

# REPORT OF THE TASK GROUP ON GENERAL EDUCATION

*July 31, 2007*



# CONTENTS

**TASK GROUP’S CHARGE.....3**

**LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.....4**

**PREFACE .....5**

**RATIONALE FOR THE GENERAL EDUCATION PLAN.....6**

INTRODUCTION .....6

THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM .....6

GENERAL EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON.....7

SKILLS INHERENT IN GENERAL EDUCATION .....9

BENEFITS TO FACULTY .....10

CONCLUSION .....11

**PROPOSED NEW REQUIREMENTS .....12**

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR.....13

QUANTITATIVE REASONING .....14

NATURAL SCIENCE .....15

HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND SOCIETY.....16

GLOBAL INQUIRY .....17

LANGUAGE .....18

ARTS, LITERATURE, AND PERFORMANCE .....19

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING.....20

WRITING AND SPEAKING INTENSIVE REQUIREMENTS.....21

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN .....22**

GENERAL TIME LINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION .....22

PROCEDURES FOR POPULATING THE COMPONENTS .....24

*First Year Seminar (FSEM)* .....24

*Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR)* .....25

*Distribution Areas*.....26

TRANSITION PLANS .....27

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACADEMIC POLICY CHANGES .....29

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE WI AND SI COMMITTEES.....30

**MEMBERS OF THE TASK GROUP ON GENERAL EDUCATION.....31**

## TASK GROUP'S CHARGE

May 29, 2007

Dear Members of the General Education Task Group:

In September 2006, I charged the General Education Review Committee with formulating a set of recommendations for revising the undergraduate General Education requirements in the College of Arts and Sciences with the goal of having revisions in place by fall 2008. The objective was to develop focused, targeted changes that make our General Education program more streamlined, more flexible, more coherent, and more contemporary while not undermining those aspects of our curriculum that are currently working well.

Throughout the 2006-2007 academic year, the General Education Review Committee worked diligently to analyze, review, and assess current requirements and formulate proposed revisions to the General Education curriculum. After several months of study of a variety of approaches and a series of open public forums which solicited community wide input, the Committee formulated "second stage" proposals for faculty review. Committee members were then charged with gathering reactions from their departmental colleagues to the proposals and posting those to the public General Education Review "Wiki" by April 9, 2007. That process is now complete. The task remaining is to craft a final set of recommendations for faculty consideration based upon the feedback to the "second stage" proposals.

Your charge is to formulate a final report for revising General Education which you will officially place before the Faculty Senate and the relevant governance committees at the start the fall semester. This report should include three things. First, it should contain a rationale for General Education at the University of Mary Washington consistent with the University's mission and representative of its diverse constituencies. Second, it should contain a specific set of general education requirements, a detailed description of each of those requirements, and specific criteria for courses which might satisfy those requirements. Finally, the report should contain a detailed plan for implementing the proposed changes on a timescale consistent with the objective of having these changed in place by fall 2008.

Thank you for agreeing to undertake this important task during the summer months. I look forward to your report.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosemary Barra". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rosemary Barra,  
Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs  
and Dean of the Faculty

## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

July 31, 2007

Dear Dean Barra:

We hereby submit our report on the undergraduate General Education curriculum for the BA/BS degree at the University of Mary Washington. Although the report is our own, the facts, recommendations, and conclusions are based upon the findings of the year-long evaluation of the General Education curriculum conducted by the General Education Review Committee. Invaluable insights from colleagues across campus were contributed throughout the process.

We believe that this report and its recommendations represent a clear and compelling set of recommendations for revising the existing General Education requirements and the plan outlined herein satisfies the objective of implementing focused and targeted changes to the General Education program by fall 2008.

Although we regard the existing General Education requirements as a successful approach to a liberal arts and sciences education, we believe that this plan offers several concrete advantages which build upon and revitalize the distinctive strengths of the University's long standing approach to the undergraduate academic experience. This plan creates greater flexibility for both students and faculty, streamlines existing requirements, instantiates "new" components which have already demonstrated their effectiveness, and modifies existing distributional areas to produce a General Education curriculum that is more coherent, interdisciplinary, and suited to the needs of 21st century students and the talents of our faculty.

We ask that you distribute this report to the general faculty and convene an open meeting for August 16th so that we may hear from our colleagues prior to officially conferring the report to the Faculty Senate.

Respectfully yours,

*The General Education Task Group*

## PREFACE

The University of Mary Washington's undergraduate curriculum represents a distinctive academic experience which prepares graduates to make choices that lead to fulfilling lives as responsible, contributing members of local, national, and global communities. Three interrelated components make up this experience: General Education, the Major, and Electives.

General Education is the foundation of a liberal arts and sciences 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 the world. General Education facilitates collaborative learning, individual intellectual development, and constitutes the basis for lifelong learning.

The Major develops expertise in a specialized area of study resulting from focused investigation in a particular academic discipline or disciplines (in the case of an interdisciplinary Major). Majors are organized areas of inquiry and knowledge with defined learning goals and methodologies. Major requirements complement, reinforce, and extend the objectives of General Education while adding depth of study in coursework, individualized learning, and co-curricular experiences.

