

The following is a collection of notes (not minutes) from the General Studies Roundtable on February 2, 2007:
Report from AAC&U Conference

Rick Miller: There were many invigorating discussions on general education.

Capstone Courses: There are many potential models, many of which could work well at UNK. One such example may be a course in which students from many majors come together and spend the first half of the course discussing a current global issue. They would spend the second half of the course writing a paper in which they would discuss how that global issue would affect their field or what solutions their field could have for that issue.

The conference also presented many other ideas, including methods to enhance reading, writing, and thinking; methods to relate interdisciplinary topics to the major were also discussed.

A publication from AAC&U – “Losing America’s Memory” – reported on why history needs to be included in the general education program. A survey of 55 colleges and universities showed that only 22% required history with the GE program. The publication made a case for knowing where we come from and that the students need more than just a history of events, but also of ideas.

An additional idea from the conference was that part of a first year experience program might need to address emotional IQ which would include among others social skills, problem solving, and handling stress.

John Anderson: many presentations were made on the need for liberal education including writing. There may be a need to work within the P-16 setting to form a more seamless transition into college and to enhance those skills that students need in the collegiate setting.

Discussion on current status of GE proposals:

There were concerns that

we have not yet addressed the lack of history in the program

we are not looking at the current proposals relationship to the Phase I outcomes

that we need to decide whether we wish to create a “showcase liberal education” program or worry more about how well we mesh with established programs at other colleges including the community colleges.

Other comments:

We are making progress.

We can do a creative program and the community colleges will follow and adapt to our program. We don’t need to wait for them, but we do need to communicate with them about expectations and requirements.

The participants considered a summary prepared by Martha Kruse that listed what components of the initial Phase II models have been and which components are yet to be incorporated into the current model. (This summary is attached as an appendix.) In the end, every aspect of the initial models may not be or need not be incorporated into the final model.

Discussion of the place of History in the model:

Ideas and comments:

There needs to be screening of incoming students to ensure knowledge of American (Western Civilization?) history to allow students with acceptable background knowledge to take other classes rather than repeat what was taken in High School.

There may be a need for a new course in history; one that discusses ideas rather than rote memorization of facts and events.

A themed course in history, perhaps of Democracy – American and Others, may be one approach to the GE history requirement

Recent/ current history is not usually covered prior to college.

The course could be an integrated history course; one that would not be separated into American, European, or Nebraskan histories.

A focus solely on Democracy as a theme may neglect other important areas.

New Component for the Core: The group decided that a new component to the core area needed to be made for history (3 hours). There could be only one allowed course or many options, any of which would need to meet the criteria/goals of the category.

Summary of the Current Model:

Core: (15 hours)

Writing (3 hours); at a level comparable to current Eng 102. Some screening that would ensure an entrance writing level at or above Eng 101 may be necessary. Those lacking the necessary writing skills would need an additional 3 hours of remedial writing instruction which would not count toward the GE total. This course should make use of primary reading texts for subjects of the writing.

Math Communications (3 hours); This course would cover interpretation and analysis of graphs, charts, data, and statistics. Some instruction in the calculation of statistics may need to be included.

Wellness (3 hours); These hours would be broken into several pieces. The first part would be a 2 hour course that would cover the 5 areas of wellness to be followed by two courses (0.5 hr each) in which these areas would be practically applied (e.g. PE courses for athletic wellness, etc.)

Communications (3 hours); This course would cover visual, written and oral communication skills along with instruction in the interpretation of these forms. Primary texts should be incorporated into the curriculum.

History (3 hours); A full description of this area is not yet completed.

Modes of Inquiry: (potentially up to 25 hours, still under discussion)

Modes of Inquiry: (3 hours each, 12 hours total)

Natural Sciences

Social Sciences

Humanities

Arts

Each of the above categories would explore the following topics within the given mode of inquiry:

How is new knowledge generated in this mode of inquiry?

What is the role in society of this mode of inquiry?

What are the current issues relating to this mode of inquiry? (Case Studies?)

Modes of Inquiry: Discipline-Related Courses (13 hours)

Within each of the above areas, the students will need to choose one course from one department in which the student will learn more about the discipline – techniques and content. One course must include a laboratory experience.

Capstone: (? hours)

Interdisciplinary

Senior level

Items remaining to be discussed:

Foreign Language: where will it fit in the program?

Exact Details of the Capstone

Refinement of the Modes of Inquiry Section

Closing Thoughts:

Don't dumb down programs – retain rigor, require critical reading and thinking

Consider issues of timing – when during the 4-5 year program will each of the components be offered / required?

