

# **Report to the Guilford College Faculty**

## **Ad Hoc General Education Review Committee**

April 20, 2015

### **Committee members:**

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## **Introduction**

The Ad Hoc General Education Review Committee was charged by the faculty with reviewing the effectiveness of the current general education curriculum and bringing to the faculty a recommendation as to whether we should engage in a major, minor, or no revision of the current general education program. Furthermore, if the committee recommended a major or minor revision, it could recommend a procedure by which such a revision should occur.

One of the difficulties the ad hoc committee faced was figuring out the precise scope of “reviewing the effectiveness” of the current general education curriculum. Given rapidly evolving changes at the college this spring and the clear response indicated by the survey of faculty we administered in March, the committee decided to limit its review to the items discussed here, finding this information sufficient to warrant starting a curriculum revision. It seemed prudent to move forward quickly with the level of detail provided below as sufficient to the task with which we were charged. If the faculty finds this level of review insufficient, the committee will expand the scope of its considerations and report in more detail at a later date.

## **Recommendation**

Having conducted a review of Guilford College's current general education program, the Ad Hoc General Education Curriculum Review Committee recommends that we engage in a major revision of the general education program. We suggest that this revision be undertaken by a special committee constituted by the Clerk's Committee with the following representation:

- Five faculty members, one from each division, one of the five drawn from the Curriculum Committee and another one of the five drawn from the Assessment Committee
- Two student representatives
- Three ex officio members representing Institutional Research & Effectiveness, Engaged Learning, and Instructional Design.

In addition to this committee structure, this report recommends the following:

- all members of the committee must make a commitment to serve for two years (uninterrupted by study leaves, study abroad leadership, etc.);
- committee members must not have other service duties assigned (the members coming from the Assessment and Curriculum Committees would be relieved of their duties there; those two committees could be given substitute members from Educational Support if necessary);
- the chair of the group at least should have a course release each year for two years;
- the committee should be given adequate resources to engage in the revision process, including a designated administrative support staff person and an operating budget of \$50,000 over a two year period.

Based on recommendations from faculty members who consulted with us, this report further recommends the establishment of an ongoing budget line item to support general education through course development and regular review. Following best practices, Guilford would centralize the management of the general education curriculum in an office for teaching and learning. A faculty member would be released from some teaching duties to manage general education as a program, similar to the way we currently manage programs like IDS.

The membership of the committee is designed to help ensure that the new curriculum is developed with its assessment strategies in place from the outset and that it consider technology needs, for instruction and assessment of the curriculum, as well as appropriate high impact learning practices.

This report recommends the general education revision be accomplished within a two-year timetable with multiple status reports to and consultations with the faculty along the way. The committee also considered the idea that revision could be accomplished in stages. For example, the FYS/FYE program could be changed first, and more quickly, without affecting the structure of the rest of the curriculum. A bold revision of this program could help with enrollment, marketing, and retention.

## **Rationale**

**1. Strategic need:** General education should be the vibrant core of an education in the liberal arts. It provides the breadth of knowledge, the development of transferable skills, the engagement in different methods of inquiry, and the opportunities to engage in serious consideration of values that help students become well-educated persons beyond the expertise in a particular discipline they acquire through the major. While a revision of general education should never be undertaken for transient reasons, as the proposal for the “New Curriculum” approved by the Guilford faculty on April 1, 1998 stated, “curriculum revision is a work in progress.” It seems clear that, especially at an institution guided by Quaker principles, including the concept of “continuing revelation,” periodic revision of the curriculum should take place, especially at such times when students and faculty come to perceive it as merely a series of requirements to fulfill.

This year President Jane Fernandes has expressed her support for a revision of the general education requirements and has called repeatedly for faculty to envision and develop new curricular opportunities that will be attractive to students. This seems an opportune moment to undertake this task. Multiple institutions across the United States have engaged in productive general education revision recently, perhaps particularly in response to the growing sense that higher education must demonstrate more tangibly how effectively it delivers on its promises to educate students in certain skills, knowledge, and values. Many faculty agree that Guilford’s current general education program, while certainly including important features connected to the college’s mission, no longer provides a distinctive marker of Guilford’s values or a potential means of attracting students to the institution. While it is certainly the case that students do not choose a college largely based on its general education, revising Guilford’s offerings provides a key opportunity to think strategically about how general education, linked more rationally to education in the major, might serve as a means of securing more of the kinds of students who can take full advantage of the Guilford educational environment.

Faculty members who attended a recent AAC&U conference on general education revision spoke powerfully to our ad hoc committee, saying that Guilford has fallen way behind other institutions, which employ fully-integrated curricula that span all four years, using courses that build upon one another and incorporate high impact learning practices in well-orchestrated fashion. They indicated that refining the curriculum could help with recruitment and retention and that, given the pending restructuring of the academic division, we could link curricular reform effectively with a new academic organization. Since the faculty has already developed and approved the General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs), a good step that aligns us with national trends, now is the time to continue building on the momentum created by that work to ensure that our general education curriculum can be more readily assessed in a rational, reasonable manner.

The Curriculum Committee has received various proposals over the past few years for revising portions of general education, deciding to postpone these until a more comprehensive revision took place. We include copies of these proposals in the Supporting Documents. Last year, a joint committee of the Curriculum and Assessment Committees produced a report outlining three potential models for curricular revision, and this report generated faculty interest in revision. We include a copy of this report in the Supporting Documents as well. All these facts indicate that this is a turning-point moment in Guilford’s institutional history, one that provides the opportunity to make important changes to a general education curriculum.