Electives offer students opportunities to explore personal interests, add variety to one's studies, and advance particular academic, career, or professional goals (such as preparation for law or medical school). Electives also enable the study of an area of knowledge in greater depth through individually selected courses or experiences that build on a Major's formal requirements.

The combination of learning experiences provided through General Education, the Major, and Electives enable students to emerge fully prepared to contribute to the world beyond the University.

## RATIONALE FOR THE GENERAL EDUCATION PLAN

### Introduction

There have been far-reaching changes both in and outside of the university since we last completed a major revision of our General Education program. While each of us has adapted our individual courses and pedagogies to respond to the needs and aspirations of a new generation of students, it has been ten years since we have examined the general education requirements which constitute our core undergraduate academic experience. The plan proposed in this report is an approach to general education that is consistent with our longstanding institutional values, builds on our strengths, and, at the same time, takes into account who our students are now, recognizes the complex and demanding decisions they will need to make, and prepares them to be citizens of a rapidly changing, richly diverse, and increasingly interconnected world.

The General Education program proposed in this report offers several improvements for students and faculty over the present requirements. First, this plan provides increased choice in the courses fulfilling the various requirements, thereby giving students more *flexibility* in the classes they take and offering faculty new opportunities to teach and develop different courses that will have a role in General Education. Second, *fewer total courses* are required, an improvement which will make it easier for students to complete this portion of their education without feeling that General Education crowds other opportunities. Third, *new and important components* are added, such as a first year seminar, an experiential learning component, and a revised approach to global inquiry. Finally, the requirement areas are deliberately *interdisciplinary*, not based on lists of courses limited to particular disciplines. In fact, we expect that courses from a variety of disciplines will fit each new requirement area, so long as the courses proposed meet the criteria for the category in question. When the new curriculum is implemented, the breadth and variety of arts and sciences disciplines offered at the University will be represented within and across the new requirements.

### The Undergraduate Curriculum

Throughout the 2006-2007 academic year, members of the General Education Review Committee and the larger University community engaged in a series of meetings and discussions to reconsider current General Education requirements. In both the committee's deliberations and during the campus-wide meetings, significant agreement emerged on curricular goals that are central to our core academic values and which exemplify our understanding of an undergraduate liberal arts and sciences education:

- University of Mary Washington graduates should be able to write and speak effectively in a variety of contexts;

- University of Mary Washington undergraduates, regardless of major, should acquire specific knowledge of and appreciation for the problems, methods, and contributions of the fine and performing arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics;
- The University of Mary Washington academic experience should be characterized by intellectual rigor, integrity, disciplinary depth, and attention to the individual student;
- The University of Mary Washington academic experience should include diverse learning experiences provided by the entire undergraduate course of study: General Education, the Major, and Electives;
- The University of Mary Washington academic experience should offer students an informed understanding of and engagement with global issues, thereby enabling them to graduate fully prepared to contribute in positive and substantive ways to the complicated and changing world beyond the university.
- The University of Mary Washington academic experience should ensure that students are in command of the technologies that define not only 21st-century communication but the emerging tools of different disciplines.

## General Education at the University of Mary Washington

Following from these earlier discussions about the University's core academic values, a clear sense of the goals of General Education emerged. While the Major Program serves to ground students in predominately discipline-based knowledge and methods, and Electives offer students opportunities to pursue individual interests, the purpose of General Education is to instruct all undergraduate students in ways that go beyond specific areas of knowledge, to develop them as thoughtful and engaged individuals who are prepared to make choices that lead to fulfilling lives as responsible contributing members of local, national, and global communities. Thus, General Education requirements should advance the following goals:

***General Education develops 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 basic research, and write and speak effectively:

***General Education prepares students to engage knowledgably and responsibly with a changing, complicated, and multi-dimensional world.*** University of Mary Washington students must understand and appreciate global linkages, differences, cultures, environments, and change. They achieve this through studying complex problems and issues in the arts, humanities, and natural and social sciences. General Education fosters the study of social structures and organizations, diverse cultures, and of different languages.

***General Education challenges students to explore issues, solve problems, and learn through 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. General Education offers courses that often push at the margins of the different disciplines, courses that require students to be both individual and collaborative learners, solve problems systematically and creatively, and find opportunities to explore independent and “out of class” experiences including undergraduate research, internships, community service, and study abroad.

***General Education develops students as both individuals and as engaged members of the larger community.*** From their initial interaction with a faculty member as first year students and throughout their general education experience, students should be challenged to identify, evaluate, and articulate their own values and beliefs—and push the boundaries of those beliefs: to accept responsibility for what they think and do, to participate in activities outside of the classroom through engagement in community and civic life. General education fosters intellectual curiosity that inspires students to acquire the habits of lifelong learning.

