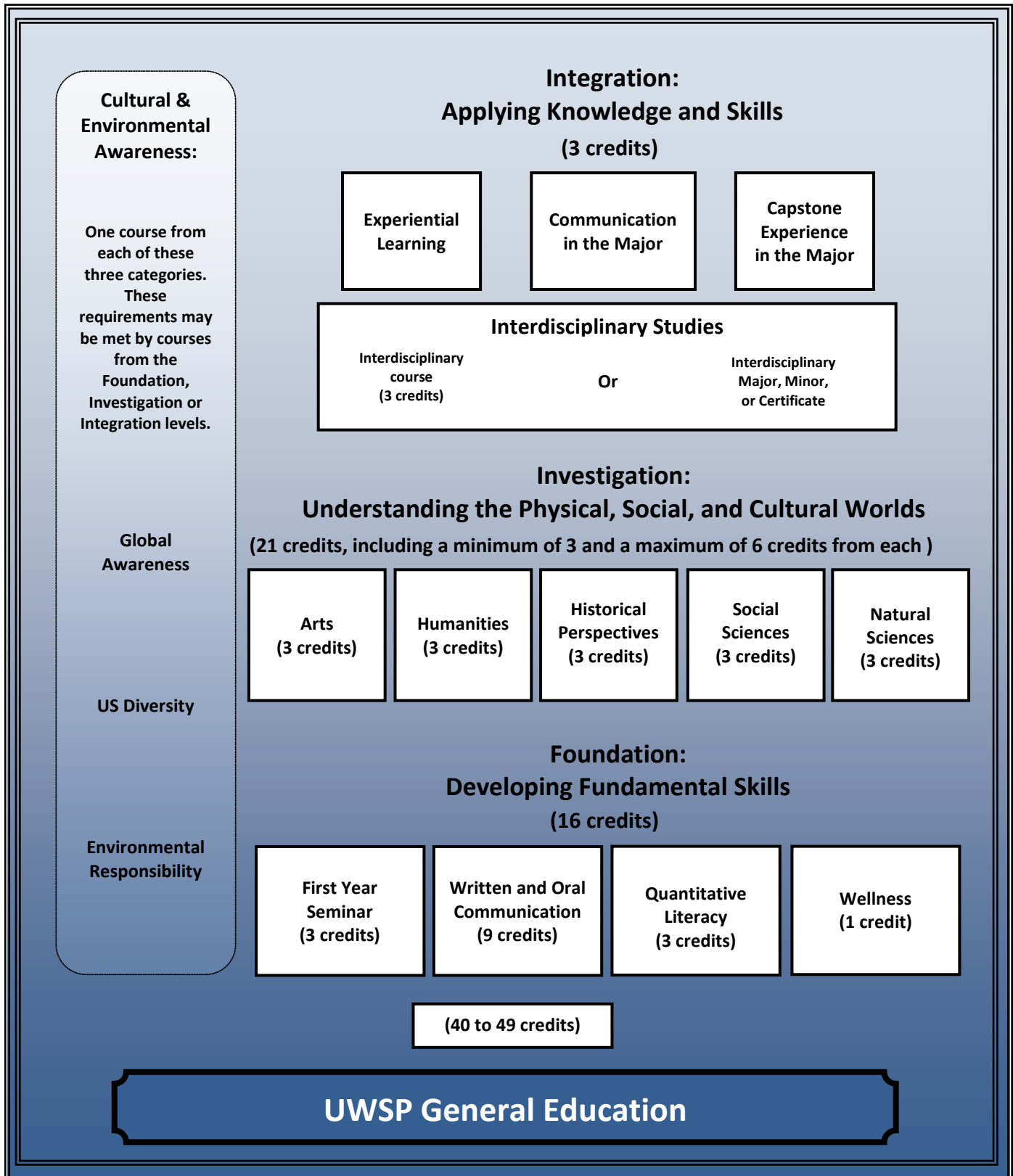
The General Education Program seeks to develop these qualities of global citizenship in four distinct ways. After completing the general education curriculum, students will:

- 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.

**Proposal**

**Curriculum**

Students will fulfill these program outcomes by completing the following General Education requirements:



### Foundation: Developing Fundamental Skills

Courses listed under this category are intended to provide students with the basic skills necessary for intellectual development and to succeed in their studies at UWSP, including critical thinking, quantitative literacy, information literacy, written and oral communication, and wellness.

Students will complete 16 credits in this area, including the following:

#### *First Year Seminar (3 credits)*

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

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Describe the importance of a liberal education and the ways in which academic study is structured at UWSP.
- Describe the importance of critical thinking and information literacy and apply the associated skills.
- Identify and apply appropriate note-taking, test-taking, and time-management strategies to their academic studies.
- Describe the importance of co-curricular involvement and how it enhances their academic study at UWSP.
- Identify and utilize UWSP programs, resources, and services that will support their academic studies and co-curricular involvement.
- Develop a plan that demonstrates their responsibility for their own education, specifically how it relates to their interests, abilities, career choices, and personal development.

#### *Written and Oral Communication (9 credits)*

Written Communication (6 credits): Introductory writing classes provide an essential 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.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Identify basic components and elements that shape successful writing such as topic, purpose, genre, and audience.
- Compose an articulate, grammatically correct, and organized piece of writing with properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience.
- Critique their own and others' writing to provide effective and useful feedback to improve their communication.

Oral communication (3 credits): Learning to speak effectively is an essential part of a liberal 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.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Identify basic components and elements that shape successful oral presentation such as topic, purpose, genre, composure, and audience.
- Compose an articulate, grammatically correct and organized oral presentation using appropriate communication technologies as well as properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience.
- Critique their own and others' speaking to provide effective and useful feedback to improve their communication.