## 2. Faculty surveys

Faculty surveys indicate strong support among faculty for a revision to the general education curriculum. The most recent survey, administered in March 2015, indicates a stronger level of support for a greater level of revision than evidenced in the February 2011 survey. These data also point toward particular courses in general education about which faculty have the most concerns.

### March 2015 Survey

The March 2015 survey of faculty (N=68) was distributed to faculty via email on behalf of the Ad Hoc General Education Committee. The survey explored many factors, including whether reservations exist and the nature of those reservations; satisfaction or dissatisfaction with specific requirements; and the degree of general education revision.

**Table 1** shows the faculty's support for curriculum revision in general, the degree of curriculum revision faculty support, as well as the percentage of faculty who have reservations about curriculum revision.

<b>Should we revise the curriculum?</b>		
Strongly agree	41	59.4%
Agree	20	28.9%
Disagree	7	10.1%
Strongly disagree	1	1.4%
<b>To what degree should the curriculum be revised?</b>		
Overhaul	20	29.0%
Major	25	36.2%
Moderate	17	24.6%
Minor	6	8.7%
None	1	1.4%
<b>Do you have any reservations?</b>		
Has Reservations	32	47.1%
No Reservations	36	52.9%

*Table 1 - Support for curriculum revision, degree of revision supported, and percentage of faculty with reservations regarding curriculum revision.*

A few interesting relationships emerge in the data. First, although approximately half of the respondents have reservations about revising the curriculum, **Figure A** reveals that respondents nevertheless agree that the curriculum should be revised.

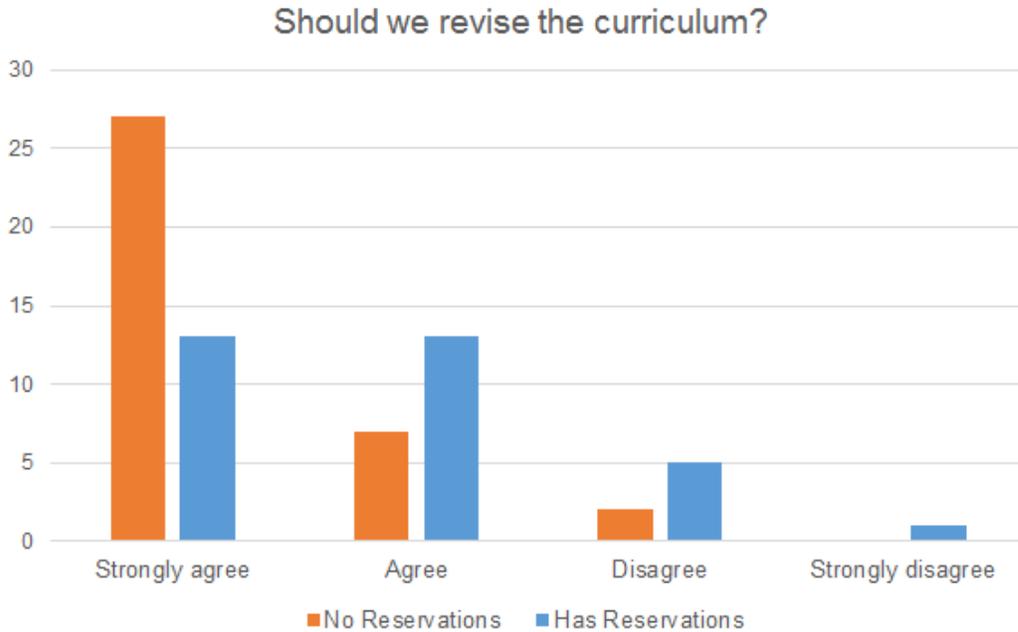


Figure A - "I think the GenEd curriculum should be revised."

Second, **Figure B** reveals a clear relationship between the strength of an individual's support for curriculum revision and the degree of revision that individual supports. Respondents who strongly agree with revising the curriculum also support either complete or major overhauls, while respondents who agreed only supported major or moderate revisions to the general education curriculum.

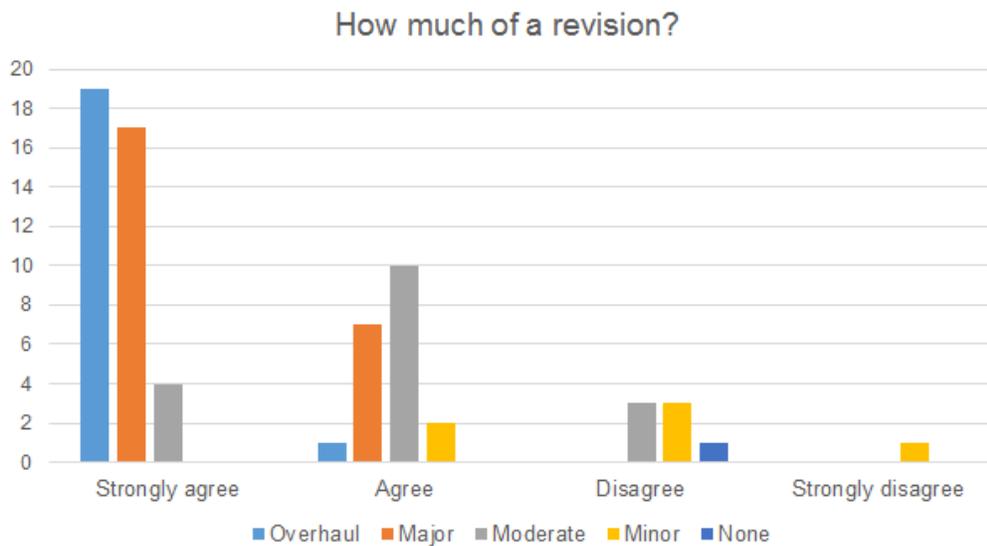


Figure B - "I think the Gen Ed should be revised" (Strongly agree to strongly disagree).