The General Education Review Committee and the subsequent General Education Task Group considered a number of plans to incorporate such goals into the curriculum. These plans, despite various differences, exhibited common fundamental beliefs about the structure and content of the General Education requirements, and thereby defined what is distinctive about the University’s undergraduate academic experience. Across the plans, agreement emerged on the following points:

- The across-the-curriculum (ATC) requirements in the areas of Environmental Awareness, Race and Gender Awareness, and Global Awareness (as currently structured) are now largely and effectively integrated into the curriculum and, as stand alone components of the University’s General Education requirements, are no longer compelling.
- The University must develop a more comprehensive first year experience and the key academic component of this experience should be a first year seminar.
- Commitment to close mentoring, independent inquiry, and active learning is one of the University’s signature strengths and the General Education requirements should signify this through an experiential learning component.
- Current General Education “distribution” requirements depend on a very limited number of designated courses and discipline-specific tracks which are inflexible, unresponsive to student needs, constrain the future development of major programs, and inhibit transdisciplinary connections.

Thus, the majority of the new proposals argue for General Education requirements that are not discipline specific, have greater flexibility in the courses that satisfy those requirements, have wider latitude in the level of courses that satisfy those requirements, and require fewer courses

than the existing system. The plan proposed by the General Education Task Group responds to these core beliefs through the inclusion of a first year seminar and an experiential learning component and the creation of a flexible system of distribution requirements which cohere with and complement the majors.

### **Skills Inherent in General Education**

Critical thinking, formulating clear ideas and compelling arguments, analyzing data, evaluating evidence, researching thoroughly and with integrity, and many other fundamental skills are the essence of General Education and are taught throughout the disciplines. Most importantly, so too should thoughtful, clear, effective writing and speaking. Such skills are inherent in and represent a crucial aspect of General Education at the University of Mary Washington.

Throughout the discussions of the General Education Review Committee and the General Education Task Group, as well as in the larger community, there was clear recognition that developing the writing and speaking capabilities of students is one of the University's strengths. However, at the same time, there was significant debate as to the most effective way to ensure that students learn to write and speak well. The two issues at the center of this debate are whether or not we need a first year composition course and/or some sort of foundational speaking instruction, and the role, nature, and purpose of writing and speaking intensive courses. The majority of the proposed plans argued to eliminate the first year composition course; none of the plans argued for a foundational speech course; all of the plans agreed that writing intensive (WI) and speaking intensive (SI) courses were valuable and should continue; and the majority of the plans argued to keep WI and SI as General Education requirements.

While there continues to be debate among both composition theorists and speech communication theorists as to the best strategies for teaching college-level writing and speaking, the consensus is that students need to talk and think about their writing and speaking experiences over the entire four years of their academic experience and they must do so in a range of contexts. Therefore, our ideas of undergraduate writing and speaking must include attention to the wide range of contexts in which student writing and speaking substantively and formatively develop. Such contexts are inherent in seminars, traditional writing and speaking courses, courses that are specifically designated WI or SI, as well as courses offered throughout the majors and disciplines. Since the University's goal should be to offer multiple academic experiences which engage students in writing and speaking in a wide variety of contexts (not the least of which is the discipline specific context of the major program) we recommend continuing WI and SI courses as General Education requirements, but not the first year composition course. Introductory writing courses, like introductory speech courses, will and should continue to be offered on an elective basis.

Since the first year seminar, by virtue of its purpose and structure, creates an environment for challenging and frequent interaction with the instructor and other students and necessitates significant student investment in the development and articulation of ideas, it offers a concrete context for both writing and speaking activities. All first year seminars should promote student understanding of writing and speaking as sources of personal development (as opposed to writing and speaking assignments which solely meet course requirements) because such

activities add depth to the intellectual experience of the seminar. They also serve as a demanding and fruitful context for anchoring student writing and speaking while providing first year students with an investment in those skills that will continue to grow throughout their college experience. The First Year Seminar requirement represents an important foray into college-level work; work which includes internalizing information, developing one's intellectual agenda, and becoming a writer and speaker who exhibits control over argumentation, reasoning, and style. Since this plan makes the first year seminar a requirement for all first year students, and such courses necessarily involve writing and speaking, it is neither necessary nor desirable to require that such courses satisfy existing WI/SI requirements. The General Education Task Group, therefore, recommends that the WI/SI designations for these courses be eliminated beginning in fall 2008.

Finally, despite their success and the clear desire to continue WI and SI as part of General Education, these requirements often cause students to question why they are expected to write and/or speak in classes which lack such designations. Although we believe that the first year seminar requirement will be useful in inculcating an awareness that writing and speaking are and should be infused throughout the undergraduate academic experience irrespective of "credit," we also recommend that the WI and SI Committees reexamine the criteria used to determine whether a particular course earns the WI or SI designation in order to foster wider integration of writing and speaking across the disciplines.

### **Benefits to Faculty**

This revision of the General Education requirements also promises a number of benefits for faculty and their academic departments. First, one longstanding goal is to reduce faculty teaching loads. Implementation of a more flexible system of general education requirements will allow departments to schedule fewer courses that serve only general education, while at the same time giving students more opportunities to "double count" general education courses with requirements in the majors. This plan provides the flexibility that is a necessary component of the administration's goal of reducing teaching loads.

Second, the increased sectioning flexibility created by this plan should also enable a redistribution of part-time faculty resources. Part-time staffing could be used to enrich department offerings and to provide hire-behinds in cases where full-time faculty are involved in other important teaching and professional development activities.