#### *Quantitative Literacy (3 credits)*

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.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Select, analyze, and interpret appropriate numerical data used in everyday life in numerical and graphical format.
- Identify and apply appropriate strategies of quantitative problem solving in theoretical and practical applications.
- Construct a conclusion using quantitative justification.

#### *Wellness (1 credit)*

Wellness is a dynamic process of becoming aware of and making conscious choices toward a more balanced and healthy lifestyle. It is multi-dimensional and holistic, encompassing lifestyle, mental and spiritual wellbeing, and the environment. Wellness is

an essential attribute of a well-rounded, liberally educated person and of strong societies. Understanding the dimensions of wellness and their impact on individuals, families and societies is essential to being a responsible global citizen.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Identify the seven dimensions of wellness.
- Recognize the interaction between each dimension of wellness and their overall impact on personal, national and global health and well being.
- Develop an individual plan for healthy living that demonstrates an understanding of the principles of wellness.

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

Building on the skills and knowledge from the foundation level, courses listed under this category are meant to encourage students to acquire broad knowledge of the world in which they live, as well as the various disciplinary methods by which this knowledge is produced. Students will complete 21 credits in this area, including a minimum of 3 credits and a maximum of 6 credits from each category below.

#### *Arts (3-6 credits)*

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, and explore the artistic imagination or the relationship between artists, their works and the societies in which their works are produced. The arts challenge us to understand creativity and the distinctive intellectual process of the human imagination.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Identify aesthetic, cultural, and historical dimensions of artistic traditions and techniques.
- Demonstrate an understanding of creative expression by critiquing, creating, or collaborating on a specific work of art.
- Express their own understanding and interpretation of works of art critically and imaginatively.

#### *Humanities (3-6 credits)*

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 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.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an ability to read carefully, speak clearly, think critically, or write persuasively about cultures and cultural works/artifacts (including texts, images, performances, and technologies, as well as other expressions of the human condition).
- Identify and analyze how beliefs, values, languages, theories, or laws shape cultures and cultural works/artifacts.
- Engage a variety of ideas and worldviews critically by formulating reflective and informed moral, ethical, or aesthetic evaluations of cultures and cultural works/artifacts.

#### *Historical Perspectives (3-6 credits)*

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 history and the natural sciences, the social sciences, the arts, and the humanities.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Describe events from past cultures, societies, or civilizations.
- Recognize the varieties of evidence that historians use to offer diverse perspectives on the meaning of the past.
- Identify the role of human agency in shaping events and historical change.
- Explain historical causality.
- Evaluate competing historical claims that frequently inform the present.

#### *Social Sciences (3-6 credits)*

The social 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.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Define the major concepts and methods used by social scientists to investigate, to analyze, or to predict human or group behavior.
- Explain the major principles, models, and issues under investigation by the social sciences.
- Examine how the individual or groups of individuals are influenced by social, cultural, or political institutions both in their own culture and in other cultures.



*Natural Sciences (3-6 credits)*

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 must contain a laboratory component to help students develop an understanding of scientific inquiry.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Identify the basic taxonomy and principles of the scientific method as it pertains to the natural, physical world.
- Infer relationships, make predictions and solve problems based on an analysis of evidence or scientific information.
- Apply scientific concepts, quantitative techniques and methods to solving problems and making decisions.
- Describe the relevance of some aspect of the natural science to their lives and society.

Integration: Applying Knowledge and Skills

Courses listed under this category are meant to build on the earlier components of the General Education Program, giving students the opportunity to develop, integrate, and apply the knowledge and skills they learned. Students will complete at least 3 credits in this area, as well as several additional requirements.

*Interdisciplinary Studies (3 credits)*

Under this category, students are asked to complete one of three options: a single three-credit interdisciplinary course; an Interdisciplinary Certificate; or an Interdisciplinary Major or Minor. Each option encourages students to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in the context of a topic of their choosing, and to do so in ways that facilitate making connections across disciplines. In this way, students learn to recognize that issues can be viewed in multiple ways, and that solving problems requires integrating and harmonizing these perspectives.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Identify an issue or question related to the interdisciplinary course(s), and describe what each discipline contributes to an understanding of that issue.
- Explain the benefits of being able to combine these contributions.

*Experiential Learning (non-GEP credit)*

Students benefit from opportunities to learn by reflecting on experiences beyond their typical classroom activities and by applying the knowledge and skills they gain from traditional courses in new settings.

To fulfill this requirement, students will:

- Complete an approved experiential learning project.
- Reflect on the experiential learning project in order to gain further understanding of their university education, and an enhanced sense of one's personal responsibility as a member of a larger community.

*Communication in the Major (non-GEP credit)*

Communication in the Major courses provide students with systematic opportunities to develop oral and written communication skills in the context of their chosen fields, beginning the process of learning to communicate effectively in discipline-specific formats and styles.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Apply discipline-specific standards of oral and written communication to compose an articulate, grammatically correct, and organized presentation/piece of writing with properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience.
- Critique their own and others' writing/oral presentations to provide effective and useful feedback to improve their communication.

*Capstone Experience in the Major (non-GEP credit)*

A capstone experience is either a single seminar or a broader culminating experience designed to be offered near the completion of a student's program of study. It is meant to provide students the opportunity to make connections between the key learning objectives of their majors and the General Education Program Outcomes, and to consider how their educations have prepared them for the world beyond the university.