The survey also asked about faculty member’s satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the general education requirements. The results of this inquiry are seen in **Table 2**. The responses indicate little satisfaction with two requirements: First Year Seminar (28%) and Quantitative Literacy (28.1%). The Foreign Language (44.1%), Historical Perspectives (54.3%), Critical Perspectives (46.9-60.7%) and IDS (57.7%) were divided in terms of faculty member satisfaction. Finally, some requirements have high levels of satisfaction (>70%), including College Reading and Writing and the Breadth Requirements.

	% Taught	% Satisfied	% Dissatisfied
First Year Seminar (FYS 101, FYE 101)	73.9%	28.0%	72.0%
College Reading and Writing (ENGL 102)	8.7%	73.0%	27.0%
Historical Perspectives (HP)	27.5%	54.3%	45.7%
Foreign Language	10.1%	44.1%	55.9%
Quantitative Literacy	4.3%	28.1%	71.9%
Arts	17.4%	88.2%	11.8%
Business and Policy Studies	11.6%	77.4%	22.6%
Humanities	24.6%	85.3%	14.7%
Natural Science and Mathematics	11.6%	75.0%	25.0%
Social Science	14.5%	90.0%	10.0%
Critical Perspectives: Intercultural	13.0%	58.6%	41.4%
Critical Perspectives: Social Justice/ Environmental Responsibility	27.5%	60.7%	39.3%
Critical Perspectives: Diversity in the U.S.	14.5%	46.9%	53.1%
IDS 400	15.9%	57.7%	42.3%

*Table 2 - Percentage of respondents who have taught Gen. Ed. classes (left column), who are satisfied with Gen. Ed. classes (center column), and who are dissatisfied with Gen. Ed. classes (right column).*

Faculty members report a lack of clarity in FYS/FYE course objectives and express skepticism regarding the effectiveness of the FYS/FYE program. Many faculty members support the idea of the FYS/FYE program but suggest its goals may be too ambitious. Faculty responses to this survey question also suggest that neither the Foreign Language nor Quantitative Literacy requirements in their current state are sufficiently rich learning experiences for students. Other areas of dissatisfaction include the Historical Perspectives (HP), Critical Perspectives (CP), and Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS 400) requirements. Faculty members seem generally supportive of the HP objectives but express doubt regarding the achievement of these objectives. CP requirements concern some faculty members. These concerns include the “arbitrary” definitions of “diversity” and “intercultural” used in these courses, the “randomness” of the categories themselves, and that the CP requirements can be filled in too many

different ways. Some faculty express concern about the IDS 400 requirement, indicating that IDS 400 courses are not truly interdisciplinary if students choose those that are closely related to their major course of study.

A copy of the full results of the March 2015 survey is available in the Supplemental Documents.

**February 2011 Survey**

In February 2011, Kyle Dell developed and administered on behalf of the Curriculum Committee a survey of the faculty to determine opinions about the effectiveness of and potential revision to the general education curriculum. Among a number of other subjects, the survey (N=60) measured the levels of change faculty respondents felt were called for in order for the general education requirements “to more effectively support student learning.” **Table 3** reflects the percentage results:

Significant changes are required to more effectively support student learning	10	17%
Many changes are required to more effectively support student learning	9	32%
A few changes are required to more effectively support student learning	8	47%
Almost no changes are required to more effectively support student learning	3	5%

*Table 3 - Degrees of change required to effectively support student learning; 2011 survey.*

The survey also measured support for “a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the general education curriculum in supporting student learning.” **Table 4** displays those results:

Very supportive	31	52%
Somewhat supportive	21	35%
Not very supportive	5	8%
Not supportive at all	3	5%

*Table 4 - “How supportive are you of a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the general education curriculum in supporting student learning?”; 2011 survey.*

The 2011 survey also asked faculty to rank “the effectiveness in supporting student learning” of the different components of the current general education curriculum. **Table 5** below indicates that faculty perceive FYE, Quantitative Literacy, and IDS 400 to have the lowest overall levels of effectiveness:

<b>2011 Gen Ed Survey</b>	<b>Very effective</b>	<b>Somewhat effective</b>	<b>Not very effective</b>	<b>Not effective</b>
FYE	27%	52%	18%	3%
ENGL 102	63%	27%	10%	0%
HP	40%	48%	8%	3%
Foreign Language	48%	42%	7%	3%
Quantitative Literacy	27%	30%	30%	13%
Breadth requirements	52%	42%	7%	0%
Intercultural	40%	50%	7%	3%
Social Justice/Env. Resp.	37%	48%	10%	5%
Diversity in the U.S.	38%	48%	10%	3%
IDS 400	37%	43%	15%	5%

*Table 5 - Perceived effectiveness of individual components of the general education curriculum; 2011 survey.*

A copy of the full results of the March 2015 survey is available in the Supplemental Documents.

