PROPOSED
GENERAL EDUCATION
CURRICULUM

UNIVERSITY GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MARCH 2019

INTRODUCTION

General Education is the foundation of a liberal arts education and is designed to cultivate the skills, knowledge, and habits of mind that are essential in every field of study and which enable graduates to make effective decisions as citizens of a rapidly changing, richly diverse, and increasingly interconnected world. The University's General Education requirements introduce students to a variety of learning perspectives and methods of inquiry, which combine to foster an appreciation of the connections between different ways of viewing, knowing, and engaging with the world.

There have been far-reaching changes both in and outside of the University since the last major revision of UMW's General Education curriculum in 2007, and a revision is necessary to reflect those changes. The General Education requirements constitute our core undergraduate academic experience; any revision to this curriculum should be consistent with our long-standing institutional values, build on our strengths, and support the realization of our strategic vision. At the same time, the revision should take into account the needs of today's students, recognize the complex and demanding decisions they will need to make, and prepare them to be responsible citizens. With this in mind, the goals the Committee defined for a revised General Education curriculum are the following:

- to address the needs of our students during their time at UMW and prepare them for success upon graduation
- to reflect the knowledge and skills we define as essential for a UMW graduate while upholding the mission, strategic vision, and community values of the institution
- to make UMW's requirements more streamlined, allowing our students flexibility in their overall coursework

In addition to these goals, the revised curriculum must meet certain external parameters as defined by the University of Mary Washington's governing bodies. The proposed General Education curriculum presented herein is in compliance with the minimum specifications for a general education program as stated by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, the regional accrediting agency with jurisdiction over Mary Washington and its programs. The requirement is a minimum of 30 credits, with one course in each of the following areas: social/behavioral science, math/natural science, and humanities/fine arts. The new curriculum also will enable UMW to meet its obligations for the required reporting of student core competency measurements (written and oral communication, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, digital fluency, community engagement) to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. Furthermore, the proposed curriculum will facilitate the implementation of the forthcoming General Education Certificate and Passport programs being developed by the Virginia Community College System. These programs will be implemented in July 2020 and mandate that all four year institutions guarantee that 15 or 30 community college credits, respectively, will transfer and satisfy specific General Education requirements. Further information on these specific requirements can be found in Appendix I of this report.

GENERAL EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON

The University of Mary Washington strives to cultivate the skills, knowledge, values, and habits that will allow our graduates to lead personally enriching and socially responsible lives as effective and informed citizens of a rapidly changing world. In particular, the General Education curriculum should:

- *develop core skills that enable students to understand, evaluate, articulate, and advance their ideas and the ideas of others*. Across their General Education courses, students learn to think critically, analyze data, evaluate evidence and the arguments and theories grounded in that evidence, conduct research thoroughly and with integrity, write and speak effectively, and be in command of the technologies that define not only 21st-century communication but also the emerging tools of different disciplines.

- *challenge students to explore issues, solve problems, and learn though multiple methodological approaches*. General Education offers a wide-range of courses challenging students to make connections across their course of study and to explore the variety of ways they can understand and apply what they learn. They achieve this through studying complex problems and issues in the arts, humanities, quantitative reasoning, and natural and social sciences.

- *prepare students to engage knowledgably and responsibly with a changing, complicated, and multi-dimensional world*. University of Mary Washington students must understand and appreciate global connections, differences, cultures, languages, environments, and change. These courses require students to be both individual and collaborative learners, solve problems systematically and creatively, and find opportunities to explore beyond the classroom experiences such as undergraduate research, internships, study abroad, and engagement in community and civic life.

These goals were the basis for the development of the new General Education curriculum, where requirements were placed into three overarching categories: Foundations, Methods of Investigation, and Connections. Courses in the Foundations category will establish skills for later success at UMW, are fundamental to the liberal arts, and ideally should be taken early in the academic career. Methods of Investigation consist of lower level courses that explore how different disciplines approach critical thinking, research, and problem-solving. Connections courses will build on prior requirements to help students make links between classroom knowledge, the world, and their life beyond UMW. This arrangement of the courses emphasizes the skills and knowledge that will be gained from each required course and clarifies the benefits that will be acquired through the completion of the General Education curriculum through this framework.