To fulfill this requirement, students will:

- Complete a project that integrates knowledge, skills, and experiences related to those General Education Program Outcomes appropriate to the discipline.
- Demonstrate skills, processes, and resources needed to make a successful transition from college to the world beyond.

Cultural and Environmental Awareness

Courses listed in this area are meant to foster greater awareness of cultural and environmental issues that currently shape today's world as a means of better preparing students for responsible citizenship. Students will complete 3 credits in each area below. But since these courses are

intended to be cross-listed as requirements in other parts of the general education curriculum, for most students, they should require no additional credits.

### *Global Awareness*

Global Awareness courses examine the unique cultural, political, economic, intellectual, and/or religious components of societies, countries, regions, and peoples that are distinct from those found within the United States. By learning about these cultures, students can appreciate the key differences and similarities between diverse modes of human life 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.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Identify and explain various components of a culture that is distinct from those found within the United States.
- Analyze how cultural similarities and differences are negotiated in ways that help shape the modern world.

### *U.S. Diversity*

U.S. Diversity courses are designed to consider the role of diversity in American life, where diversity is defined to include both individual differences (e.g. personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and other group and social differences (e.g. race, gender, ethnicity, country of origin, class, sexual identity/orientation, religion, ability, or other affiliations). Satisfaction of this requirement will prepare students to act thoughtfully and responsibly as a U.S. citizen in a global society.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Describe the various dimensions of diversity and marginalization within the United States.
- Explain the means by which one or more persistently marginalized groups in the U.S. have negotiated the conditions of their marginalization.

### *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.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

- Recognize areas of interaction between human society and the natural environment.
- Identify the individual, social, cultural, and ecological factors that influence environmental sustainability.
- Evaluate competing scientific claims that inform environmental debates.

## Explanation of Proposal

In November 2009, the committee circulated a draft proposal for Step 4, which we labeled Step 4c. In the weeks that followed, members of the committee gathered feedback during two open forums, through our Web site and by email. We are grateful for the many thoughtful comments we received. (These comments are contained in a separate attachment.)

Based on this feedback, the committee is circulating the revised proposal outlined above, labeled Step 4d. This proposal remains very similar to that circulated in Step 4c:

- Each category in the curriculum contains the same proposed number of credits.
- The categories of U.S. Diversity Studies and Global Studies have been renamed U.S. Diversity and Global Awareness. They continue to be intended to roughly correspond to the current Minority Studies and Non-Western Culture GDRs.
- The First Year Seminar remains at 3 credits, with its learning outcomes revised to reflect greater engagement with developing critical thinking skills.
- Wellness continues to be a distinct category in the curriculum.
- Interdisciplinary Studies has been maintained as a distinct requirement, which students can fulfill in a variety of ways.

What follows below are brief explanations of each section of the proposed curriculum.

### Foundation

The suggested categories at the Foundation level remain similar to our previous proposal with two exceptions: a revised First Year Seminar that includes additional credits and learning outcomes intended to provide greater engagement with developing critical thinking skills and co-curricular involvement; and a new Wellness category.

### *First Year Seminar:*

The committee strongly supports inclusion of a First Year Seminar (FYS) in the General Education curriculum. The most common argument supporting a FYS is that it will boost retention rates and help students decide to stay in college. Although UWSP has a solid freshmen retention rate in comparison to other UW system schools, when measured against UW-Eau Claire and UW-La Crosse in particular, there is clearly room for a more ambitious goal.

**New Freshmen Enrolling Full-Time in Fall Semester  
and Returning to the Same Institution for the Second Year**

	Fall 2003		Fall 2004		Fall 2005		Fall 2006		Fall 2007	
	Cohort	Rate (%)	Cohort	Rate (%)	Cohort	Rate (%)	Cohort	Rate (%)	Cohort	Rate (%)
UW-Eau Claire	1,869	81.3	2,026	83.7	2,063	83.7	2,020	82.4	2,026	84.7
UW-Green Bay	960	74.9	989	75.7	904	76.2	1,019	75.1	987	72.4
UW-La Crosse	1,506	86.5	1,539	87.7	1,755	85.6	1,751	87.0	1,750	86.2
UW-Madison	5,553	92.9	5,617	94.0	6,118	93.0	5,633	93.2	5,980	93.6
UW-Milwaukee	3,716	72.6	3,714	71.8	4,218	69.3	3,977	71.8	4,465	69.2
UW-Oshkosh	1,765	76.4	1,708	76.9	1,617	74.4	1,726	73.5	1,723	76.9
UW-Parkside	863	61.5	890	64.7	783	63.1	814	60.1	833	66.4
UW-Platteville	1,116	77.4	1,164	76.0	1,218	76.8	1,387	75.2	1,466	74.8
UW-River Falls	1,220	77.2	1,197	76.1	1,192	71.4	1,289	75.0	1,276	73.5
UW-Stevens Point	1,498	79.5	1,525	76.2	1,521	77.3	1,640	76.0	1,611	75.3
UW-Stout	1,267	73.4	1,277	73.5	1,699	71.5	1,507	69.6	1,489	71.8
UW-Superior	336	67.0	329	71.7	336	69.0	293	62.5	343	65.9
UW-Whitewater	1,825	76.9	1,745	77.0	1,701	74.6	1,780	77.0	2,048	76.1
UW System Total	23,494	80.2	23,720	80.5	25,125	79.2	24,836	79.2	25,997	79.3

Source: [http://www.uwsa.edu/opar/orb-im/im/ret\\_grad/rg08-09.pdf](http://www.uwsa.edu/opar/orb-im/im/ret_grad/rg08-09.pdf)

But while retention is undoubtedly important, a FYS will also shape and mold the first year students to be better prepared to face college life in a broader sense. Students will be able to: (a) understand the nature of college-level courses and how to prepare themselves for it (note-taking, studying, asking questions, seeking advice, etc); (b) become excited about learning and understand the value of critical thinking etc., while taking a themed-course; and (c) understand the structure of college education better so that they feel more confident to face the next level of classes. In addition to this student-oriented goal, faculty too will receive a benefit through a FYS by having more engaged and interested students coming into their classes.