Although these two faculty surveys were not identical in form, their results do indicate that faculty interest in general education revision has grown since 2011 and that the same general education areas remain points of faculty concern.

### ***3. Identified curricular areas of concern (based on the March 2015 survey and other data):***

#### **Areas of greater concern**

- a. **FYS/FYE:** The March 2015 faculty survey shows that the most common dissatisfactions regarding FYS/FYE relate to a lack of clarity in the course objectives and doubt about the effectiveness of these courses in preparing students for college work. Several respondents suggest that FYS “tries to do too much.” Some other suggestions include: a heightened focus on PPS and interdisciplinary studies, more consistency in terms of academic rigor, and more consistency in terms of content so that FYS is an approximately equivalent experience shared by all first-year students.

Information reported by students and faculty through other instruments provides some additional information related to the FYS/FYE component of the current general education

curriculum:

- i. Incoming students (CIRP): Highly motivated students (those who identified Guilford College their first choice institution and identified a very good chance that they will be satisfied with Guilford College) identified that it was Somewhat or Very Important to go to college to gain a general education and appreciation of ideas at 98% over 4 years.
- ii. Current Students (NSSE): Students reported participating in a learning community (2 or more classes taken together as in FYE/Lab) and compared this self report to peers. In 2012, 32% of first year students reported participating (compared to 11% of peers, statistically significant positive difference) and 27% of seniors (compared to 31% of peers, statistically significant negative difference). In 2014, only 19% of first years reported participating (compared to 16% of peers, nonsignificant difference) and 26% of seniors (compared to 37% of peers, statistically significant negative difference).
- iii. Faculty Report of Current Students (FSSE): 38% of faculty teaching primarily in lower level courses and 27% teaching in upper level courses identified participating in a learning community as either Very Important or Important
- iv. Graduating Students (Senior Survey): 98% of graduating seniors Agree or Strongly Agree that their experience at Guilford College increased their openness to learning, intellectual curiosity and openness to new opportunities.
- v. Course Evaluations: Data from F2011 through S2014 indicated the following average scores of students enrolled in FYE and FYE Lab sections for questions related to course outcomes:
  1. Course Organization FYE 4.34 FYE Lab 4.47
  2. Clarity of Course Objectives FYE 4.30 FYE Lab 4.48
  3. Achievement of Course Objectives FYE 4.42 FYE Lab 4.56
  4. Helpfulness of classes in stimulating thinking about course content  
FYE 4.39 FYE Lab 4.36
  5. Helpfulness of classes in improving understanding of course content  
FYE 4.38 FYE Lab 4.40
  6. Clarity of standards for evaluation FYE 4.31 FYE Lab 4.44
  7. Helpfulness of assignments in extending course content understanding  
FYE 4.32 FYE Lab 4.40
  8. Appropriateness of teaching methods to course content  
FYE 4.49 FYE Lab 4.57
  9. Amount of understanding added to my knowledge base  
FYE 4.37 FYE Lab 4.27
  10. Stimulation of my interest in the material studied  
FYE 4.21 FYE Lab 4.16
  11. Overall rating of the course FYE 4.28 FYE Lab 4.25

These data indicate the following:

- students rated the FYE/FYE lab courses **below** the college course average range on most of these items (4.40 to 4.56 average for these items on all courses at Guilford, 2011 to 2014);
- incoming and outgoing students value learning experiences that create new intellectual opportunities for them.

**b. Quantitative Literacy:** In the March 2015 survey and elsewhere, faculty members report dissatisfaction with the existing Quantitative Literacy requirement. Many argue the existing standard is too low and that it merely represents a hoop through which our students must jump. Many suggest the QL requirement should be met through a rich learning experience found in a full course. Faculty also suggest that a QL course could exist in a discipline other than Math.

Information reported by students and faculty through other instruments provides some additional information related to the QL component of the current general education curriculum:

- i. Incoming students (CIRP): No questions addressed this component
- ii. Current Students (NSSE): In 2012, students endorsed the contribution of Guilford College in enhancing their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the area of analyzing quantitative problems with an average score from first year students at 2.79 (compared to 2.95 reported by peers, a statistically significant negative difference) and 3.12 for seniors (compared to 3.10 for peers, nonsignificant difference). In 2014 the question was changed slightly to the area of analyzing numerical and statistical information with an average score from first year students at 2.4 (compared to 2.4 for peers, nonsignificant difference) and 2.7 for seniors (compared to 2.8 for peers, nonsignificant difference)
- iii. Faculty Report of Current Students (FSSE): 39% of faculty teaching primarily in lower level courses and 39% teaching in upper level courses identified the learning outcome of analyzing quantitative (numerical and statistical) data Very Important or Important.
- iv. Graduating Students (Senior Survey): No questions addressed this component.
- v. Course Evaluations: Data from F2011 through S2014 indicated the following average scores of students enrolled in QL courses for questions related to course outcomes:
  1. Course Organization QUANT 4.44
  2. Clarity of Course Objectives QUANT 4.39
  3. Achievement of Course Objectives QUANT 4.44
  4. Helpfulness of classes in stimulating thinking about course content  
QUANT 4.40
  5. Helpfulness of classes in improving understanding of course content  
QUANT 4.12
  6. Clarity of standards for evaluation QUANT 4.42
  7. Helpfulness of assignments in extending course content understanding  
QUANT 4.29