Presented below is the General Education curriculum proposed by the University General Education Committee. It is followed by rationales and learning outcomes for each requirement; an * indicates that these are draft learning outcomes.

PROPOSED GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

FOUNDATIONS	DESCRIPTION
First Year Seminar	**One** course designated as a first year seminar.
Written Communication	**Three** courses designated Writing Intensive.
Oral Communication	**One** course designated Speaking Intensive.
Language	Intermediate competency in a second language defined as the completion of any **201 course** (Completion of Level IV of a language in high school will also satisfy this requirement. Details on other options for satisfying this requirement on page 9.)

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION	DESCRIPTION
Arts and Literature	**One** course focusing on visual art, performing art, and/or literature.
Humanities	**One** course in the humanities (including history).
Natural Science	**One** course in the natural sciences that includes a laboratory.
Quantitative Reasoning	**One** course focusing on quantitative information and abstract reasoning.
Social Science	**One** course in the social sciences.
	Two additional courses from any of the five Methods in this section. The rationale behind requiring students to take two additional courses in the Methods of Investigation category is aimed at promoting exploration in the breadth of the liberal arts and developing broader educational experiences and viewpoints. At the same time, we want to allow students the choice of areas they pursue further.

CONNECTIONS	DESCRIPTION
Digital Fluency	**One** across-the-curriculum course designated as a Digital Fluency course.
Diverse and Global Perspectives	**One** across-the curriculum course focusing on global and/or diverse communities.
Beyond the Classroom	**Two** faculty supervised experiences involving a significant experiential learning component designed to challenge students to go outside of the bounds of the typical classroom.
After Mary Washington	**One** experience focused on translating the liberal arts experience for life after Mary Washington.
Writing in the Major	All students are required to complete **one** course designated Writing Intensive in their major(s).
Speaking in the Major	All students are required to complete **one** course designated Speaking Intensive in their major(s).

First Year Seminar

Rationale: The first-year seminar (FSEM) course is designed to help students cultivate the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary for liberal learning through the in-depth study of a topic in a seminar setting; the FSEM is to be taken in the first semester of enrollment by all first-time, full-time students. This is a transitional class that introduces students to college coursework and establishes fundamental skills in the areas of information literacy, writing, and oral communication.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will utilize a variety of research techniques to retrieve information efficiently, evaluate retrieved information, and synthesize information effectively to support their messages or arguments.
- Students will improve development and organization of written arguments.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to edit and revise in the writing process.
- Students will apply the basic theories and principles of oral communication.
- Students will communicate effectively in a variety of settings, including public speaking and group discussion.

Written and Oral Communication

Rationale: One of the University of Mary Washington's signature strengths lies in the development of students' written and oral communication abilities, which happens formally in designated Writing Intensive (WI) and Speaking Intensive (SI) courses. Building on the foundational skills established through first year seminar courses, WI and SI courses develop focused thinking and written or oral communication skills in the context of specific subject matter and disciplinary areas. Additionally, UMW students do significant writing and speaking in other courses that are not formally designated as either WI or SI. The current UMW academic experience, therefore, builds student competence in two important learning priorities that executives and hiring managers have identified "very important skills for recent college graduates we are hiring."[1]

The General Education Committee recommends that the written and oral communication be structured in a way that incorporates a progressive nature into the requirements so that communication skills are built and strengthened by successive courses. This objective is accomplished by requiring that all students take one WI and one SI course in their major (either as an elective or a requirement in each of their majors). This change helps ensure that students will not be exposed solely to basic instruction, but that they will be challenged to develop higher-level skills through courses in the major. Communication in the major will demand increased sophistication in the expression and evaluation of ideas and arguments through writing and speaking. Development of crucial skills for effective communication in their chosen discipline will enable students to transition more successfully from the undergraduate environment to post-graduate destinations in careers or post-graduate study. A survey of the majors indicates that most programs would easily be able to accommodate these recommended course requirements.

---

[1] "Fulfilling the American Dream: Liberal Education and the Future of Work: Surveys of Business Executives and Hiring Managers," Hart Research Associates conducted on behalf of the Association of American Colleges & Universities, July 2018, https://www.aacu.org/research/2018-future-of-work

Written Communication Learning Outcomes:
- (Ideas): Students will demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the varying strategies to convey arguments, main ideas and support/evidence.
- (Organization): Students will demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the varying patterns of composition organization and development.
- (Rhetorical Situation): Students will demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the audience, the role of the writer, and rhetorical strategies.
- (Editing): Students will demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of writing conventions and correctness.