Some faculty have asked whether the FYS learning outcomes are addressed at Freshmen Orientation. Although some of these topics are touched on very briefly, Orientation takes place in the summer, almost two months before classes begin. Students have forgotten most of the

information by the time they return in the fall. Although there are currently some courses and programs for freshmen at UWSP that focus on various aspects of the first year in college, they only serve about 30-40% of the total population. Some are housed in academic departments while others are located in the Student Affairs Division, and there is a lack of coordinated programming or a unified institutional message. A FYS would ensure that all students are introduced to what it means to be a college student and, more specifically, what it means to be a college student at UWSP.

Initially the GEPRC proposed a one-credit 8-week FYS (see General Education Proposal Step 4b Appendix II). However, after much written and verbal feedback from our colleagues over the summer and the month of September, we heard that many felt a one-credit course would 1) be inadequate to address the learning outcomes we proposed; and 2) be something many faculty would be uninterested in teaching. A one-credit 8-week course would be limited to topics such as study skills, time management, campus resources, etc. and many faculty told us that they do not feel skilled in teaching these topics. GEPRC members returned to the literature on FYS and in September, two GEPRC members along with four other UWSP faculty and two academic staff, attended a conference that focused on best practices to strengthen the first year of college. After much discussion, the GEPRC now feels that a 3-credit full-semester academic-themed FYS would be a better fit at UWSP. These seminars are small (approximately 20 students), writing- and discussion-oriented courses geared to the investigation of a specific theme or issue. The FYS does not provide a general survey of a discipline; instead it should focus on a narrow but exciting aspect of a field. At the same time, it should foster a more personal relationship with fellow class members and instructors. We also recommend that a peer mentor component be a part of the FYS.

The following information comes from the National Center for the First Year Experience:

- **Does the number of credit hours matter?** No. It only matters that the # of credits is sufficient to address the learning outcomes.
- **Is there a perceived difference between required and elective courses?** Yes. Required courses tend to have a higher quality of instruction and mastery of learning outcomes.
- **Do peer mentors have an impact?** Yes. If trained well, peer mentors not only have a positive impact on first year students, but FYS also give upper class students an excellent internship-type experience.
- **Is it a good idea to link seminars into a block or “learning community”?** Yes. “The students who live together, study together.” The Freshmen Interest Group (FIG) program is an example of a learning community.
- **Does the type of content matter?** No; however, academic theme FYS were rated by a larger population of students as highly effective on outcomes such as improving critical thinking and cognitive skills, improving time management and setting priorities as well

as feeling connected with faculty and peers. With regards to overall effectiveness, academic theme FYS were ranked as highly effective.

- **Does section size influence effectiveness?** Maybe. 20-30 seems ideal.
- **Does the “type” of instructor make a difference?** Not necessarily. Most important is that they believe in the positive impact a seminar can have on students’ first year. Adequate compensation and training is also important.
- **Does a particular textbook matter?** No.
- **What’s the bottom line on FYS impact on learning, academic achievement, and retention?** Retention: yes; GPA: not sure; Students at risk: need more attention.

Some faculty question whether UWSP students need a FYS. According to UWSP’s Office of Policy Analysis and Planning, "UWSP's largest drop in retention is from the first to second year. However, UWSP does the best job of our UW peers in getting students from sophomore year to graduation. Hence, increasing first year retention would positively impact overall success rates of UWSP students." FYS research also indicates that FYSs benefit students of all academic abilities and that they help strong students perform better while at the same time helping weaker students to survive. It should be noted that all the research on first year retention emphasizes that a FYS alone cannot necessarily have a significant impact on first-to-second year retention. There needs to be a campus-wide belief, from those who work with freshmen at Orientation to those who teach freshmen in the classroom to those who supervise them in the residence halls, that it is our institutional responsibility to do everything we can to encourage their success and facilitate their transition to higher education. Other factors that have an impact on first year student success include strong academic advising, supplemental instruction for underprepared students, living on campus vs. commuting, an extended orientation linked to the FYS, and service learning opportunities.

For examples of academic theme FYS courses, see:

- University of Wisconsin-Green Bay: <http://www.uwgb.edu/focus/programs/fs/courses.asp>
- Maryville University: <http://www.maryville.edu/about-excellence-advising-seminarDescriptions.htm>
- University of North Carolina: <http://www.unc.edu/fys/SpringCourses2010.html>
- Beloit College: [http://www.beloit.edu/fyi/assets/2009\\_seminars.pdf](http://www.beloit.edu/fyi/assets/2009_seminars.pdf)
- St. Mary’s College of Maryland: <http://www.smcm.edu/firstyear/overview.html>
- Western Carolina University: <http://www.wcu.edu/13067.asp>