Third, the required first year seminar will give faculty greater opportunities than now exist to teach courses in their emerging areas of interest, to explore their developing and on-going research with students, and to teach a small seminar as part of their regular teaching load.

Finally, the proposed plan introduces interdisciplinary, "distribution areas" which invite our entire faculty to participate in building the new General Education curriculum in the coming months and years. With far fewer constraints to support and fit into a structured set of general education requirements this plan offers departments a real opportunity to reexamine and reimagine existing courses in new and innovative ways.

## **Conclusion**

The General Education Task Group has considered all of the materials and proposals to date and hereby forwards a plan for General Education that embraces ideas we have long shared and jointly espoused. This is a plan that will provide students with a strong, substantive foundation in the liberal arts and sciences and a vibrant, challenging, and formative undergraduate academic experience.

## PROPOSED NEW REQUIREMENTS

The components of the proposed general education requirements, together with brief descriptions, are given below. Descriptions, course criteria, and a rationale for each component can be found on subsequent pages.

COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION
<b>First Year Seminar</b>	<b>One</b> course designated as a first year seminar.
<b>Quantitative Reasoning</b>	<b>Two</b> courses focusing on the role of quantitative information in various settings and the ability to reason abstractly.
<b>Natural Science</b>	A <b>two</b> -course sequence within the natural sciences. The first course must serve as a prerequisite for the second course, and at least one of the two courses must have a laboratory.
<b>Human Behavior &amp; Society</b>	<b>Two</b> courses from two different disciplines that explore the forces shaping human activity, relationships, social structures, institutions, and intellectual systems.
<b>Global Inquiry</b>	<b>One</b> course focusing on global interconnections related to economic, political, cultural, social, public health, or environmental issues. 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.
<b>Language</b>	Intermediate competency in a second language.
<b>Arts, Literature, and Performance</b>	<b>Two</b> courses focusing on art, literature, or performance. One course provides an opportunity for exploring the process of creating artistic work while the other course encourages the appreciation and the interpretation of artistic expressions.
<b>Experiential Learning</b>	A faculty supervised experience involving a significant experiential learning component designed to challenge students to go outside of the bounds of the typical classroom.
<b>Writing Intensive Requirement</b>	All students are required to complete <b>four</b> courses designated writing intensive.
<b>Speaking Intensive Requirement</b>	All students are required to complete <b>two</b> courses designated speaking intensive.

## First Year Seminar

**Description:** One course designated as a first year seminar. First year seminars will:

- utilize active, discussion-based, participatory learning;
- be exploratory in nature, rather than just presenting established conclusions;
- have students read primary sources, not simply textbooks;
- introduce students to appropriate research and information retrieval techniques;
- use writing and speaking as tools for the exploration and expression of ideas and arguments;
- have students synthesize material from multiple sources to develop their own views on the topic; and
- be capped at 15 students.

**Rationale:** First year students expect a more engaging, demanding and rewarding experience than their secondary schooling and they arrive at the University of Mary Washington willing to be led in new directions. The aim of the pilot First Year Seminar program, begun in fall 2006, has been to satisfy those expectations while challenging both students intellectually and introducing them to the excitement of university-level learning. First year seminars offer students the best of the higher education academic experience insofar as they represent a genuine opportunity to motivate students to seek and contribute to the meaningful creation of knowledge. In addition, first year seminars anticipate the experience of the senior seminar without the requisite background knowledge and skills that such seminars demand. The pilot program should be expanded as a core component of the University's General Education requirements.

The first year seminar requirement follows the pattern of the pilot program. First year seminars will be distributed across the disciplines, yet they are structured around a set of common principles whose purpose is to introduce first year students to the pursuit of intellectual inquiry. Specific topics are determined by the instructor's background and interests. The objective of the first year seminar is to cultivate the intellectual skills necessary for liberal learning through the in-depth study of a topic and the provision of instruction on how to gather and analyze information for the purpose of formulating and defending an opinion. Seminars will be deep in terms of the critical approach employed, but will involve topics which are accessible to first year students.

Although first year seminars will neither be part of the Writing/Speaking Intensive Program(s) nor be a replacement for a first year writing course, all first year seminars involve meaningful writing and speaking assignments in which students are given instruction and guidance on writing and speaking at the college level.

## Quantitative Reasoning

**Description:** Two courses focusing on the role of quantitative information in various settings and the ability to reason abstractly. Courses satisfying this requirement will:

- emphasize the interpretation of quantitative information;
- cultivate the ability to solve problems and construct abstract arguments using mathematical techniques;
- develop skills to solve problems that have an explicit dependency on quantitative information;
- explore the role of mathematical techniques and quantitative information in the context of other disciplines; and
- provide a deeper appreciation for how quantitative information is used to make decisions that affect our lives.

**Rationale:** University of Mary Washington graduates will live in a world in which the presence and significance of quantitative information is considerable. From assessing risk when buying insurance and interpreting poll results to evaluating success rates for medical procedures and understanding mathematical models, which predict everything from the weather to the stock market, quantitative information affects all of our lives. Now and in the future, citizens can expect to be called upon to evaluate such information, and the claims of others who employ it, to make decisions that affect not just their own lives, but society as a whole.