Oral Communication Learning Outcomes:
- Students will understand and be able to explain the conventions and expectations of oral communication as practiced within the discipline of the course taken.
- Students will apply theories and strategies for crafting messages (verbal, nonverbal, and visual) for particular audiences and purposes.
- Students will be able to craft oral messages after a conscious process in which various options are reviewed and will be able to explain and support their choices.
- Students will be able to meta-communicate about their own communication patterns.

Language

Rationale: In today's multicultural and global society, communication is the key to understanding other peoples and cultures and the ability to communicate in more than one language is increasingly becoming an essential skill and one that is sought after by employers. Research has repeatedly shown that learning a foreign language has multiple added advantages including superior problem-solving skills, increased empathy, and learning a second language makes students more open to different ways of thinking and out-of-the-box solutions. [2] At the same time, every language implies a particular history and perception of the world and its most pressing problems. The linguistic and cultural skills which our students acquire enable and encourage them to lead a life defined by respect for others and service to their community.

Based upon feedback from faculty, department chairs, alumni, and current students, the Committee concluded that completion of a language through the 201 level was sufficient to accomplish the purposes identified as important in learning a second language and provides additional flexibility for students.

*Learning Outcomes:

Generally speaking, the learning outcomes reflect the global competence proficiency categories of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL): Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. [3]

- Students will understand and recognize the necessary vocabulary and grammatical structures so that they may understand the second language as well as express their own thoughts in that language.
- Students will employ communicative skills in a second language so that they can:
  - participate effectively in formal and informal conversations on a limited number of topics and can present and explain information (speaking)
  - comprehend authentic speech on a limited number of topics (listening)
  - accurately comprehend a limited number of written texts (reading)
  - write appropriately and effectively in a limited number of genres (writing).
- Students will recognize, describe, and analyze the cultural contexts and distinctive features of the peoples and countries which speak the language that they are studying.
- Students will better understand the diversity and richness of the cultural manifestations of other peoples.

---

[2] https://www.actfl.org/advocacy/what-the-research-shows/references-cognitive#intelligence
[3] https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/publications/standards/World-ReadinessStandardsforLearningLanguages.pdf

Intermediate competency in a second language may be demonstrated by:

- completion of 201 or higher in a language;
- a score of 620 or higher on any language SAT II subject test;
- a score of 3 or higher on any language AP Exam or on any Language and Literature AP
- Exam (including the Latin Vergil AP Exam);
- a score of 4 or higher on any group 2 (second language) higher-level IB Exam;
- a passing score on the University of Mary Washington language competency exam;
- a rating of "Intermediate" on the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI);
- a rating equivalent to "Intermediate-Low Competency" on the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale on an approved third-party exam;
- a score of 60 or higher on the CLEP exam
- completion of Level IV in a language in high school; or
- the submission of pertinent documents which verify that a student has had a high school education conducted in a language other than English or has lived extensively in and become fluent in the language of a non-English-speaking country.

Arts and Literature

Rationale: Human societies have found a richer understanding of the human experience through arts, literature and performance. They remain an integral element of the human experience today, especially as we encounter the way that creativity evolves. As students are bombarded with unprecedented access to creative output, the engagement with these processes, as well as the historical and contemporaneous context of art and literature becomes all the more important. The creative problem-solving skills and ability to critically analyze works that these courses impart to our students, as a part of a liberal arts education, better prepares them for cultural engagement, now and into the future.

This category combines *Arts, Literature, and Performance - Appreciation* and *Process* with a renewed focus on literature, visual and performing arts and gives students the tools and language to discuss and understand the works of others. It also provides students with an understanding of the techniques required to produce their own creative work and/or the tools of critical analysis via historical, analytical, theoretical or aesthetic frameworks. Through these courses the student is able to develop methods required for engagement in the aesthetic, ethical, moral, material and content driven issues that works of art, literature and performance can raise.

*Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be able to incorporate or respond to theories/perspectives/values/ideas relating to creative works and performances.
- Students will identify the processes to successfully convey a creative project and understand the level of that project's success.
- Students will be able to both examine the aesthetic qualities of a work, and move beyond a descriptive account, critically analyzing their work and/or the work of others.
- Students will reflect on the value of creative process in visual arts, performing arts, and/or literature as a method of understanding the world and conveying ideas.