### *Wellness*

After thoughtful discussion, we have decided to keep Wellness at 1 credit. We believe that the three bulleted learning outcomes can be achieved and assessed within the framework of a rigorous 1-credit course. We would encourage the campus to embrace the concept of wellness by designing a campus wide wellness plan that builds upon the GEP wellness requirement at the foundation level. The Wellness category links directly to the reference to personal accountability in the program outcomes already approved for the general education curriculum. In conjunction with existing programming in Residential Living, Student Affairs, Health Services, and Dining Services, it seeks to provide an academic foundation for promoting healthy lifestyle decisions by our students. Portage county and the community of Stevens Point have long embraced this culture (ex. Green Circle Trail). The National Wellness Institute is located here in Stevens Point. Moreover, UWSP's alumni, the campus community, and people in the general public recognize UWSP as a "wellness campus." Both wellness and health promotion are included in the select goals and responsibilities outlined in UWSP's mission statement. (See <http://www.uwsp.edu/news/uwspcatalog/intro.htm#Mission>.) Perhaps as a result, wellness was identified as the top descriptor of the institution by 32% of those surveyed, second only to "transformational experience" at 55%, according to a 2008 survey of UWSP students, faculty and alumni. The survey was conducted by Lipman Hearne, an outside consulting group.

Given that the United States is now widely believed to be in a health care crisis, and that over 70% of health care costs are caused by modifiable risks, it seems reasonable to devote a portion of the General Education program at UWSP to educating students about personal wellness and its impact both nationally and globally.

### Investigation

This category in the General Education program maps directly to the second Program Outcome approved by the Faculty Senate: 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 make up 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 first outcome recommended by LEAP calls for students to acquire "Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World." This knowledge is to come, in turn, "through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts."

The 3-6 credit ranges proposed for each category in the Investigation level are intended to ensure that students obtain as much breadth as possible in the topics and methodologies they encounter, while still allowing them to have some measure of choice in shaping their educations to fit their particular interests.



A note on foreign language: the committee continues to feel strongly that all students at UWSP would benefit from the study of a foreign language. However, due to the staffing implications this would entail, we are unable to recommend its inclusion in the current general education proposal. At a minimum, we hope that foreign language is included by the Academic Affairs Committee as a requirement for all BA students. In addition, we strongly encourage the campus to consider a stronger language requirement for all students seeking admission to UWSP.

## Integration

### *Interdisciplinary Studies*

The Program Outcomes approved by Faculty Senate last spring call for learning experiences that allow students to “apply their knowledge and skills, working in interdisciplinary ways to solve problems.” The committee continues to wrestle with how best to fulfill this requirement, especially the interdisciplinary component. Our previous proposal was to create a Themes category consisting of three classes in which students could explore a topic of their choice from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Although many comments we received were supportive of this idea, there was broad concern about how this approach could be implemented: who would administer the program; how could students be assured that enough classes would be available within each theme; how would the learning outcomes be assessed?

These are good questions and could well be asked about any interdisciplinary requirement, no matter how it is structured. This is especially true given that UWSP lacks a strong track record of interdisciplinary teaching: no matter how the campus seeks to meet this Program Outcome, it will likely require the development of new courses, or new ways of connecting existing courses.

In light of the potential logistical difficulties with Themes, however, the committee has revised its proposal in this area in a way (we hope) that provides greater flexibility to students and faculty alike. There are three ways in which the proposed Interdisciplinary Studies requirement could be fulfilled:

- Students could take a 3-credit interdisciplinary course.
  - The kinds of courses offered here would depend on the criteria specified in Step 5, including how narrowly or broadly “interdisciplinary” is defined. But we imagine courses that are either team-taught or taught by faculty with the expertise to offer students a learning experience that crosses established disciplinary boundaries.

- The creation of new interdisciplinary courses would require clarification of several administrative issues, including how SCH might be shared between departments whose faculty pair up to offer a team-taught course.
- Although there are substantial logistical issues associated with this idea, we believe that there are also numerous creative possibilities that could result from encouraging faculty to teach courses with their colleagues in other departments.
- Students could complete an Interdisciplinary Certificate.
  - The Interdisciplinary Certificate program was approved by Faculty Senate in May 2006. It is very similar to the Themes category in our previous proposal; however, included in the Senate’s approved policy were numerous guidelines that address many of the potential logistical issues associated with this type of program. (To review the policy, see Appendix II.)
  - Few if any certificates have been created since this policy was approved in 2006. But inclusion of this option in the new General Education program would place new emphasis on this possibility, and it would provide faculty with an incentive to take advantage of this creative teaching opportunity.
  - Students who complete an Interdisciplinary Certificate would have the advantage of earning something that was potentially marketable as they seek employment after graduation.
- Students could complete an Interdisciplinary Major or Minor.
  - There are already a number of established interdisciplinary majors and minors at UWSP, including International Studies, Women’s Studies, Ethnobotany, and Environmental Studies among others.
  - Much as with Interdisciplinary Certificates, students completing a major or minor would strengthen their academic records in a way that was potentially marketable as they seek employment after graduation.
  - If the new General Education program is composed of fewer credits than the current GDRs, then creating an incentive for students to earn an additional minor may benefit those students in low-credit majors in need of additional coursework.

As noted above, there are sure to be logistical difficulties in structuring any interdisciplinary requirement. Yet by providing students with a variety of options, including a number of programs and policies already in place, we can minimize these difficulties while still providing students with new and enriching interdisciplinary learning opportunities.

### *Experiential Learning*

Experiential learning is a broad concept, including many types of active, hands-on learning opportunities. Experiential learning is an example of a “high-impact teaching practice” that has

been shown to enhance a student's comprehension of course material, to enable students to see connections between theory and practice, to aid in student retention (especially those who are identified as "high-risk"), and to develop a student's sense of responsibility for their education. Moreover, experiential learning provides students with an experience that aids in the development of leadership skills and responsible citizenship.

