

# GUILFORD

## COLLEGE

**MEMO:** 20 April 2014  
**FROM:** *Joint Subcommittee on General Education Curriculum Revisions:* Damon Akins, Drew Hays, and Sanjay Marwah for Curriculum Committee; Caryl Schunk, Sylvia Trelles and Megan White for Assessment Committee.  
**TO:** Faculty  
**RE:** **Update on the Status of General Education Curriculum Revision, 2013-14**

The Joint Subcommittee, in consultation with the full Curriculum and Assessment Committees, feels it is critical to update the faculty on the status of the General Education (GE) Curriculum Revision process.

In fall 2013, the Curriculum Committee was charged with pursuing GE curriculum revision, in consultation with the Assessment Committee. In accordance with the handbook, a joint subcommittee was formed with representatives of both Curriculum and Assessment. Over the course of the 2013-14 academic year, that subcommittee has discussed a variety of options, looked at preliminary assessment data, consulted with members of the campus community, compared the GE curriculum at peer, aspirant and co-application institutions, held one faculty forum (February 2014) and incorporated feedback and existing proposals before Curriculum. What we offer here are three possible models or approaches to function as a starting point for broadening the GE curriculum revision process to the full faculty.

The subcommittee was encouraged by faculty enthusiasm at the faculty forum devoted to the topic. Our goal with this framework is to give some direction to those conversations, and to help sustain that enthusiasm as the process moves forward.

**The Core:** Given Guilford's diverse student body, the competitive college landscape we face, the challenges in student retention, we recommend a more coherent core curriculum to better integrate and deliver the General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) and to clarify and support the mission of the college to provide a practical, excellent, and transformative liberal arts education. The Core is integrative, cohesive, interdisciplinary and focused on delivering the GELOs. It consists of four basic elements:

1. a First Course, taken by all students in their first semester at Guilford
2. an Experiential Learning requirement
3. tighter sequencing overall, specifically in the writing program across all four tiers
4. tighter integration / linkage of the Last Course (similar to current IDS 400)

The core is the backbone of the GE curriculum, and may, as faculty, staff and students consider the process moving forward, grow to include other proposals the subcommittee has considered, such as a holistic health requirement, an expanded foreign language requirement, or an activity / service learning requirement. The subcommittee felt that these all have considerable merit, but wants to guard against enlarging the overall number of GE requirements. We feel that the specific requirements which constitute the core must be the product of inclusive and deliberate conversations across the entire corporate faculty.

**The Models:** We have proposed three models here, all of which are structured around the Core. Model A grafts the Core onto our existing curriculum with minimal revisions. Model B suggests substantial revisions to the way in which we deliver the breadth requirement (a requirement according to SACS) by integrating it into an expanded Critical Perspectives to better integrate the Core into our curriculum. Model C suggest a GE curriculum consisting of the Core and departmental-determined co-curricular requirements such that every department would decide what sort of GE beyond the Core would best serve its majors. Each of these models is explained in more detail below, and it is worth repeating that these are presented as places for a discussion to start. The Joint Subcommittee is well aware of the many difficulties each poses.

All of the models are more clearly centered around and supportive of the college's core mission, and support the integration of the college's different constituencies (CCE, Transfer, Traditional, Early College). Additionally, they center the GELOs and distribute those learning outcomes across all divisions. They remain flexible—both in the sense that we can accommodate transfer students, but also flexible in offering student access to the GELOs. We see all of the models as facilitating broad faculty support for the practical, excellent and transformative education we offer.

#### **Model A**

- Implement a First Course to replace FYE 101. The course would be required of all students (traditional and CCE, regardless of transfer status) their first semester at Guilford. The course should be interdisciplinary and, we suggest, center Principled Problem Solving.
- FYE 102 and Adult Transitions (GST 101) are equalized in terms of credit requirements (2) and expectations. The former required of all FY traditional students; the latter required of all CCE students.
- Greater integration of the writing sequence into the third (majors) and fourth (IDS or its equivalent) tiers through sequenced and shared learning outcomes.
- Implementation of a Experiential Learning Requirement in the form of a certain number of ELR credits required in order to graduate. This could be met by courses which have been designated as ELR by a review process (Curriculum, or perhaps an additional committee) according to established criteria and learning outcomes. Additionally, proportional credit could be granted for courses with experiential components (e.g. 4-credit course with an experiential component could count toward 1-credit of ELR). As part of this requirement, J-term could be designated as EL only, thus ensuring the number of courses and sufficient student interest.
- More clearly and intentionally linking a Last Course (similar to current IDS 400) with the revised goals of the First Course and the writing sequence.

#### **Model B**

- In addition to the changes as above, the following:
- Expanding, clarifying, revising and deepening the Critical Perspectives requirements, perhaps to 8 requirements (e.g. replacing the 5 current Breadth and 3 Critical Perspectives requirements) These would need considerable conceptualization and configuration to ensure that they are equally (or at least similarly) distributed across the divisions through distribution requirements, while not discretely assigned to specific divisions. The logic: Critical Perspectives are far more distinct than Breadth Requirements. By expanding Critical Perspectives and

ensuring that they are served by each division, we could meet the minimum breadth requirements of SACS, but better integrate those requirements into our Core.

- Additionally, we would suggest that all Critical Perspectives courses require HP (or equivalent research-tier in the writing program) as a prerequisite, that they have an explicit writing component and/or experiential learning requirement which engages the specific Critical Perspectives requirement they fulfill.
- The Joint Subcommittee considered the idea that, in order to support the breadth which we feel is critical, that we replace existing minors with a requirement that all minors be interdisciplinary (either a permanent minor such as MEMS, or a PPSE minor).

### **Model C**

The General Education curriculum is comprised of two parts:

- The Core (outlined above) required of all students at Guilford.
- Co-requisites determined by the major / program. These would need to be determined through a broadly collaborative process to ensure that courses offered in one department are available to programs in other departments. While this would pose a number of logistical challenges, the subcommittee felt that the process could help integrate the college around our core mission while retaining the flexibility that many programs need.

### **Conclusion**

We feel strongly that general education curriculum revision is vital, overdue, and needs to move forward. As we move forward, we *hope* that any future proposals that impact curriculum (such as J-term, Principled Problem Solving, Experiential Learning, additional foreign language requirements, etc.) be considered in conjunction with the ongoing GE revisions, and that the overall process will proceed along these lines: The Joint Subcommittee will continue its work, according to the process outlined in the faculty handbook (1.402), but will supplement that process with procedures to ensure broad internal and external feedback and review through ongoing faculty fora, workshops led by the subcommittee and/or general education experts and best practices. The subcommittee will create an online shared space where proposals can be shared and feedback solicited from the college community, and organize dedicated outreach to groups of interests to further discussion and involvement around how to best deliver the GELOs broadly across the campus. However, we feel that this process requires a substantial institutional commitment in the form of administrative release and support, stipends for additional faculty commitments, and a budget (or assistance in seeking faculty development or other funds) to support planning and implementation. In the absence of the support that our experience has shown us to be necessary to effectively pursue substantial and innovative GE revisions, we question the wisdom of moving forward with revisions at this time.