Humanities

Rationale: University of Mary Washington graduates will live in a world that requires them to engage, appreciate, interpret, and understand the ideas and forces associated with our cultural and historical heritage. Human societies find clarity, compassion, and a richer understanding of the human experience through the study of cultures, history, and philosophical and religious thought. Courses that focus on the understanding of history, intellectual works, and human culture help students discover and appreciate the complexity of the human experience. Study of the humanities promotes the development of critical inquiry skills and historical perspective, which helps students be able to understand differing views and experiences while examining their own and others' beliefs. This understanding helps students to develop critical consciousness and acquire the tools necessary for engagement and responsible action in their lives and society.

*Learning Outcomes:

- Students will understand the breadth, diversity and creativity of the human experience as expressed in the humanities.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of the humanities and be able to identify their ongoing significance and relevance.
- Students will be able to employ the reasoning skills and vocabulary necessary to reflect upon and understand the human experience.

Natural Science

Rationale: As a part of a set of General Education curriculum requirements that expose students to different methods of investigation and modes of critical thinking, the Natural Science component addresses the reality that scientific information impacts virtually every aspect of their lives. Graduates of UMW must possess the capacity to understand, interpret, evaluate, and employ scientific information in order to make judgements as an informed citizen.

Courses that meet the Natural Science designation provide a thorough grounding in the principles of a natural science discipline and as well as an understanding of how scientific claims are developed and presented through the application of the scientific method. With the complex scientific issues that our students are facing, and will face, they must be armed with the ability to interpret and evaluate scientific arguments to discern scientific information from pseudo-science and misinformation. The Natural Science course will enable students to appreciate how scientific information is applied to solve specific, practical issues and problems in the natural sciences. The course includes a laboratory which reinforces the concepts and provides hands-on experience using the scientific method.

Learning Outcomes:
- Students will be able to describe the scientific methods that lead to scientific knowledge.
- Students will be able to report and display data collected, interpret experimental observations and construct explanatory scientific hypotheses.
- Students will be able to use theories and models as unifying principles that help us understand the natural world.
- Students will gain an understanding for how the natural sciences are used to address societal issues.

Quantitative Reasoning

Rationale: Quantitative literacy is essential in order to be an informed citizen and productive in the workplace. Equipping graduates with quantitative reasoning skills prepares them to meet their future responsibilities and remains a core of a liberal arts education at the University of Mary Washington.

At Mary Washington, students are taught how to make informed judgments using quantitative information through a course with a quantitative reasoning (QR) designation. QR courses teach students to identify reliable data, to weigh evidence and understand probabilities, to think critically to solve complex problems in a variety of contexts, to make connections to other disciplines, and to interpret and communicate their results while recognizing and avoiding the fallacies and pitfalls which frequently surround the use of quantitative information.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate an ability to interpret quantitative/symbolic information.
- Students will have the ability to convert relevant information into various mathematical/analytical forms (e.g., equations, graphs, diagrams, tables, words).
- Students will be able to apply analytical techniques or rules to solve problems in a variety of contexts.
- Students will gain an appreciation for how analytical techniques or rules are used to address real-world problems across multiple disciplines.

Social Science

Rationale: The study of social world helps students to better understand the role of cooperation and conflict in and between societies and in social relationships. Understanding the forces that impel and interfere with social connections fosters appreciation for the complexities involved in social decision-making, encourages exploration of alternatives for addressing social barriers, confronts the ethical questions which stem from the choices involved in social engagement, and ultimately, aids in preparing students to be effective decision-makers in their own communities.

The social sciences requirement also exposes students to different kinds of approaches to theoretical, quantitative, and/or qualitative modes of inquiry, as they are applied to the study of social behavior, interaction, and institutions. Students will learn to critique the collection, reporting, and analysis of evidence on the social activities being explored, and examine their broader cultural and historical context. Ultimately, this requirement provides students with an opportunity to develop a set of critical thinking skills related to the social sciences that they will be able to use personally and professionally, to understand the social worlds that they inhabit.

Courses in Social Science have been formally defined by the Faculty as falling within the disciplines of Anthropology, Economics, Geography, Linguistics, Political Science, Psychology, or Sociology.

*Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be able to examine and explain social experiences and activities from multiple cultural and/or theoretical perspectives.
- Students will be able to draw appropriate conclusions based on evidence, texts, or other materials concerning social experiences, activities, and ideas.
- Students will be able to apply critical knowledge and skills related to social behavior, ideas, and structures to better understand various aspects of social life.

Digital Fluency

Rationale: UMW must prepare our students to live, work, and serve effectively in this Age of Accelerations; thus, a Digital Fluency course will intentionally foster the ability in our students to consume and produce digital knowledge, as well as to creatively adapt to emerging technology. The Digital Fluency course requirement will ensure that all students, regardless of major, will develop digital fluency during their time at the University. As defined by the Digital Fluency Working Group, advanced digital fluency is the ability to consume and produce digital knowledge critically, ethically, and responsibly, as well as to creatively adapt to emerging technology.[4] This incorporates information literacy, knowledge production and creativity, critical thinking paired with ethical actions, social awareness in the digital environment, and the evolving nature of what is understood as "digital." These skills are necessary for UMW graduates as they move through an increasingly digital and interconnected world.

In Digital Fluency courses, students will build on information literacy foundations developed in the First Year Seminar to work toward advanced digital fluency. This will serve as an across-the-curriculum requirement, where these principles and skills will be presented in appropriate ways that may be unique to each learning context or discipline. This will ensure that every student would develop demonstrable digital fluency skills and capabilities, with the ability to adapt to the inevitable changes in the digital landscape.

The Digital Fluency Working Group has preliminarily identified close to 50 courses that could meet this requirement, with around 1375 students enrolled in these courses each academic year (average, 2015-2019).

*Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be able to access, consume, and use digital information in an ethical manner and understand the social, legal, and cultural issues surrounding the use of digital information.
- Students will be able to express ideas using digital information and media by applying digital technologies in meaningful ways to create digital artifacts specific to content objectives and concepts.
- Students will be able to evaluate digital information and technologies for quality and think critically about approaches to solving technology and information challenges.

---

[4] http://umwdtlt.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/FinalDigitalFluencyReport.pdf

Global and Diverse Perspectives

Rationale: General Education should cultivate the skills and knowledge that enable graduates to make effective decisions as citizens of a rapidly changing, richly diverse, and increasingly interconnected world. University of Mary Washington students will graduate into a world marked by transnational corporations and global financial transactions; international migration; complex political relations amongst nation-states; individualized, yet global communication systems; and a host of health and environmental issues that do not respect political boundaries. As a foundation for democratic citizenship and visionary leadership in an increasingly diverse and global society, University of Mary Washington graduates will need a framework for informed reflection on human diversity and social complexity. The dilemmas and possibilities humankind faces cannot be effectively addressed by any single culture or group of people acting alone. The focus of this requirement is understanding and working with the interconnections that differently affect people living in different places to promote effective and appropriate interaction with a variety of people and different cultural contexts.

Courses that focus primarily on the U.S. can be applicable as long as the learning outcomes are met through discussion of diverse cultures, interactions, and practices and some engagement with the world beyond our borders. An approved study abroad or other field program can fulfill this requirement if it includes a satisfactory evaluation of a written reflection of a student's experience in that program by a University of Mary Washington faculty member. A Community Engagement course that includes the "diversity and inclusion" learning outcome fulfills this requirement.

*Learning Outcomes:

- Students will develop an informed understanding of an issue or a group of related issues (e.g., historical, linguistic, technological, economic, political, social, cultural, health-related, and/or environmental) whose influence on contemporary life significantly involves other societies, cultures, and/or geographical locations.
- Students will evaluate differences and similarities among different cultures or societies that affect perceptions, beliefs or behaviors, and relationships between those cultures.
- Students will explore how race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, social class, disability status, sexual orientation, religion, veteran status, economic status, nativity, age, and other socially salient statuses influence the human condition and experience.
- Students will explicate the processes that create or fail to create just, productive, egalitarian, and collaborative societies.
- Students will examine how knowledge of intercultural connections can reduce insensitivity and misunderstanding and establish tolerance and respect for other cultures and societies.
- Students will effectively use skills to navigate cross-cultural situations or conflicts.