8.	Appropriateness of teaching methods to course content	QUANT 4.19
9.	Amount of understanding added to my knowledge base	QUANT 4.16
10.	Stimulation of my interest in the material studied	QUANT 4.11
11.	Overall rating of the course	QUANT 4.08

These data indicate the following:

- students rated the QL courses **below** the college course average range on most of these items (4.40 to 4.56 average for these items on all courses at Guilford, 2011 to 2014), with the overall rating of the courses being especially low;
  - a number of faculty think the ability to analyze quantitative data is Very Important or Important;
  - student-reported data on the NSSE is somewhat mixed.
- c. **Foreign Language:** The March 2015 survey shows that the current foreign language requirement is among the most common sources of dissatisfaction with the existing curriculum. Many faculty members are supportive of an additional foreign language requirement, some arguing that a single class has little chance to provide a meaningful experience in foreign language. Several faculty members pointed to the college’s emphasis on global perspectives as further justification for increasing the requirement.

Information reported by students and faculty through other instruments provides some additional information related to the Foreign Language component of the current general education curriculum:

- Incoming students (CIRP): Highly motivated students (those who identified Guilford College their first choice institution and identified a very good chance that they will be satisfied with Guilford College) identified that it was Somewhat or Very Important to go to college to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures at 61% over 4 years.
- Current Students (NSSE): In 2012, students endorsed the contribution of Guilford College in enhancing their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the area of understanding people of other racial or ethnic backgrounds with an average score from first year students in 2012 at 2.98 (compared to 2.75 reported by peers, a statistically significant positive difference) and in 2014 at 3.0 (compared to 2.79 reported by peers, a statistically significant positive difference). Senior students in 2012 reported 3.24 (compared to 2.78 for peers, a statistically significant positive difference) and in 2014 3.1 (compared to 2.9 reported for peers, a statistically significant positive difference).

- iii. Faculty Report of Current Students (FSSE): 57% of faculty teaching primarily in lower level courses and 69% teaching in upper level courses identified the learning outcome of understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds as Very Important or Important.
- iv. Graduating Students (Senior Survey): 92% of graduating seniors Agree or Strongly Agree that their experience at Guilford College increased their knowledge of their own and/or other cultures and history. 94% Agree or Strongly Agree that they increased their sensitivity and respect for personal and cultural differences and a commitment to respectful global citizenship, and 96% Agree or Strongly Agree that they increased their ability to critique their own cultural values and views by comparing and contrasting to other cultures.
- v. Course Evaluations: Data from F2011 through S2014 indicated the following average scores of students enrolled in Foreign Language courses for questions related to course outcomes:
  1. Course Organization FORL 4.52
  2. Clarity of Course Objectives FORL 4.51
  3. Achievement of Course Objectives FORL 4.52
  4. Helpfulness of classes in stimulating thinking about course content  
FORL 4.53
  5. Helpfulness of classes in improving understanding of course content  
FORL 4.52
  6. Clarity of standards for evaluation FORL 4.49
  7. Helpfulness of assignments in extending course content understanding  
FORL 4.48
  8. Appropriateness of teaching methods to course content  
FORL 4.60
  9. Amount of understanding added to my knowledge base  
FORL 4.45
  10. Stimulation of my interest in the material studied  
FORL 4.34
  11. Overall rating of the course FORL 4.45

These data indicate the following conclusions:

- students rated FL courses **within** the college course average range on most of these items (4.40 to 4.56 average for these items on all courses at Guilford, 2011 to 2014), except for “Stimulation of my interest in the material studied”;
- current students report that their experience at Guilford enhances their ability to understand people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds (in a statistically significant positive difference from those at peer institutions) and highly motivated incoming students report that it is Somewhat or Very Important to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures;

- faculty generally identify the learning outcome of understanding people of other racial or ethnic backgrounds as Very Important or Important;
- a high percentage of graduating seniors find that Guilford has increased their appreciation of other cultures.

#### Areas of less concern

- a. **Historical Perspectives (HP)/Writing sequence (ENGL 101 and 102):** The March 2015 faculty survey shows the overarching theme in comments about HP is that the course objectives may be too ambitious for a single course, or that achieving the various objectives requires a delicate balancing by the instructor. Some specific comments ask if students are learning to cite sources, or use primary sources as the course was intended. Faculty report in the same survey a high level of satisfaction with ENGL 102 (73%).

Information reported by students and faculty through other instruments provides some additional information related to the HP, ENGL 101 & 102 component of the current general education curriculum:

- Incoming students (CIRP): Highly motivated students (those who identified Guilford College their first choice institution and identified a very good chance that they will be satisfied with Guilford College) identified that it was Somewhat or Very Important to go to college to make myself a more cultured person at 90% over 4 years.
- Current Students (NSSE): In 2012, students endorsed the contribution of Guilford College in enhancing their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the area of writing clearly and effectively with an average score from first year students in 2012 at 3.28 (compared to 3.13 reported by peers, a statistically significant positive difference) and in 2014 at 3.2 (compared to 29 reported by peers, a statistically significant positive difference). Senior students in 2012 reported 3.67 (compared to 3.30 for peers, a statistically significant positive difference) and in 2014 3.5 (compared to 3.1 reported for peers, a statistically significant positive difference). In the area of thinking critically and analytically, first year students in 2012 reported 3.28 (compared to 3.31 for peers, a nonsignificant difference) and in 2014 3.2 reported for first year students (compared to 3.1 for peers, a nonsignificant difference). Seniors reported 3.69 in 2012 (compared to 3.50 for peers, a statistically significant positive difference) and 3.5 in 2014 (compared to 3.1 for peers a statistically significant positive difference).
- Faculty Report of Current Students (FSSE): 68% of faculty teaching primarily in lower level courses and 83% teaching in upper level courses identified the learning outcome of writing clearly and effectively as Very Important or Important. 93% of lower level and 100% of upper level instructors identified the outcome of thinking critically and analytically as Very Important or Important.
- Graduating Students (Senior Survey): 92% of graduating seniors Agree or Strongly Agree that their experience at Guilford College increased their understanding of historical, political, religious, and economic forces that have shaped current global systems.