The Quantitative Reasoning component of the general education requirements prepares students to make informed judgments about quantitative information. Courses which satisfy this requirement rely on the study of statistics, logic, and/or mathematics to teach students how to weigh evidence, understand probabilities, solve complex problems, and draw inferences while avoiding the fallacies and pitfalls which frequently surround the use of quantitative information. Given the significance and variety of quantitative information in the modern era a two course requirement from two distinct disciplines is warranted.

## Natural Science

**Description:** A two-course sequence within the natural sciences. The first course must serve as a prerequisite for the second course, and at least one of the two courses must have a laboratory. This component can be satisfied with either 7 *or* 8 credits of coursework. Courses satisfying this requirement will:

- provide a base of knowledge in a particular natural science discipline that is sufficient to allow meaningful intellectual engagement within that discipline;
- inculcate the scientific mode of inquiry and relate it to the historical development of knowledge in the natural sciences;
- foster opportunities for students to reflect upon the myriad ways in which the natural sciences impact their everyday experiences and choices as citizens;
- raise awareness about the social, political, philosophical, and ethical dilemmas that scientific progress often creates; and
- provide students with life-long scientific tools that will allow them to better interpret and evaluate scientific information.

**Rationale:** University of Mary Washington graduates will be confronted with an accelerating array of complex scientific and technical issues and their associated social, political, ethical, and philosophical dilemmas. To understand and make informed judgments about some of the most divisive issues of our time, such as stem cell research, climate change, energy policy, natural resource management, and human reproductive technology, students must possess the capacity to understand, interpret, evaluate and employ scientific information. Liberal learning necessarily involves: the study of science, its history, and its methods; the practical experience gained through applying scientific tools, evidence, and data to specific, real-world, problems; and, the ability to understand larger connections between the natural sciences and everyday life and experience.

The Natural Science component of the general education requirements prepares students to live in a world in which scientific information impacts virtually every aspect of their lives. It consists of a two-course sequence within the natural sciences. The first course provides a thorough grounding in the foundational principles of a natural science discipline and serves as a prerequisite for the second course which utilizes those foundational principles to interpret and evaluate scientific arguments as well as to appreciate how scientific information is applied to solve specific, practical, issues and problems in the natural sciences. One of the two courses in this sequence must include a laboratory which offers students a hands-on experience using the scientific method.

## Human Behavior and Society

**Description:** Two courses from two different disciplines that explore the forces shaping human activity, relationships, social structures, institutions, and intellectual systems. Courses satisfying this requirement will:

- focus on individuals, relationships and/or the role of institutions within society, while exploring the larger systems that bind individuals to groups and connect groups to the greater social fabric;
- devote instruction to both topical subject matter and methodology in order for students to understand important ideas relevant to the area of study and to critique the collection, reporting, and analysis of evidence related to the topics under consideration;
- seek to make connections to the evolving collection of disciplines that study the complexities of individual behavior and societal structures;
- provide the broader cultural and historical context on the areas of human and social activities being explored;
- explore the commonalities and differences of the human experience, from whatever paradigms are most appropriate to the course content; and
- help students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to formulate and examine specific questions relevant to the study of the areas of human behavior and society that are the focus of the course.

**Rationale:** University of Mary Washington graduates will inhabit and negotiate a world which requires a sophisticated understanding of the nature and dynamics of human conduct, organization and change. Exploring the complex forces shaping human activity, cultures, communities, interactions, intellectual systems, and political, economic, and social institutions is essential to thoughtful and engaged citizenship. The study of human behavior and society prepares students to see how tension and conflict tear at the social fabric as well as how people develop and negotiate a wide variety of connections and relationships. Understanding the forces that impel and interfere with human 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 human engagement, and ultimately, prepares graduates to be effective decision makers in their own communities.

The Human Behavior and Society component of the general education requirements prepares students to see how theoretical, quantitative, and/or qualitative modes of inquiry are applied to the study of human behavior, social interaction, and institutions and to understand how knowledge about human behavior and society is generated. Given the variety of approaches to studying human behavior and society and the virtue inherent in studying the issues involved from multiple perspectives, a two course requirement from two distinct disciplines is warranted.

## Global Inquiry

**Description:** One course focusing on global interconnections related to economic, political, cultural, social, public health, or environmental issues. 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. Courses satisfying this requirement will:

- examine how past, present, or future persons, places, phenomena, and/or events affect or are affected by global interconnections;
- explore some combination of technological, economic, political, social, cultural, health-related, and/or environmental global interconnections most relevant to the course content; and
- help students realize how such interconnections work in their lives and in the lives of others.

**Rationale:** University of Mary Washington students learn and 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. Thus, General Education should cultivate the skills and knowledge which enable graduates to make effective decisions as citizens of a rapidly changing, richly diverse, and increasingly interconnected world. This requires students to learn about the technological, economic, political, cultural, social, health and/or environmental interconnections that influence their own lives and produce similarities and differences among peoples and places around our world.

The global inquiry component of the general education requirements prepares students to recognize the presence of the global in any particular situation. The focus of this requirement is understanding and working with the interconnections that differently affect people living in different places, not merely an appreciation of difference.