Beyond the Classroom

Rationale: Experiential learning experiences are consistent with and reinforce the University's mission and strategic vision to promote both undergraduate research and civic engagement. These high-impact experiences enhance student learning by fostering connections outside the classroom, encouraging students to apply their classroom learning in practical ways, increasing student ownership of their educational experience, and promoting the cultivation of life-long learning.

We know far more today about the real impact of applied and experiential learning opportunities than we did a decade ago. Evidence shows that such experiences have an outsized impact on life and career and substantially increase student satisfaction. This proposal modifies the existing Experiential Learning requirement by adding a second experience. Research from the Office of Institutional Analysis and Effectiveness shows that one-third of UMW's graduates already complete two or more Experiential Learning experiences. The establishment of the Center for Community Engagement and the support for CE designated courses should sufficiently expand capacity to support this elevated requirement.

The Beyond the Classroom requirement is guided by the assumption that there is no single approach to experiential learning and recognizes that students should have great flexibility in creating an experience suited to their individual needs and circumstances. Such experiences vary considerably by discipline and may include individual study or research (departmental or URES 197), practica, designated community engagement (CE) courses, faculty supervised internships (graded or pass/fail), as well as approved study abroad programs and courses that involve a significant public service, field study, or community based research component. These experiences have a required reflection component.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be able to apply what was learned in coursework to new scenarios outside standard university courses.
- Students will be able to identify their personal values and learning goals and direct themselves by creating personalized learning experiences that may include alternative means of learning.
- Students will be able to clarify and refine their understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in the content of the relevant disciplines.
- Students will be able to clarify and refine an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses related to skills such as time management, organization, and professionalism.
- Students will be able to connect their undergraduate experiences and their post-graduation plans.

After Mary Washington

Rationale: The University of Mary Washington seeks to prepare students for life after UMW by connecting the liberal arts to career success by preparing undergraduates to succeed in the transition from college to career and to thrive in the dynamic and ever-changing 21st century world of work. Adoption of this graduation requirement as part of the General Education review would be unique and noteworthy, distinguishing UMW from its competitors on the very thing that drives students and their families to invest in a four-year degree in the first place. While other General Education requirements foster student attainment of career ready competencies, this requirement prepares students to effectively transfer and translate the liberal arts experience to the workplace while learning to manage post-graduation outcomes. Approached this way, career readiness is not anathema to the liberal arts experience. Rather, a quality liberal arts experience is the *sine qua non* of career readiness.

In recent years, within six months of graduation, approximately 92% of UMW undergraduates are either employed, attending graduate school, or participating in a service program or the military. However, a closer examination of employment data reveals that too many UMW graduates are underemployed, often working low-wage or part-time jobs that have little connection to their degree or the knowledge, skills, and competencies nurtured during their UMW experience. A survey of recent UMW graduates conducted by the General Education Committee in Fall 2018 indicated that personal and professional development should be meaningfully integrated into the undergraduate experience.

*Learning Outcomes:

- Students will understand the connection between the UMW curriculum and the world of work and be able to translate the knowledge, skills and competencies of their liberal arts experience to the career readiness competencies that are valued by employers.
- Students will be able to identify and articulate their skills, strengths, knowledge and experience relative to their career and professional aspirations.
- Students will be able to develop, maintain, and disseminate their own personal and professional identities in appropriate modalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

Pass/Fail

Many of the College of Arts and Sciences chairs recommended that the new requirements allow students to use the pass/fail option for some of their General Education classes. Upon reflection and discussion, the General Education Committee concurred with this suggestion so long as the total number of classes taken pass/fail stays within current UMW rules (one course per term, up to a maximum of eight courses). Allowing students to take a few General Education courses pass/fail may enhance student success and retention, especially in their early years at UMW. The current General Education program allows students to take Experiential Learning on a pass/fail basis; this proposal would extend this ability to other categories as well.

Development of a Sophomore Seminar

There was support in the second faculty survey for the development of a new seminar addressing contemporary problems and the enduring issues of human existence. The goal of the sophomore seminar is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and methods to address "big questions." The seminar would offer students the opportunity to connect with faculty and a small number of students (18-20) in order to discuss ideas, perspectives, and approaches that may not normally be considered in any single course or program. Embracing a range of intellectual perspectives, seminars could focus on issues such as social justice, ethics, and environmental concerns.