v. Course Evaluations: Data from F2011 through S2014 indicated the following average scores of students enrolled in HP, ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 courses for questions related to course outcomes:

1.	Course Organization	HP 4.53	W101 4.46	W102 4.48
2.	Clarity of Course Objectives	HP 4.49	W101 4.45	W102 4.45
3.	Achievement of Course Objectives	HP 4.57	W101 4.49	W102 4.53
4.	Helpfulness of classes in stimulating thinking about course content	HP 4.59	W101 4.59	W102 4.70
5.	Helpfulness of classes in improving understanding of course content	HP 4.60	W101 4.47	W102 4.50
6.	Clarity of standards for evaluation	HP 4.45	W101 4.44	W102 4.42
7.	Helpfulness of assignments in extending course content understanding	HP 4.55	W101 4.44	W102 4.51
8.	Appropriateness of teaching methods to course content	HP 4.65	W101 4.51	W102 4.57
9.	Amount of understanding added to my knowledge base	HP 4.55	W101 4.43	W102 4.44
10.	Stimulation of my interest in the material studied	HP 4.43	W101 4.32	W102 4.30
11.	Overall rating of the course	HP 4.50	W101 4.40	W102 4.43

vi. Enrollment Shifts: Since the institution of the 1998 revision, what was initially conceived as a one-course English composition requirement (ENGL 102) has become, de facto, a two-course requirement due to a downward trend in student preparedness for college-level writing and, to some extent, changes in the initial placement procedure. Below, **Figure C** charts the number of sections of ENGL 101 and 102 taught each fall semester from 1999 to the present. It shows clearly that presently more students are enrolled in ENGL 101 than ENGL 102 as their initial course in the writing sequence, which has led effectively to the institutionalization of two composition courses for the majority of traditional students.

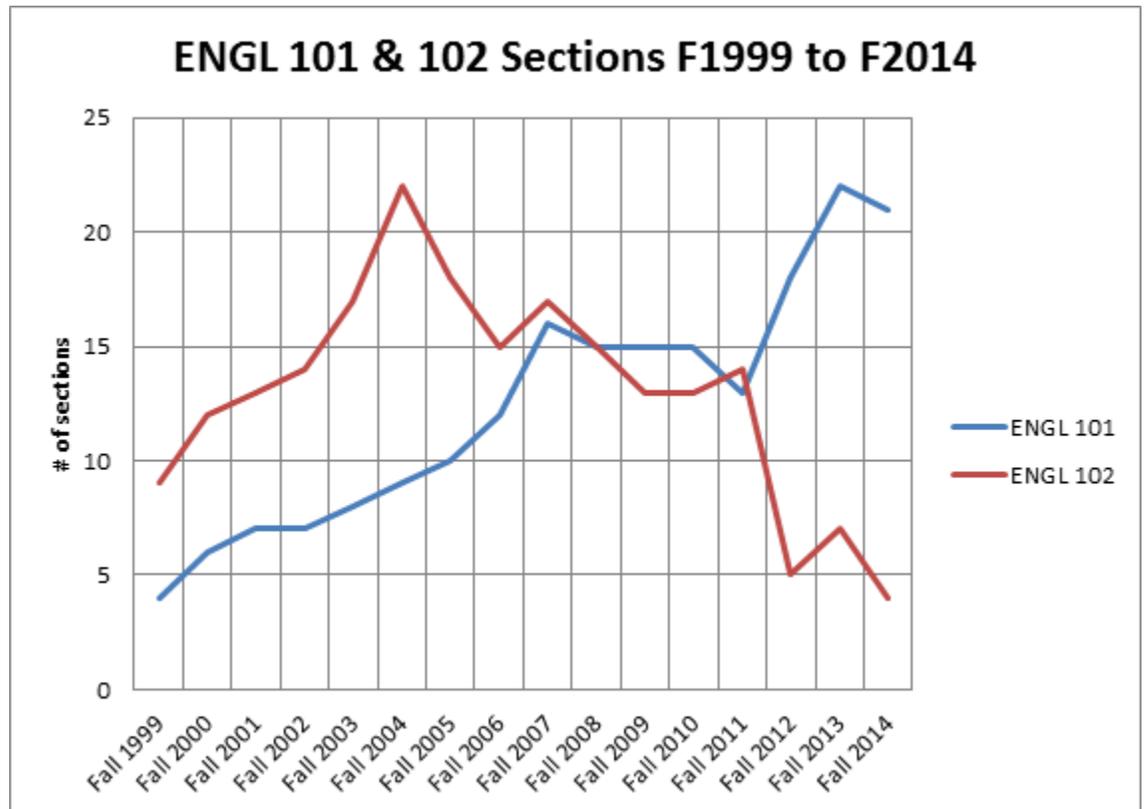


Figure C - Number of fall semester sections of ENGL 101 and ENGL 102; 1999-2014.