Note: the term "experiential learning" is sometimes used in different ways. For example, our current University Catalog uses the label "experiential learning" (pages 6 and 93) to refer to prior learning credit. However, it is common practice to differentiate "experiential learning" from what is identified as "prior learning credit." Hopefully this confusion will be clarified in the future by altering the language of the Catalog.

We wish to maintain the tradition of granting our incoming students with appropriate prior learning credit, but we think that the term "experiential learning" refers to an educational experience that is based on reflection and active learning rather than prior life experience (no matter how valuable that prior life experience might be).

The key idea with experiential learning is the synthesis of a hands-on experience with some relevant aspect of a student's university education. Normally, this synthesis of experience with learning takes place in the context of a structured reflection activity. An appropriate reflection activity will vary depending on the experiential learning project. Some examples might include a written reflection, a one-on-one interview/debriefing, a small group discussion, a presentation (to other students, for example), a multimedia summary, journaling, analysis and application of case studies, or service portfolios. Extensive literature exists on the topic of experiential learning and reflection activities, and can be made available to campus.

We envision that students can complete this experiential learning requirement by engaging in at least one of the following types of experiential learning projects.

- **Course-based Activities:**

In some cases, courses will be recognized and designated as experiential learning courses (including courses that are based on service-learning, internships, practicum experiences, study abroad trips, etc.). Within such a course, students will engage in an appropriate reflection activity linking their hands-on experience with the learning goals of the course. Students completing a course with this experiential learning designation will automatically fulfill the experiential learning requirement for the new general education program.

- Not course-based Activities:

In other cases, students gain valuable educational experience by engaging in activities that take place outside of a for-credit course structure. There are numerous such opportunities for students, and we aim to recognize as many of these valuable experiential learning projects as we can. However, in order to count as experiential learning, students must complete an appropriate structured reflection activity that links their experience with their university education in a meaningful way.

In sum: in order to satisfy this experiential learning requirement, students will engage in an experiential learning project in conjunction with an appropriate faculty or staff member (usually the student's advisor, research supervisor, or immediate staff supervisor) and will complete a reflection activity that synthesizes the student's experience with an enhanced understanding of responsible citizenship, leadership, and/or the scholarly aims of a discipline.

- Student Leadership:

Students can satisfy the experiential learning requirement by engaging in an approved experiential learning project, including appropriate participation as leaders in Student Government, student organizations, Student Involvement and Employment programs, or Residence Hall activities. In this case, the student will work with an appropriate faculty member, faculty advisor, or staff member to ensure a meaningful reflection activity has taken place linking the project with the student's education.

- Undergraduate Research, Creative/Performance Projects, & Community Projects:

Alternatively, the experiential learning requirement can be satisfied by students who engage in appropriate discipline-specific research projects, the development of creative or performative works, or other community-based service projects with a faculty supervisor or academic advisor. Upon completion of this work, and upon completion of an appropriate structured reflection activity, the faculty mentor or staff member will report that the student has completed the experiential learning requirement.

- Professional Development:

Finally, in an attempt to be as broad as possible and to still encourage a meaningful reflection that synthesizes hands-on experience with educational development, we recognize that valuable experiential learning can take place in a professional, employment-related activity. For example, if a student is employed over the summer in a capacity that enhances the student's skills, abilities, and professional development, we recognize that this can serve as a valuable experiential learning opportunity. In order to have this count, however, we recommend that students get "pre-approved" by a faculty

supervisor, academic advisor, or appropriate staff member. After the experiential learning experience takes place in a professional setting, the student will complete an appropriate reflection activity with a faculty or staff member.

### *Communication in the Major*

The purpose of the Communication in the Major program is to ensure that students graduate with proficient speaking and writing skills. At the Integration level of the GE curriculum, this program would extend and reinforce the oral and written communication courses taken in the Foundation level. Although the topics that would be addressed through oral and written communication would focus on the student's major, this program is not intended to be an infringement on majors. The goal is to further students' interests and abilities in communication by allowing them to focus on communication skills relevant to their major. Furthermore, this program would allow each department to participate in the teaching of GE communication learning outcomes within the context of their own disciplines.

In order for the program to be credible and substantive, however, a set of general, university-wide guidelines should be established that indicate what constitutes "communication" and how communication might be addressed: oral, written, or some combination. The guidelines will be developed in Step 5 in consultation with representatives of appropriate disciplines. Departments would still have flexibility and choice in developing Communication in the Major courses.

Finally, the necessary support [staffing] and resources are essential for a Communication in the Major program. Some departments will need support in order to develop courses, and smaller departments may need some initial flexibility concerning offerings, staffing, and class sizes.

### *Capstone Experience in the Major*

A senior capstone experience is among several high-impact practices identified by the Association of American Colleges and Universities as improving student learning. (See <http://www.aacu.org/LEAP/hip.cfm>.) A capstone can serve at least four important purposes: it offers students the opportunity to integrate the knowledge and skills they have gained during their education; in the same way, it can provide students the chance to apply what they have learned; it can encourage students to consider how their educations will serve them after graduation; and finally, it gives students the chance to connect the specialized education they receive in their majors with the broader goals of the general education curriculum.

Some faculty comments on the committee's earlier proposal expressed the concern that capstone experiences should remain the prerogative of departments. In particular, some people wondered whether departments should "be told how to teach their majors." This is not

the committee's intent in suggesting a capstone experience. Rather, if general education is to be the shared responsibility of all programs on campus, then it seems reasonable to expect departments to ensure that what their students learn within their majors is connected in some way to the university's broader learning goals. The capstone experience can be structured flexibly enough to accomplish this task without intruding on the content or prerogatives of a given department.

