



The New General Education Program at the University of Maryland



THE OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES



The Charge to the Task Force

- In 2009, the Task Force was charged by the Provost and the Chair of the Campus Senate to design a new General Education that:
 - aligns with the priorities of UM's Strategic Plan
 - serves the needs of our students
 - calls for an intellectually rigorous and demanding curriculum
 - is easily understandable and increases flexibility
 - prepares students for an increasingly more connected world
 - aims to reduce class size
 - considers out-of-classroom experiences
 - enhances opportunities for innovative and improved teaching methods

The Task Force worked from March 2009 to March 2010. The plan was approved by the University Senate in April 2010.



The Purpose of General Education

- Provide the skills necessary for all students to succeed in their academic careers and professional lives.
- Complement and strengthen students' major areas of study.
- Endow students with a broad view of civilizations past and present.
- Enhance the ability of students to thrive both intellectually and materially to support themselves, their families, and their community through a broad understanding of the world in which they live and work.
- Engage students in defining the ethical imperatives necessary to create a just society, in their own communities and in the larger world.
- Foster intellectual dexterity



GOALS of the New GEN ED Program

- Ensure that students have the basic skills in written and oral communication and in mathematical analysis that are critical to their success across the curriculum and in their professional lives: **FUNDAMENTAL STUDIES**
- Provide students with breadth of knowledge and disciplinary diversity: **DISTRIBUTIVE STUDIES**
- Allow students to explore unfamiliar fields and ignite new intellectual and professional passions through traditional disciplines, established interdisciplinary programs, and emergent trans-disciplinary fields: **THE I-SERIES**
- Promote self-understanding and understanding of others. Sharpen students' awareness of the consequences, intended and unintended, of previous generations' decisions and, by so doing, alert them to the significance of their own choices: **PLURAL SOCIETIES AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE**



Outline of the New General Education Program

The following slides outline 5 major areas of the proposal:

1. **Fundamental Studies** (writing, math, oral communication, and analytic reasoning) [5 courses, 15 credits]
2. **Distributive Studies** (including requirements in Humanities, Natural Sciences, History and Social Sciences, and Scholarship in Practice) [8 courses, 25 credits]
3. **The I-Series courses** [2 courses, double count w/Dist. Studies]
4. **Plural Societies and Cultural Competence** [2 courses, double count w/ Dist. Studies]

Total credits: minimum 40



Math and Writing: AP and SAT issues

- No SAT exemptions for ENGL 101 and Fundamental Studies Math; however, AP/IB exemptions remain
- AP credit is limited to 6 Distributive Studies courses
- No exemption for Professional Writing



Fundamental Studies: *Writing*

- Retain the requirement that students take both Academic Writing and Professional Writing.
- Remove the exemption from English 101: Academic Writing based on SAT scores.
- Remove the exemption from Professional Writing based on grade of A in Academic Writing.
- Increase the variety of specialized offerings in English 39X: Professional Writing



Fundamental Studies: *Oral Communication*

- Require one oral communication course for all undergraduates.
 - could be implemented with a variety of courses across campus (Communication, Journalism, Theatre, Hearing and Speech; others)
- A committee should oversee the overall administration of the Oral Communication Fundamental Studies requirement.



Fundamental Studies: *Analytic Reasoning*

- Require 1 course (beyond Math Fundamental Studies) whose focus is logical and/or analytical reasoning.
- Courses introduce students to conceptual and theoretical methods used in reasoning and problem solving.
- Most courses that are presently in the “MS” CORE category would satisfy this requirement
- Additional existing math and statistics courses not currently in the “MS” CORE category, as well as courses involving other forms of reasoning, may satisfy this requirement.



The New Distributive Studies

Features of the new program are to:

1. Add a fourth area, *Scholarship in Practice*.
2. Reduce the number of courses required in each area from three to two.
3. Eliminate subcategories in each of the areas.
4. Require that two of the courses fulfilling Distributive Studies be I-series courses.
5. Incorporate individual enrichment features in all courses satisfying Distributive Studies requirements.
6. Incorporate 300 and 400-level courses into Distributive Studies.



Distributive Studies: *Scholarship in Practice*

- Reinforces and enhances the traditional areas in the Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences with courses that put these areas of learning into practice.
- Teaches the stages required for the pursuit of tangible goals through planning, modeling, drafting, testing, revising, perfecting, and assessing.
- Gives students an appreciation for how successful outcomes can be defined and assessed, how feasibility tempers and corrects optimistic intentions, and how realistic achievement requires discipline and hard work.



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The Signature:

I-Series: Issues, Imagination, Intellect, Inspiration, Innovation, Implementation

- The I-series inverts the common pedagogical pyramid. Rather than starting with a survey of existing knowledge, approach large problems from particular (inter)disciplinary perspectives.
- While I-Series courses ask questions, they are not meant to answer them. Rather, they aim to examine the ways in which diverse intellectual traditions and disciplinary protocols address big questions.
- The I-Series seeks to dismantle artificial boundaries in knowledge.
- I-Series courses double-count in Distributive Studies, under the appropriate categories.



Plural Societies and Cultural Competence

- The centerpiece of the new Diversity requirement, *Understanding Plural Societies*, speaks to both the *foundations*—cultural, psychological, historical, social and biological—of human difference and the *operation* of plural societies. *Understanding Plural Societies courses double-count with Distributive Studies.*
- *Cultural Competence* serves as a practicum for Understanding Plural Societies courses, just as a laboratory section serves as a practicum for a science course or a rehearsal serves as a practicum for a music, dance, or theater class. Cultural Competence courses provide training in practical ways of dealing with human difference and navigating the complexity of plural societies.



Timeline

- June-July: Learning Outcomes; 12 committees
- Sept. 15: Expressions of Interest for Oral Comm due
- Oct. 15: I-Series course proposals due
- Oct. 15: Expressions of Interest for Scholarship in Practice due
- Oct. 30-Nov. 15: Oral Comm proposals due
- Nov. 1 : Online course submission begins
- Nov. 11 or 15 TBD: Presentation to Senate