These data indicate the following conclusions:

- students rated ENGL 101, 102, and HP courses **within or above** the college course average range on most of these items (4.40 to 4.56 average for these items on all courses at Guilford, 2011 to 2014) except for “Stimulation of my interest in the material studied” for ENGL 101 and 102;
- current students value the writing instruction Guilford College provides;
- faculty clearly endorse the value of writing instruction as well as that of critical and analytical thinking;
- in revising general education, we need to align our practice with our stated policy regarding the composition course sequence (ENGL 101 and 102).

**b. Critical Perspectives:** If considered together as a group, the critical perspectives requirements are a significant source of dissatisfaction, according to the March 2015 survey of faculty. Definitions of “diversity” and “intercultural” are seen by some faculty members as “limited” and “arbitrary,” and the categories themselves are seen by some as “random.” Other faculty report the requirements can be filled in too many different ways.

Given the large number of different courses that fulfill the Critical Perspectives requirement, our

committee did not study student course evaluation, NSSE, FSSE, CIRP, or Senior Survey data with regard to this set of courses.

- c. **Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS 400):** In the March 2015 survey some faculty report that IDS courses are not truly “interdisciplinary” if students choose IDS courses that are closely related to their major course of study.

Information reported by students and faculty through other instruments provides some additional information related to the IDS 400 component of the current general education curriculum:

- i. Incoming students (CIRP): Highly motivated students (those who identified Guilford College their first choice institution and identified a very good chance that they will be satisfied with Guilford College) identified that it was Somewhat or Very Important to go to college to develop a meaningful philosophy of life at 53% over 4 years.
- ii. Current Students (NSSE): Students reported participating in a culminating senior experience and compared this self report to peers. In 2012 2% of first year students reported participating (compared to 1% of peers, statistically nonsignificant) and 62% of seniors (compared to 55% of peers, statistically significant positive difference). In 2014 4% of first years reported participating (compared to 16% of peers, nonsignificant difference) and 56% of seniors (compared to 75% of peers, statistically significant negative difference). In 2012, students endorsed the contribution of Guilford College in enhancing their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the area of solving complex real world problems with an average score from first year students in 2012 at 2.73 (compared to 2.75 reported by peers, statistically nonsignificant) and in 2014 at 2.72 (compared to 2.6 reported by peers, a statistically significant positive difference). Senior students in 2012 reported 3.08 (compared to 2.90 for peers, a statistically significant positive difference) and in 2014 2.8 (compared to 2.9 reported for peers, statistically nonsignificant).
- iii. Faculty Report of Current Students (FSSE): 78% of faculty teaching primarily in lower level courses and 86% teaching in upper level courses identified the culminating senior experience as Very Important or Important. 59% of lower level and 75% of upper level instructors identified the outcome of solving complex real world problems as Very Important or Important.
- iv. Graduating Students (Senior Survey): 94% of graduating seniors Agree or Strongly Agree that their experience at Guilford College increased their critical, comprehensive and analytical thinking and creative problem solving skills. Additionally 93% Agree or Strongly Agree that they increased their ability to view the world and self from multiple perspectives.
- v. Course Evaluations: Data from F2011 through S2014 indicated the following average scores of students enrolled in IDS 400 courses for questions related to course outcomes:

1.	Course Organization	IDS 4.36
2.	Clarity of Course Objectives	IDS 4.45
3.	Achievement of Course Objectives	IDS 4.52
4.	Helpfulness of classes in stimulating thinking about course content	IDS 4.73
5.	Helpfulness of classes in improving understanding of course content	IDS 4.59
6.	Clarity of standards for evaluation	IDS 4.42
7.	Helpfulness of assignments in extending course content understanding	IDS 4.53
8.	Appropriateness of teaching methods to course content	IDS 4.61
9.	Amount of understanding added to my knowledge base	IDS 4.57
10.	Stimulation of my interest in the material studied	IDS 4.54
11.	Overall rating of the course	IDS 4.52

These data indicate the following conclusions:

- students rated IDS 400 courses **within or above** the college course average range on most of these items (4.40 to 4.56 average for these items on all courses at Guilford, 2011 to 2014) except for “Course organization”;
- a culminating senior experience seems important or very important to a significant number of Guilford College faculty.

#### **Areas of little concern**

- Breadth requirements:** The March 2015 faculty survey indicates a high level of overall satisfaction with Breadth Requirement courses. Given the large number of different courses that fulfill the Breadth requirements, our committee did not study student course evaluation, NSSE, FSSE, CIRP, or Senior Survey data with regard to this group.

#### ***4. Faculty reservations about revising the curriculum (March 2015 survey)***

Out of 68 survey respondents, 32 respondents (**47%**) indicate that they have reservations about revising the curriculum. Nevertheless, out of those 32 respondents, 26 (**81%**) agree that the curriculum should be revised, with only 6 (**19%**) disagreeing.

When asked what their reservations were, many respondents indicate concerns that the committee anticipated: Time commitment (**75%**); Support (financial, course release, administration) (**72%**); Timeline (how quickly will this be completed?) (**66%**); Interdepartmental and/or personal conflict (**56%**); Transparency (**53%**); and Effect on departmental interests (**50%**). Comments in the “Other” category

(28%) largely state concerns for the timing of the revision during a period of financial strain, budget/position cuts, and low morale. Concern for student feedback and reaching consensus for the benefit of the students were also mentioned.

In the open-ended section on possible solutions to those reservations, respondents reiterate many of these concerns, especially that the timing of this possible revision may be poor due to financial constraints and low morale. Several respondents cite the previous curriculum revision's challenges and expressed fear or hesitation about confronting these challenges again. "Turf wars" and departmental conflicts are also concerning to faculty members, and some worry that the budget woes might exacerbate those turf wars.

Faculty were asked to propose solutions that might pave the way for a revision process. Many respondents call for greater clarity and focus of the college's mission and goals as a necessary precursor to a curriculum revision, and some respondents also emphasize the importance of transparency from the administration and from the group undertaking the curriculum revision.

Sufficient support and time were common themes across responses, with calls for course releases, funding, and other support options, such as creating a new position to oversee the process. Many respondents call for a clear, structured process with multiple opportunities for feedback and contribution from all faculty, and several respondents suggest a modular approach and/or prioritizing action steps to break the process into segments.

### ***5. Gaps between General Education Learning Outcomes and current general education curriculum***

The development and approval in 2012 of the General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) was a strong, positive step in aligning Guilford's curriculum with best practices current in higher education (as indicated in the LEAP report from AAC&U) and is helping to streamline our assessment of student learning program. However, as the Assessment Committee and our ad hoc General Education Review Committee have come to see, the GELOs do not map completely onto the current general education course structure. In other words, assessment of certain GELOs is difficult because we cannot pinpoint precisely where some of those outcomes are being taught.

Some of the GELOs, such as written communication, oral communication, critical thinking, and creative thinking, have clear, obvious loci of direct instruction in courses like ENGL 102, FYS, and the Arts Breadth requirement. Other GELOs, especially

- GELO 3.0 Interpret problems and solutions using a broad range of knowledge and disciplines;
- GELO 5.0 Discern their roles and responsibilities beyond themselves through reflection on Guilford's core values of community, diversity, equality, excellence, integrity, justice, and stewardship; and

- GELO 6.0 Demonstrate responsible civic engagement and global engagement beyond Guilford College,

we find difficult to assess because instruction in these outcomes is much more widely dispersed across curricular and para-curricular activities. While the GELOs were never intended to be tied to specified general education courses only--courses in the majors, for instance, being seen as places where many of these learning outcomes were developed further in an iterative manner--trying to figure out effective and efficient methods for assessing these three GELOs is a daunting task. A revision of the general education curriculum, particularly one that integrates general education more fully across the four-year range of a student's Guilford experience, could help alleviate this problem.

The GELOs provide an excellent guide for a new curriculum that could be innovative, integrated across four years of study, and securely tied to Guilford's distinctive focus on problem-solving and its core values. The report recommends that the special committee revising general education look to the Experiential Learning and PPS proposals (see Supporting Documents), deferred by the Curriculum Committee, as important guides in developing curricular strategies for better matching with GELOs 3, 5, and 6. The Foreign Language proposal (see Supporting Documents), also deferred by the Curriculum Committee, aligns with the "global engagement" statement in GELO 6 and should also receive strong consideration from the special committee for general education revision in this regard.

### ***6. Prior proposals deferred by Curriculum Committee***

Over the past few years, the Curriculum Committee has received some proposals for changes to portions of the existing general education program. These include

- a proposal to more fully incorporate Principled Problem Solving (PPS) into general education, as per the strategic long range plan that launched PPS;
- a proposal to require an experiential learning component of all students; and
- a proposal to alter the Foreign Language requirement.

The Curriculum Committee deferred consideration of these proposals until such time as the faculty endorsed a more comprehensive revision of general education. The presence of these proposals indicates faculty interest in revising general education. Our report recommends that the special committee for general education revision seriously consider these proposals, particularly in terms of creating a better alignment between general education courses and the approved GELOs. Please see the Supporting Documents below for copies of these proposals.

## **Conclusion**

As stated in the introduction, it was difficult for us to gauge how thoroughly our ad hoc committee should study the effectiveness of the current general education curriculum. Given the fact

that assessment information regarding certain portions of current general education was reported in faculty meeting last fall, we chose not to include that data here. We have relied heavily on faculty survey data in this report, largely because the March 2015 survey indicated such strong support for revision, and our committee found that information so compelling that we decided to bring this report, the scope of which could be considered preliminary, to the faculty now. This report also reminds faculty, especially newer members, how long the idea of revision has been circulating as well as noting major proposals for revision of parts of the general education that have come forward in recent years. All of these indicators, along with the strategic advantage of using revision as an opportunity to reconceive our position in the marketplace, point toward the direction of a significant revision to our general education program.

## **Supporting documents**

The following documents accompany this report:

- a. Foreign Language proposal to Curriculum Committee, April 16, 2013
- b. PPS General Education proposal to Curriculum Committee, March 18, 2013
- c. Experiential Learning Proposal to Curriculum Committee, November 2012 (Draft)
- d. Report on GE Curricular Revisions, April 2, 2014 (Joint Committee of Assessment and Curriculum Committees)
- e. Spring 2011 survey of faculty opinion on general education (collected by Kyle Dell)
- f. Spring 2015 survey of faculty opinion on general education (collected by Ad Hoc Committee on General Education Review)