### Cultural and Environmental Awareness

This section of the proposed curriculum is based on three broad points gleaned from campus comments concerning the committee's past proposals:

- 1) There has been little opposition to the idea that requirements related broadly to Minority Studies, Global Culture, or Environmental Responsibility belong in the General Education curriculum.
  - Minority Studies, in fact, must be included somewhere as a distinct 3-credit requirement, according to UW System rules.
  - Environmental sustainability, meanwhile, is specifically mentioned as part of the new Program Outcomes already approved by UWSP Faculty Senate.
- 2) There has been a strong preference expressed for maintaining categories similar to Minority Studies and Non-Western Culture as distinct 3-credit requirements at UWSP as the best approach to the teaching of diversity (both within the U.S. and internationally) at UWSP.
- 3) There has been strong support for continuing to allow given courses to satisfy more than one General Education requirement, where appropriate.

As a result, the committee proposes the following three categories under the general heading of "Cultural and Environmental Awareness":

- Global Awareness, which is similar to the current Non-Western Culture GDR, albeit with slightly revised learning outcomes.
- U.S. Diversity, which corresponds roughly to the current Minority Studies GDR, with revised learning outcomes that incorporate a definition of "diversity" that is intentionally broader than the racial and ethnic groups currently specified. (This definition is drawn from the UW System Inclusive Excellence language.) The groups we currently identify in our MNS outcomes include "but [are] not limited to African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Asian-Americans and Native Americans."
- Environmental Responsibility, which is similar to the current Environmental Literacy with revised learning outcomes.

Students are meant to satisfy each of the three requirements above by taking courses that fulfill one other requirement in the General Education curriculum at the same time, either at

the Foundation, Investigation, or Integration level. In practice, this would be similar to the way in which the current Non-Western Culture, Minority Studies, and Environmental Literacy GDRs are often taught. According to Dan Kellogg, UWSP Registrar, the great majority of current Non-Western Culture and Minority Studies courses also carry additional GDR status in other areas such as Humanities, Social Science, Natural Science, and History. A smaller percentage of current Environmental Literacy classes carry additional GDR status.

GDR Category	Total Courses	% of Total Courses w/ designation	Satisfying Two or More GDRs	% of Total Satisfying Two or More GDRs
NW	114	20.4%	80	<b>70.2%</b>
EL	37	6.6%	16	<b>43.2%</b>
MNS	33	5.9%	25	<b>75.6%</b>
Total (NW, EL, MNS)	184	32.9%	121	65.8%
Total (All GDR Courses)	559			

The committee remains wary that allowing courses to fulfill more than one General Education requirement will place an inappropriate premium on these so-called “silver bullets” among students and departments alike. Nevertheless, we are hopeful that effective assessment strategies can help to avoid the majority of these pitfalls. In addition, allowing courses to fulfill more than one General Education requirement also complicates describing how many credits students are required to complete. Although the majority of students should be able to complete the proposed curriculum in 40 credits, it remains true that some students may have to take as many as 49 credits.

### *Global Awareness*

As noted above, this category is intended to be very similar to the current Non-Western Culture GDR. In fact, we imagine that Global Awareness 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 the U.S., and by “significantly different” we intend to refer to what is commonly understood as “Non-Western” traditions.

However, we realize that the “Western/Non-Western” distinction is contentious (just as the Occidental/Oriental distinction was contentious). The term “Non-Western” enjoys widespread understanding that signifies important aspects of cultures that are different from the “Western” tradition that most of our students find to be familiar. At the same time, however, we received feedback from campus that has encouraged what is thought to be a more inclusive understanding of different human cultures and ways of life. In order to reflect this feedback, we propose to call this category “Global Awareness”.

Courses offered under the Global Awareness category are not limited to analyzing the differences between societies. Rather, we encourage Global Awareness courses to address both differences and similarities, and to understand how these cultural relationships are negotiated among the world’s peoples.



## Appendix I: Additional Proposals

In addition to the Step 4c proposal outlined above, the committee makes the following related proposals:

### 1) Diversity in the Curriculum

***Once the new General Education program is implemented, Faculty Senate should establish an ad hoc committee composed of faculty teaching courses in the new U.S. Diversity and Global Awareness categories to explore ways of broadening the teaching of diversity in the general education curriculum beyond these 3-credit requirements. The ad hoc committee should base its work, in part, on the assessment of student learning in each category.***

Explanation: In suggesting U.S. Diversity and Global Awareness as 3-credit requirements in the current GE proposal, the committee is essentially seeking to maintain the status quo in the teaching of diversity at UWSP. Nevertheless, we continue to believe there are good reasons to consider broadening our efforts to address these topics in the general education curriculum. As we argued in our Step 4b proposal, the available literature on this subject makes a convincing case that our current approach to the teaching of diversity can potentially (and unintentionally) marginalize the issue. Determining whether or not this is the case at UWSP will depend on assessing student learning in these courses.

### 2) Implementing the First Year Seminar

***If a 3-credit First Year Seminar is approved as part of the new General Education curriculum, the course should remain optional for a period of 5 years to provide adequate time to implement the new program.***

Explanation: Making the First Year Seminar a required course for all entering freshmen will necessitate offering roughly 80 sections of the course per year. This will surely require substantial time to implement, for several reasons:

- Departments will need time to adjust the allocation of staff to match the demands of the new General Education program. This is especially problematic given that many students will still be under the old GDRs and will need sufficient courses to fulfill these requirements.
- Instructors will need to be trained in the teaching of First Year Seminars. There is a well-developed pedagogy focused on teaching these kinds of

courses, but developing our own collective expertise in this area at UWSP will take time.

- Building a First Year Seminar program, and even more important, linking these seminars to a broader First Year Experience will require administrative resources currently lacking at UWSP. The committee continues to support the idea of creating a Coordinator of the First Year Experience within the Center for Academic Excellence and Student Engagement to help fill this gap.

### **UW-Stevens Point Guidelines for Interdisciplinary Certificate Programs**

An Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Certificate at UW-Stevens Point is a set of interdisciplinary courses that students may study in addition to, or separately from, their major or minor. Certificates result from a collaborative effort involving faculty from at least two academic departments. A Certificate, because of its interdisciplinary nature, encourages students to obtain knowledge and perspectives outside of their major area of study. Certificate completion is recorded on a student's official transcript.

UWSP Interdisciplinary Certificates consist of an agreed upon series of courses which provide students with specialized knowledge and skills sets of particular value to students with focused academic and career goals. These certificates thus offer students an opportunity to take a set of courses that certifies a significant level of achievement in an area for which they may not have adequate academic preparation. As the rate of change in the job world increases, more people are engaging in continuous learning to meet new challenges and responsibilities. Because of their interdisciplinary and theory/skills focus, pursuing an Interdisciplinary Certificate is one means of helping students prepare to meet such challenges.

Interdisciplinary Certificates are credit-bearing and are thus created, approved, and administered by the faculty. The approval of a Certificate, which must be interdisciplinary and include at least 2 departments, requires faculty to determine what courses, concepts, and skill sets are appropriate to meet the needs of the students who would benefit from pursuing a specific certificate. All Interdisciplinary Certificates must adhere to the following guidelines and requirements:

#### **Policy Guidelines**

1. Certificates must contain courses from at least 2 disciplines.
2. Certificates must be between 9-21 credits, with no more than 36 credits of options from which to choose for certificate completion.
3. Only students who pursue a Bachelor's degree at UWSP may pursue a UWSP Interdisciplinary Certificate. A student must declare a major before pursuing a certificate.
4. A minimum grade point of 2.0 must be earned in all courses to be applied to a certificate.
5. All of the courses applied to a UW-Stevens Point Interdisciplinary Certificate must be taken through UW-Stevens Point. Transfer students may transfer in a maximum of 6 credits of courses to apply to a certificate.
6. Substitutions for coursework are allowed, but only with the approval of the chairs of the units sponsoring the Certificate. At least one Dean of a College must also approve substitutions. No more than 2 substitutions will be allowed for a single certificate.
7. Interdisciplinary Certificates do not replace or substitute for other certificate programs offered at UWSP.

#### **Academic Requirements and Issues**

1. Certificate coursework must be in at least 2 disciplines and must contain courses related to both conceptual and experiential/practical aspects of the certificate subject.
2. Specific care must be taken to include courses that have minimal course prerequisites. Courses applied to a Certificate must be offered with enough frequency, in sufficient numbers, and on a continued and predictable basis to allow students to complete the certificate within a reasonable time period. Certificate programs may include an internship/service component as part of the requirements of the certificate.
3. No more than 50% of the credits applied to a certificate program can be earned within a student's major. This policy does not apply to students with a double major who are completing a certificate that is largely composed of courses reflected in both majors. Exceptions to this policy require approval of the chairs of all units of a specific certificate.
4. Interdisciplinary Certificates are open to all students at UWSP and cannot be limited to students within only specific majors or programs.
5. Students who intend to complete a Certificate must enroll in a required, introductory Interdisciplinary Certificate orientation meeting offered through Career Services. This meeting is designed to introduce students to Interdisciplinary certificates, to help students construct a reasonable timetable for completion, and to engage students in discussions regarding academic majors and career options.

6. Sponsoring departments are responsible for course selection and ensuring Certificates are adjusted as courses are revised. All Interdisciplinary Certificate programs, including courses applied to certificate programs, must receive the approval of the Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate.
7. Sponsoring departments must identify which department(s) are responsible for the administration of the certificate, which may include activities such as processing applications and notification of certificate completion to the Registrar's office.
8. Sponsoring departments may implement an application procedure for specific Certificate programs to ensure students complete the coursework required. The application procedure and requirements must be approved through the Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate.
9. Students will receive advising regarding Interdisciplinary Certificates during the normal academic advising process. Advisors within a student's major discuss during advising such topics such as course selection and the sequence of courses taken.

Approved: Curriculum Committee 4/4/06

## Appendix III UWSP General Education Program Curriculum Map

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.	Foundational: Developing Fundamental Skills										Investigation: Understanding the Physical, Social, and Cultural Worlds					Integration: Applying Knowledge and Skills				Cultural & Environmental Awareness		
	First Year Seminar	Written and Oral Communication	Quantitative Literacy	Wellness	Arts	Humanities	Historical Perspectives	Social Sciences	Natural Sciences	Interdisciplinary Studies	Experiential Learning	Communication in the Major	Capstone Experience in the Major	Global Awareness	U.S. Diversity	Environmental Responsibility						
Demonstrate critical thinking, quantitative, and communication skills necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing global society.	I	D	D		D	D	D	D	D	D	D	M										
Acquire broad knowledge of the physical, social, and cultural worlds as well as the methods by which this knowledge is produced.	I				D	D	D	D	D	D	D	M										
Recognize that responsible global citizenship involves personal accountability, social equity, and environmental sustainability.	I			I					D	D		M	D	D	D	D						
Apply their knowledge and skills, working in interdisciplinary ways to solve problems.					I	I	I	I	D	D	D	M										
I → Introduce    D → Develop    M → Master																						