## Language

**Description:** Intermediate competency in a second language. Courses satisfying this requirement will:

- teach students to function in the target language by familiarizing them with the necessary vocabulary and grammatical structures so that they may understand as well as create;
- afford students the ability to express their own thoughts on concrete topics in writing (and in the case of modern languages, speaking); and
- use skills in reading and writing (and in the case of modern languages, in listening and speaking), to understand and comment upon real texts and native speech.

Attaining intermediate competency in a second language prepares students for interaction with other cultures and for further study in the language, culture and literature of the language.

Intermediate competency in a second language may be demonstrated by:

- completion of 202 or higher in a language;
- a score of 620 or higher on any language SAT II subject test;
- a score of 4 or higher on any language AP Exam or on any Language and Literature AP Exam (including the Latin Vergil AP Exam);
- a score of 5 or higher on any group 2 (second language) higher-level IB Exam;
- a passing score on the University of Mary Washington language competency exam; or
- submitting 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.

Students with four or more years of study in a particular language in high school may enroll in the 100-level courses of that language, *but NOT for credit* at the University of Mary Washington.

**Rationale:** University of Mary Washington graduates living in an increasingly interconnected world should have the ability to engage in transnational and transcultural communication. In addition, studying a second language improves understanding of one's native language while fostering critical thinking skills and cultural perspectives applicable to other areas of study.

## Arts, Literature, and Performance

**Description:** Two courses focusing on art, literature, or performance. One course provides an opportunity for exploring the process of creating artistic work while the other course encourages the appreciation and the interpretation of artistic expressions.

Courses satisfying the *process* dimension of this requirement will:

- offer opportunities to explore expressions of the human spirit, imagination, aspiration and belief;
- create opportunities to expand individual self-awareness and creativity;
- substantially engage the student in creating, participating or performing in a given art form;
- examine aesthetic qualities of created work; and
- provide regular opportunities for instructor and student critique of artistic process and progress.

Courses satisfying the *appreciation* and *interpretation* dimension of this requirement will:

- examine artistic production through appropriate historical, theoretical, analytical, and/or aesthetic frameworks;
- require students to analyze, respond to and critically assess works within a given art form;
- encourage the individual interpretation of artistic work; and
- explore how the artful creation of other worlds in language, music, movement or image enriches our own.

**Rationale:** University of Mary Washington graduates will live in a world which requires them to engage, appreciate, interpret, and understand the ideas and forces which stimulate the creation of art, literature and performance. Human societies find clarity, beauty, compassion, and a richer understanding of the human experience through art, literature, and performance. Understanding the arts requires an exploration of both artistic process and achievement. Courses that focus on the theory and practice of human artistic and literary achievement, works, and processes help students acquire the tools—verbal, non-verbal, visual, and/or musical—necessary for engagement in the aesthetic, ethical, and moral issues which arts and literature raise.

## Experiential Learning

**Description:** A faculty supervised experience involving a significant experiential learning component designed to challenge students to go outside of the bounds of the typical classroom. Experiential learning varies considerably by discipline and may include individual study or research (departmental or URES 197), designated practica, 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.

**Rationale:** Experiential learning experiences are consistent with and reinforce the University's mission to promote both undergraduate research and civic engagement. Some learning experiences involve undergraduate research, while others offer tangible routes for civic engagement outside the classroom. These experiences enhance student learning by fostering connections outside the classroom, increasing student ownership of their educational experience, and promoting the cultivation of life-long learning. Evidence shows that such learning experiences substantially increase student satisfaction.

The Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR) is guided by the assumption that there is no single approach to experiential learning and that there are a wide variety of learning experiences available to students. ELR recognizes that students should have great flexibility in creating an experience suited to their individual needs and circumstances. Students learn differently and, therefore, should be encouraged to seek different learning outcomes. While some may benefit from the rigors of an intensive individual study or a one-on-one research project with a faculty mentor, others have interests, needs, and learning styles that may be more appropriately cultivated through other activity based means.

## Writing and Speaking Intensive Requirements

**Description:** Four courses designated as writing intensive and two courses designated as speaking intensive.

**Rationale:** One of the University of Mary Washington’s signature strengths lies in the development of students’ writing and speaking abilities. Much of this growth occurs as students learn to communicate within their chosen disciplines in Writing Intensive (WI) courses, Speaking Intensive (SI) courses, senior seminars, as well as courses with no formal designation.

The General Education Task Group believes that students should take at least four courses designated and structured as WI to ensure the continued development of their writing skills. Such courses develop focused thinking and writing skills in the context of specific subject areas. Current WI courses have proven critical and successful in improving student writing because these courses exist in the disciplines, across the curriculum, and are spread throughout the four years of the student’s undergraduate experience. In addition to the four required WI courses, many students take additional required courses in their majors that cannot be successfully completed without demonstrating effective writing in those disciplines.

Coupled with the importance of writing, is the undeniably important ability to express one’s self verbally. Therefore, the General Education Task Group believes that students should take at least two courses designated and structured as SI. Speaking activities make students active participants in the learning process, give students opportunities to exert greater control in the classroom, and increase student motivation and learning. SI courses introduce students to the theories and principles of effective communication, enhance understanding of the conventions and situational expectations of oral communication within disciplinary contexts, teach students to listen carefully, and promote the examination and evaluation of the effectiveness of messages—both of their own and those of other speakers. In a world where effective oral communication is often sidelined by text messaging and email, the SI requirement will continue to focus attention on this essential mode of communication.