Assignment for Friday's meeting:

Using the components above create a complete General Education Framework (Model).

Include number of hours, create descriptions for the required courses, finalize or modify the Modes of Inquiry section, create a workable capstone course.

Limit your revision work to the part of the program following the core. You may, however, clarify or further define those courses within the core.

Consider the Phase I outcomes document (attached): Does the model address the desired outcomes (or as many as possible)?

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Darveau, co-moderator

General Studies Roundtable – Phase II

February 2, 2007

A review of the individual/group proposals discussed at the 10/20/06 meeting shows that the current proposal in progress incorporates many of the elements of these proposals. Other aspects of the proposal are not (yet) included in the current model. The purpose of this hand-out is to call both to your attention.

Aspects of Individual Proposals Included in Model under Construction:

- Introduction to Scientific Inquiry with follow-up course(s)
- Mathematics Communication
- Health and Wellness course / physical activity component

- Writing – introductory course and academic discourse (thematic writing/WAC)
- Communication skills (rhetoric) – Conflict and Resolution?
- Emphasis on critical thinking
- Interdisciplinary approaches
- Emphasis on “classical, renowned original work” (primary texts)
- Distinction between the physical/natural sciences and the social sciences, each with appropriate follow-up course(s)

Aspects of Individual Proposals Not (Yet) Explicitly Included in Model under Construction

- Course(s) devoted to current issues (personal beliefs, regional/national issues, international issues)
- Capstone/Senior Seminar – Practicum in Citizenship, An Educated Person in Today’s World)
- Service Learning
- Foreign language(s)
- Diverse world cultures
- Achievements of civilization
- Cultural/historical influences upon beliefs and behaviors
- Personal Development (beyond wellness)
- Promotion of lifelong learning
- Economics (money management)
- American Citizenship (tie-in with American Democracy Project?)
- History included in social sciences or humanities category?
- Name of the program

Total Number of Credit Hours in Proposals

Requirements range from 24-45 credit hours. Some 45-hour programs left 6-9 hours undesignated to be decided at the discretion of individual departments/programs.

Using the mission statement the group was challenged to develop a list of student outcomes that could be used for assessment and also to aid in developing curriculum. The following is the outcome of that exercise.

Mission Statement:

The General Studies program at UNK will facilitate the development of students’ skills that transfer across all disciplines. Students will understand the accomplishments of civilizations and world cultures, engage in logical and creative thought in different disciplines, and experience personal growth that enhances their ability to be lifelong learners, and ethical and responsible citizens.

The following student outcomes have been identified and are linked to the mission statement through specific statements:

...development of students’ skills that transfer across all disciplines...

Students should be able to communicate effectively by:

- applying the principles of effective oral communication in group and individual presentations
- applying the principles of effective writing and other forms of communication
- participating in fruitful intellectual dialogue and working cooperatively on issues of personal and public importance

Students should be able to think critically by:

- articulating a problem and developing a logical and reasonable response to it using appropriate sources
- demonstrating the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information in problem solving

...understand the accomplishments of civilization and world cultures...

Students will be able to

- describe, analyze, and evaluate the achievements of civilizations in their historical, scientific, philosophical, and social dimensions
- identify and evaluate the contributions of diverse world cultures in the sciences, arts, languages, literature, and philosophy
- recognize cultural influences on the development and expression of worldviews, historical and contemporary
- understand the cultural and historical influences that account for similarities and differences among human beings, past and present
- examine how their own worldviews affect the ways they view themselves and the world

...engage in logical and creative thought in different disciplines...

Students will be able to:

- understand the logic, content, methods, and theoretical approaches of different disciplines
- integrate knowledge across disciplines
- develop creative thought in ways that foster intellectual curiosity and the ability to ask why and research the question

... experience personal growth. . .

Students will be able to:

- recognize and apply the knowledge, skills and behaviors which promote physical and emotional well being
- integrate their knowledge in ways that will deepen their understanding of issues of personal and social importance

... enhances their ability to be lifelong learners, and ethical and responsible citizens. . .

Students will be able to:

- identify and demonstrate the knowledge, attitudes, and actions essential to making ethical and responsible decisions in personal and public life
- identify and examine important principles and concepts that frame our American heritage and democratic government
- identify and analyze ways to balance individual needs and rights with responsibilities to a larger public purpose (the common good)
- respect the views of others and show concern for future generations