Following the implementation of the new General Education curriculum, the University should move to develop a sophomore seminar. This seminar course would be taken by students during their second year and would build upon the learning goals of the First-Year Seminars, with the possibility of interdisciplinary or team taught courses. Since all sections need to be Writing Intensive, this course would replace one of the Writing Intensive courses in the Foundations category.

UNIVERSITY GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Nicole Crowder, Chair, College of Arts and Sciences

Brooke DiLauro, College of Arts and Sciences

Lance Gentry, College of Business

Chris Musina, College of Arts and Sciences

Kelly Perkins, College of Arts and Sciences

Farhang Rouhani, College of Arts and Sciences

Marie Sheckels, College of Education

Ex Officio

Rita Dunston, Registrar

John Morello, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

Tim O'Donnell, Associate Provost for Academic Engagement and Student Success

Brian Ogle, Associate Registrar

Debra Schleef, Associate Provost for Institutional Analysis and Effectiveness

APPENDIX I: **Constraints on a General Education Program**

(1) **SCHEV Core Competencies**: The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia's (SCHEV) "Policy on Student Learning Assessment and Quality in Undergraduate Education"[5] requires UMW to assess student achievement in at least six competency areas representing several different types of knowledge and/or skills. Each institution in Virginia is required to assess the following four competencies:

- o **Critical Thinking** – The ability to subject one's own and others' ideas, arguments, assumptions, and evidence to careful and logical scrutiny in order to make an informed judgment, draw a sound conclusion, or solve a problem.

- o **Written Communication** – The ability to develop and communicate ideas effectively in writing as appropriate to a given context, purpose and audience. It includes a variety of styles, genres, and media, including computer-mediated communications.

- o **Quantitative Reasoning** – The ability to manipulate, analyze, and/or evaluate numbers and numerical data. It may involve calculation and/or analysis and interpretation of quantitative information derived from existing databases or systematic observations, and may be based in a variety of disciplines, not limited to mathematics and the natural and physical sciences.

- o **Civic Engagement** – An array of knowledge, abilities, values, attitudes, and behaviors that in combination allow individuals to contribute to the civic life of their communities. It may include, among other things, exploration of one's role and responsibilities in society; knowledge of and ability to engage with political systems and processes; and/or course-based or extra-curricular efforts to identify and address issues of public or community concern.

Two competencies are selected by the institutions themselves, and on February 28, 2018, the University Faculty Council approved the recommendation of the University General Education Committee that **Oral Communication** and **Digital Fluency** are the competencies that UMW will assess.

(2) **Accreditation**: The Southern Association for Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) 2018 Principles of Accreditation[6] Standard 8.2.b requires UMW to identify expected outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results to include *student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs.*

---

[5] http://www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/institution-section/GuidancePolicy/assessment/policy-on-student-learning-assessment-and-quality-in-undergraduate-education.pdf
[6] http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2018PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf

Furthermore, Standard 9.3 requires that UMW *require the successful completion of a general education component at the undergraduate level that:*

> *(a) Is based on a coherent rationale.*
>
> *(b) Is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree program (30 semester hours or the equivalent in a baccalaureate program)*
>
> *(c) Ensures breadth of knowledge. These credit hours include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. These courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession.*

In 2010, the SACSCOC Executive Council adopted the following interpretation of what the breadth of knowledge requirement which states: "Courses in basic composition that do not contain a literature component, courses in oral communication and introductory foreign language courses are skill courses and not pure humanities courses. Therefore, for purposes of meeting this standard, none of the above may be the one course designated to fulfill the humanities/fine arts requirement." Further details describing this standard and its interpretation can be found in the 2018 Principles of Accreditation Resource Manual.[7]

> (3) **HB 919/SB631 – Passport Program**: Legislation adopted in the 2018 General Assembly[8] requires the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to develop by July 1, 2020 a uniform certificate of a 30-credit general studies program and a one-semester 15-credit passport program at each comprehensive community college. As a result, these programs will be expected to synchronize with general education programs at four-year institutions. As of spring 2019, the proposed Passport consists of 16 credit hours: communication (3), humanities/fine arts (3), social/behavioral science (3), natural science (4), and mathematics (3).

---

[7] http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2018%20POA%20Resource%20Manual.pdf
[8] https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?181+sum+SB631