

Revised General Education Curriculum: Draft Proposal

I. Introduction and Background

The following draft Revised General Education Curriculum (RGEC) represents a *realignment* of the current curriculum, as distinct from a wholesale razing and rebuilding. To be sure, new courses will need to be developed, and courses whose goals and pedagogies no longer suffice to serve the needs of 21st-century learners may find themselves offered less frequently or revised accordingly. But, over all, a refocusing of already existing courses on a narrower range of broader goals and outcomes and the emphasis on collaborative, discussion-oriented, problem-based and experiential pedagogies in small classes are all that are required for many courses currently offered as part of the Drake Curriculum (DC) to find a home in the new curriculum.

The RGEC takes as its starting point structural and pedagogical principles developed throughout the Lumina Foundations Degree Qualifications Profile, including:

- Integrative Learning, in which approaches, methods, ways of knowing, and objects of knowledge or analysis from more than one traditional discipline or knowledge area are integrated into learning experiences.
- Coherent, Intentional, and Sequenced Pathways that lead students from the development of foundational skills, knowledges, and habits of mind to more complex, independent, and higher-order engagement with and discovery of knowledge.
- Inclusion and Equity in the design and thematic foci of the curriculum, so that students from all backgrounds are included in the University's learning mission.
- Collaboration among students, faculty, and staff sustains the curriculum and engages teachers and learners alike in deep, critical, and reflective learning.
- Quality Assurance is guaranteed through ongoing assessment practices designed and conducted by the faculty teaching the courses and relying on their expertise and experience and responsive to their needs as teachers of the courses to be assessed.

The RGEC draft also borrows from the AACU's Liberal Education for America's Promise (LEAP) outcomes. Specifically, it emphasizes:

- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
 - Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts
 - *Focused* by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring
- Intellectual and Practical Skills, *Practiced extensively*, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance, including
 - Inquiry and analysis
 - Critical and creative thinking
 - Written and oral communication

- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving
- Personal and Social Responsibility, anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges, including
 - Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
 - Intercultural knowledge and competence
 - Ethical reasoning and action
 - Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Background on the research and data-gathering initiatives that supported the development of these outcomes is available at <https://www.aacu.org/leap/public-opinion-research> and by clicking the links on the “Research” menu at <https://www.aacu.org/leap>.

Finally, this revision builds on the work on potential revisions to the Drake Curriculum done by the University Curriculum Committee in 2013-14 and the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on General Education Curricular Reform in 2014-15.

II. Outcomes and Assessment

The proposed curriculum revision integrates the Senate’s endorsement of six broad learning outcome areas (November, 2015), most of which are integrated throughout and revisited on multiple occasions:

- *Communicate in a persuasive, engaging manner appropriate for their audience*
- *Access, analyze, and produce knowledge synthesized across diverse fields of study*
- *Put knowledge into practice through experiential learning and civic engagement*
- *Understand the historical, cultural, economic, and scientific forces that shape local, national, and global contexts and explain their own situation in these contexts*
- *Develop and demonstrate habits of self-reflection, self-assessment, and ethical reasoning*
- *Analyze in comparative perspective how race, culture and ethnicity create patterns of inclusion and exclusion to shape the larger context of American society and history.*

Faculty teaching courses that contribute to the RGEC will be expected to articulate more precise course-specific outcomes consonant with the broad outcome areas above in their course materials.

The assessment of student learning in RGEC will rest primarily with the faculty teaching courses in each of the content/ focus areas. Faculty will use whatever instruments (both direct and indirect) they deem appropriate to advancing pedagogy, course design, and student learning. Faculty-designed assessment instruments may include assignments, exams, and other in-class instruments by the faculty instructor of record. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment and the Associate Provost for Curriculum will support faculty efforts to design pedagogies and assessment instruments that advance the

learning outcomes of the RGEC.

UCC will approve courses to be included in each content/focus area and may seek the advice of faculty already teaching in those areas. DCAC's primary responsibility will be to review summary assessment reports and to advise on plans for improving student learning and the assessment process as a whole. Detailed plans for assessment and initial and periodic review of courses will be developed during the implementation planning phase (see section V below). Faculty time spent on assessment-related activities outside contracted periods of employment will be compensated appropriately.

III. Operational and Pedagogical Precepts

Several operational and pedagogical precepts subtend this proposal, some of which are aspirational. By virtue of approving this proposal, Senate will also endorse the following precepts and thereby commit the faculty of the university to working toward full achievement of these aims.