## Implementation Plan

Implementation will require a wide-ranging series of activities, involving many faculty members who will, in some cases, work differently from the way formal faculty governance strictures currently allow. These implementation recommendations respect faculty governance, but because there are many tasks that must be done in a short time, it is necessary to devise new *ad hoc* procedures to be employed only for general education implementation.

### General Time Line for Implementation

In developing the calendar of target dates, the General Education Task Group met with key faculty leaders and earned their agreement with the details of the time line. The Task Group met with the following leaders concerning the implementation details: the Faculty President, Curriculum Committee Chair, Academic Affairs Committee Chair, Faculty Affairs Committee Chair, and Faculty Organization Committee Chair.

Also, the Dean of the Faculty contacted the BLS Program Director and the Dean of the College of Graduate and Professional Studies and suggested they should assess how this proposal for new BA/BS general education requirements might affect the general education programs for the BLS and BPS degrees. Both of these programs would pursue any changes separately, through the established curriculum change mechanisms relevant to each – the BLS Committee and the Faculty Senate, and the CGPS Academic Council (for the BPS Program).

TARGET DATE	IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITY
August 1, 2007	The Task Group's complete report distributed to the faculty and posted on the General Education "Wiki."
August 16, 2007	<i>Open Forum</i> to discuss the report, 10 a.m. to noon (Dodd Auditorium). Topics/issues/questions that faculty wish to raise must first be posted on the General Education "Wiki" ( <a href="http://www.jtmorello.org/gened">http://www.jtmorello.org/gened</a> ) no later than August 15, 2007. The forum will be open to all UMW community members.
August 17, 2007	General Education Task Group meets to determine what action, if any, to take based on the outcome of the Open Forum discussion.
August 21, 2007	General education report discussed at department chairs meeting.
August 23, 2007	During the assigned time for department meetings, departments are encouraged to discuss the general education final report. If the contents of the report are modified as a result of the open forum (and the Task Group's subsequent discussions), a new version of the final report will be sent to all faculty before the department meetings.
September 5, 2007	General Education Task Group's proposed curriculum is formally presented to the Faculty Senate and conferred to the Curriculum Committee. Additional recommendations are submitted to the Academic Affairs Committee.
September – October	Curriculum Committee deliberates and acts on the report. Other academic policy changes recommended simultaneously pursued by other committees.

<b>TARGET DATE</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITY</b>
<b>November 7, 2007</b>	Curriculum and Academic Affairs Committees presents motion to the Faculty Senate to adopt new general education requirements. <b>Note:</b> the <i>Faculty Handbook</i> , §A.7.6.4, states: “The status of motions referred to committees from the floor must be reported upon by the second regular Faculty Senate meeting after referral.”
<b>November 12, 2007</b>	<i>Assuming passage by the Faculty Senate</i> , the Dean calls a General Faculty meeting for this date. Faculty votes on new general education program.
<b>November 12, 2007 – February 11, 2008</b>	<i>Assuming passage by the Faculty Senate</i> , the first-year seminar requirement is geared up with a sufficient number courses to be placed on the fall 2008 course schedule. (Assuming 15 per section, an entering class of 950 freshmen, some freshmen transfers who would need to meet the requirement, and supply flexibility for choice, about 38 sections per semester are needed.)
<b>November 12, 2007 – April 3, 2008</b>	<i>Assuming passage by the Faculty Senate</i> , the other requirement areas are populated with courses by the various <i>ad hoc</i> implementation sub committees (see below). Lists of courses meeting the new requirements are made available through every available means.
<b>April 23, 2008</b>	General Faculty Meeting, at which time faculty members may challenge (if desired) any of the decisions made about related academic policy changes or courses that do/do not meet particular general education requirements.
<b>May 15, 2008</b>	<i>Catalog</i> description of the new general education program finalized.
<b>June 15, 2008</b>	Web version of new <i>Catalog</i> available (print version available in August).
<b>August 2008</b>	<b>NEW GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS TAKE EFFECT.</b>

## Procedures for Populating the Components

As a general strategy, because there is much to do and little time, we need to develop several independent tracks for implementing distinct pieces of the new general education requirements. The approaches outlined below distribute responsibilities among many different groups.

### *First Year Seminar (FSEM)*

1. The Faculty Organization Committee will formally establish the FSEM Advisory Committee as an *ad hoc* committee for the purpose of approving and supporting the development of the FSEM courses to be offered in the *first year* of the new general education curriculum.
2. In addition to FSEM 100, new course numbers will be established for FSEM courses that will count towards major requirements, beginning with FSEM 101 (First Year Seminar, Art History) and proceeding through the numbers in order until every subject discipline has been assigned its own FSEM course number. Each FSEM topic offered by a discipline under its number will have its own suffix (FSEM 101A, FSEM 101B, and so forth), and course titles appearing in the schedule will be the specific topics, not the basic “root” title of the master course. In other words, instead of FSEM 115A, “First Year Seminar, English,” it would be FSEM 115A, “Travel Writing.”
3. All FSEM courses for the new general education program must be reviewed and approved by the sponsoring department, the General Education Committee, and the FSEM Committee. This includes any FSEM 100 courses that were taught previously. Once approved by the FSEM Committee, submitted courses will be listed under the new numbers and suffixes described above. If the course had been offered before as FSEM 100, the department must include this information as a part of its proposal, so that the Office of the Registrar can accurately map the previous course to the new number.
4. Departments may elect to allow its FSEM courses to count in the major. Existing courses that could meet the criteria for a first year seminar course (e.g. HIST 201, PHIL 100) may be proposed to the FSEM Committee as options for meeting the First Year Seminar general education requirement and, if approved, these will be added to the list of courses meeting the requirement and renumbered according to the scheme outlined above. If a department wishes to develop a *new* course designed as a first year seminar option that will count in the major, that new course would need to be approved first by the Curriculum Committee before the FSEM Committee reviews it.
5. Any FSEM 100 course with an existing ATC designation will no longer retain that designation when the new general education program goes into effect in fall 2008.
6. Students transferring to UMW with transfer credits taken after the student matriculated to another college or university (in other words, not high school “dual enrollment” courses) would be exempt from the FSEM requirement. Students with fewer than 30 transfer credits would be able to take FSEM as an elective. Advisors would be encouraged to work

individually with transfer students to determine an appropriate elective choice in lieu of the FSEM exempted course.

7. Some students may fail FSEM, and will have more than 30 credits at the time they need to try again. We should anticipate that there may be some such cases, and be prepared to grant “prerequisite waivers” to students who still need to complete FSEM and have more than 30 credits. In every case where this occurs, faculty advisors should strongly encourage these students to take the FSEM course again as soon as possible, either by repeating the failed course or by taking a different FSEM class. Having someone who failed FSEM take it again as a sophomore is a far better situation than letting the student wait until senior year. The Academic Services Office will contact students and their advisors in cases where a failed FSEM course is on the academic record.

### ***Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR)***

1. All 491 and 492 “individual studies” courses and all URES 197s (Undergraduate Research) meet this requirement. Also counting automatically are the following independent and/or guided research courses: HIST 485/486, AMST 470, ANTH 480, ARTS 470, CLAS 485, EDUC 440, GEOG 485, PHIL 485, RELG 401, THEA 482. If there are other similar, existing courses not listed here, the department should request that the course be added by the General Education Committee.
2. All internships (499) that have a final project/paper that is to be evaluated by the sponsoring faculty member will be coded as 499E Internship (Experiential Learning) and will meet this requirement; other internships will not. The Office of Career Services will indicate on the internship contract whether the particular internship qualifies as 499E and, if it does, the Office of the Registrar will use this course number when enrolling the student.
3. Departments wishing to propose a new mechanism for enabling students to meet this requirement outside of a formal course must make their proposal to the General Education Committee (and also to the Curriculum Committee if the proposal will affect major requirements). If any such mechanism is approved, the department will be responsible for identifying who has met this alternative requirement and for reporting that information to the Office of the Registrar in a timely fashion (deadlines to be established by the Office of the Registrar). One existing example is the Psychology Department’s “community service option” *which DOES meet the ELR* and might serve as a model for other departments. Any approved mechanisms of this sort will be recorded on the student’s transcript as a course entry line but with no credits, as PSYC 000 (Community Service) is currently. The Office of the Registrar and the department will work out appropriate language for any new option created similar to the PSYC 000 model.
4. The General Education Committee will craft criteria for courses that involve a significant public service, field study, or community based research component and which therefore satisfy the Experiential Learning Requirement. As part of its oversight responsibility for the general education program this committee will solicit and evaluate proposals for courses which should be designated “EL.”

***Distribution Areas***

1. The Faculty Organization Committee of the Faculty Senate will establish *ad hoc* committees to create the course lists for each of the five “distribution” areas – Natural Science; Quantitative Reasoning; Human Behavior and Society; Arts, Literature, and Performance; and Global Inquiry.
2. The *ad hoc* committees will exist until the new general education requirements are officially in effect, at which time they are dissolved.
3. The Faculty Organization Committee and the Faculty President will agree to have department chairs staff all the *ad hoc* committees in accordance with the outline below, or its modification as the FOC deems more prudent. The model presented here uses all department chairs (except for the chair of the Athletics, Health, and Physical Education Department), and all chairs serve on two *ad hoc* committees. Chairs have knowledge about departmental courses, and can work collaboratively to apply the relevant course criteria when making decisions in each category. The membership suggested has the chairs on at least one committee where their courses will be likely to be under consideration. In some cases, the second committee is one where the chair might serve as an “outside” check and balance. The suggested membership is:

Arts, Lit., Perf.	Natural Science	Human Behavior	Quantitative	Global
Art & Art Hist.	Geography	Psychology	Computer Sci.	MDFL
ELS	Earth & Env. Sci.	Political Science	Mathematics	Geography
Music	Physics	Business Admin.	Psychology	Economics
Theatre	Chemistry	Earth & Env. