Improving the Essential Experiences of General Education

September 7, 2018

A Presentation by the General Education Advisory Team
A Working Vision
The University of Alabama where dynamic, integrative experiences guide students to become curious learners, critical and creative thinkers, and informed and engaged citizens.
Where We Are Now

• A distribution model implemented 30 years ago
• Last reviewed 20 years ago
• Courses reviewed on a five-year cycle
• State articulation agreement
• No assessment plan
Seismic Shift

General Education

• Must integrate knowledge and developing higher-order learning
• Connect learning goals of major, student affairs, and lifelong learning
• Is foundation for equity
• Is a powerful tool for retention and completion
• Provides valuable and enduring professional development for current and future workforce
Where Do We Want to Be?

Dynamic, Integrative Curriculum & Experiences

- Measurable Learning Outcomes & Competencies
- New Teaching & Learning Technologies
- High Impact Practices
  - UG Research
  - Service Learning
  - Diversity/Study Away/Global Learning
  - Experiential Learning
  - Common FY Experience
  - Capstone Courses
  - ePortfolio
  - Writing/Inquiry Intense Courses

- Student Achievement & Success
- Ongoing Review & Oversight
- Career Readiness
Barriers

- Resistance to change
- Turf fight
- Perceived lack of resources to support effort
- Levels of approval
Stage 1 (2018-19) Faculty Taskforce: Plan and design the review process; collect data on SLOs

Stage 2 (2019-20) Analyze data and develop a comprehensive plan; present to UA community

Stage 3 (2020-21) Pilot

Stage 4 (2021-22) Implementation Begins
Stage One

• Taskforce...
  • engages in professional development;
  • interacts with UA community to identify purpose, outcomes, values of general education;
  • outlines process for review of current core;
  • begins data collection
  • identifies/capitalizes on current initiatives/momentum, e.g. diversity designation, QEP, extended transcripts, globalization, inclusive classroom, HIPs Inventory;
  • maintains transparency (website)
  • delivers realistic timeline for review/revision, inventory of experiences (HIPs), data about current core, proposal for structure of ongoing oversight
Stage Two

• Taskforce...
  • Analyzes data and presents findings to UA faculty/community
    • Includes a gap analysis, i.e. alignment of vision, values, outcomes with existing best practices and initiatives
    • Presentations, focus groups, website, UA News
  • Identifies critical needs and/or popular/existing adaptations, e.g. diversity, global, common FYE
  • Develops comprehensive plan and presents to UA community for full, fair debate and ratification
  • Delivers ratified comprehensive plan of general education, assessment plan, and implementation plan
Stage Three

• Taskforce...
  • Identifies structure for oversight of the general education experience
  • Assists in implementation of early adaptations, further refinement of comprehensive plan, evaluation of processes and assessment of student learning
  • Assists in pilot implementation

• Structure for oversight
  • A permanently staffed unit/position
  • Standing faculty or advisory committee charged with ongoing assessment of SLOs, ongoing review/evaluation of general education, and evaluation of courses/experiences for inclusion in GE plan
  • Ongoing support for professional development
Stage Four

• First phases of implementation begin with Class of 2025 (Fall 2021)
Model Continuum

Breadth / Distribution

Social Science
Arts & Humanities
Natural Sciences
Foreign Language
Math
Writing

Integrative

Common Set of Courses
Learning Communities
Interdisciplinary Courses
Integrative Courses
Team-taught Courses
Capstone Courses
Campus-Wide Themes
Service Learning
ePortfolios
Competencies
Range of Models

- Modifying existing structure
  - Example: add a new designation

- Comprehensive revision of expectations
  - Example: Competency-based core (à la U. Minnesota)
“Core Career Competencies” of U. Minnesota:

- Analytical & critical thinking
- Applied problem solving
- Oral & written communication
- Ethical reasoning & decision making
- Innovation & creativity
- Engaging diversity
- Digital literacy
- Teamwork & leadership
- Active citizenship & community engagement
- Career management
Getting There

Stage 1
(2018-19)
Faculty Taskforce: Plan and design the review process; collect data on SLOs

Stage 2
(2019-20)
Analyze data and develop a comprehensive plan; present to UA community

Stage 3
(2020-21)
Pilot

Stage 4
(2021-22)
Implementation Begins