- Active, collaborative, exchange-based pedagogy, no matter what the class size
- All courses open to all students at Drake, without regard to major or prerequisites
- Faculty-driven outcomes assessment
- Robust use of current courses
- Phased implementation
- Proactive advising
- Discipline- or field-specific professional competencies remains primarily the responsibility of major programs; academic units and programs that do not inherently emphasize the development of professional skills provide professionalization experiences that integrate professional preparation with liberal arts training appropriate for particular areas of study.
- Reduction of total number of credits required for graduation to 120 (15 per semester over four years)

The RGEC does not mandate a minimum number of credit hours outside of student majors across the academic units at Drake University. Even in programs with a large number of credit hours required for the completion of the major, the number of general education credits necessarily taken outside the major program or department (because of the likely distribution of offerings across the University) will remain within or near current levels under the RGEC. Students double majoring across divisions have a high chance of fulfilling nearly all RGEC requirements through their majors.

To account for the need for more intensive learning experiences than are sometimes the case in the current DC, and to recognize the relative high importance students place on learning that takes place across two majors (often with minors and concentrations, as well) this model for a general education curriculum requires 30 credit hours (including the capstone in the primary major) in comparison with the current requirement of 42 credit hours. Learning experiences are loosely sequenced across four phases—Foundations; Cornerstone; Keystone; and Capstone.

IV. The Model: Phased Integration

Foundations (6 credit hours; lower division; no prerequisites; completed in the first year; may count toward the majors):

- **First-Year Seminar:** As currently configured, except majors, minors, certificates, and concentrations are free to count the FYS toward their majors. (3 credits; first semester of the first year)
- **Seminar in Critical Communication:** Students practice communicating information and ideas to a variety of audiences in a variety of modes—visual, verbal, and written—by researching, analyzing, and articulating responses to a focused question or issue germane to their major field of study. [Outcomes: *Communicate in a persuasive, engaging manner appropriate for their audience; Access, analyze, and produce knowledge synthesized across diverse fields of study*]

Cornerstone (12 credits, upper- or lower-division; no prerequisites; Students advised toward completion by the end of the fifth semester). [Outcomes: *Communicate in a persuasive, engaging manner appropriate for their audience; Access, analyze, and produce knowledge synthesized across diverse fields of study; Put knowledge into practice through experiential learning and civic engagement; Understand the historical, cultural, economic, and scientific forces that shape local, national, and global contexts and explain their own situation in these contexts*]

- **Topics in Civic Literacy:** Students develop skills, knowledge and dispositions necessary for effective civic engagement. Students learn about an unsettled issue or topic of historical or contemporary social, political, or economic significance from two or more points of view (e.g. sociology + philosophy) or across two or more fields of experience or endeavor (e.g. art-making/doing + entrepreneurship). Students develop skills associated with civic debate and engagement through participatory activities organized in the classroom and/or in the community, including outreach, service-learning, programming, exhibition, and performance. (3 credits)
- **Topics in Symbolic Literacy:** Students engage in approaches to knowledge that rely on the methods of abstract symbolic manipulation drawn from such fields as computer science, mathematics, linguistics, statistics, data analysis, logic, aesthetics, and musical analysis. The course asks students to use these approaches to learn about and formulate responses to a focused issue or question of contemporary or historical importance. (3 credits)
- **Topics in Scientific Inquiry:** Students learn about and articulate responses to a focused ethical, moral, philosophical, public-policy issue or question of contemporary or historical importance to which scientific inquiry, scientific findings, scientific methodologies, or the professional application of the sciences is central. (3 credits)
- **Topics in Global Study:** Students engage deeply with and articulate responses to a focused question or issue of contemporary or historical international or global importance, including diplomacy, foreign policy, global commerce, global social

justice, and comparative studies. (3 credits including any 3-credit or greater learning experience abroad.)

Keystone: The Integrative Core: Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice (9 credits; at least six upper-division credits; at least 3-credits chosen from among courses focused on diversity and inclusion in the American context; no prerequisites)

These seminars engage students in interdisciplinary learning about issues related to diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Integrative core courses will be concerned with understanding diversity in any of its forms, including race/ethnicity, socio-economic class, gender, ability and disability, and neurodiversity. In consultation with their advisors, students will take one course focusing explicitly on diversity and inclusion in the American context.

These courses may include such topics as: The history of race relations in the US; multicultural literature; scientific constructions of race and ethnicity; criminology; disability rights and policy; diversity activism in the arts; the cultural study of race; the ethics of immigration policy; environmental justice; equity and schooling in urban and rural settings; jurisprudence of race; global colonialisms; global geographies of race; women and gender studies; global racial inequality; international gender rights and policy; representations of race and racial perspectives in performance and art.

Courses fulfilling these outcomes through experiential learning, including service learning, fieldwork, applied research, internship, ensemble participation, performance, community engagement or the like, will, over time, comprise at least 1/3 of the offerings in this area.

[Outcomes: Analyze in comparative perspective how race, culture and ethnicity create patterns of inclusion and exclusion to shape the larger context of American society and history; Access, analyze, and produce knowledge synthesized across diverse fields of study; Communicate in a persuasive, engaging manner appropriate for their audience; Put knowledge into practice through experiential learning and civic engagement; Understand the historical, cultural, economic, and scientific forces that shape local, national, and global contexts and explain their own situation in these context; Develop and demonstrate habits of self-reflection, self-assessment, and ethical reasoning]

Capstone: As currently configured. (3 credits)

V. Implementation

This proposal envisions a phased implementation plan that involves working with University administration to align resources and build a budget plan to support the RGECE prior to its implementation. This phased implementation will provide sufficient time for faculty, staff, students, and the pertinent administrative offices to prepare for a smooth transition.

Moving forward with this proposal for the RGEC will require two ballots: one in favor of the Revised General Education Curriculum itself, outlined in sections I-IV above; and a second in favor of a comprehensive resource and implementation plan no later than one year after the first ballot. Upon first-round Senate approval, the Provost's Office, in consultation with other appropriate staff and administrators, will investigate budgetary implications of a transition from the current Drake Curriculum to a RGEC.

Upon a favorable first-ballot vote in support of the RGEC, the Provost's Office will work closely with the UCC to develop an implementation plan that identifies and aligns resources, including faculty development funds, in support of a phased transition to the new curriculum. Although it will be essential for the Provost's Office to work with the appropriate faculty bodies in the development of specific implementation plans, we offer the following timeline for a phased implementation plan for illustrative purposes.

Implementation Planning: AY 2016-2017

- During the summer of 2016, the Provost's Office will investigate the budgetary implications of a transition from the current Drake Curriculum to a RGEC.
- At the beginning of the Fall 2016 semester, the Provost's Office will provide the Faculty Senate with a preliminary report on the budgetary implications of a transition from the current Drake Curriculum to a RGEC.
- During the 2016-2017 academic year, the Provost's Office will work closely with the UCC to develop an implementation plan that identifies and aligns resources, including faculty development funds, in support of a phased transition to the new curriculum. The Provost's Office, in collaboration with the UCC, will develop a comprehensive resource and implementation plan within one year of the first vote in favor of the RGEC.
- The Faculty Senate would need to vote in favor of this comprehensive resource and implementation plan prior to moving forward with implementation. This approach will ensure that the RGEC is fully sensitive to budgetary realities. If the resource and implementation plan put forward by the Provost's Office demonstrates that the costs of a transition to the RGEC are too high, the 2016-2017 Faculty Senate will have an opportunity to vote against the implementation.
- If Faculty Senate votes against implementation, then it could do one of two things:
 1. It could decide to take no further action, in which case the initial approval of the RGEC will expire, and the current Drake Curriculum would simply remain in place.
 2. Faculty Senate could, alternatively, decide to revise the RGEC and, subject to the approval of the Faculty Senate, submit the revision to the Provost's office, who, again in collaboration with the UCC, would develop a revised resourcing and implementation plan to be delivered to Faculty Senate by its February 2018 meeting. If Faculty Senate does not approve the revised implementation plan by the end of its 2017-18 term, RGEC will expire, and the current Drake Curriculum would remain in place.
- Upon approval of the resource and implementation plan by the 2016-2017 Faculty Senate, the Provost's office, including Associate Provost for Curriculum and Director

of Institutional Research and Assessment, will finalize the implementation plan and earmark resources—for instance, the Provost’s and College’s faculty-development budgets already in place—for supporting course development, professional development, and related activities. The Provost’s Office will coordinate with the deans and with CAAD to ensure that college-specific concerns are addressed in the implementation plan.

- The UCC will create a “cross-walk” document identifying which courses currently offered as part of the AOI system might fit in the revised curriculum, where, and with what changes (if any).
- The Faculty Senate will work in collaboration with the Provost’s Office to name the new curriculum and to brand it and the implementation process.
- Faculty begin course-development process for Implementation Phase 1.

Implementation Phase 1: First-Year Experience and Cornerstone: AYs 2017-2019

- The FYS program remains in place.
- Deployment of Seminar in Critical Communication courses, many drawn from existing “Written Communication,” “Critical Thinking,” and “Information Literacy” AOI courses, revised to meet the outcomes of this course.
- Deployment of enough Cornerstone courses, similarly drawn from current AOI courses, revised to meet Cornerstone outcomes, to serve 50% of total need.
- Begin funding development and revision of courses to serve as Keystone experiences.

Implementation Phase 2: Cornerstone and Keystone Courses: AY 2019-2020

- Complete deployment of Cornerstone courses.
- Begin deployment of Keystone Courses to serve 50% of total need.
- Continue funding the development and revision of Keystone experiences.

Implementation Phase 3: Complete Implementation: AY 2020-2021

- Continue development of Keystone seminars.
- Engage faculty in assessment of Foundations and Cornerstone courses.
- All remaining AOI-specific courses eliminated from the Drake Curriculum or revised to meet the needs to of the new curriculum.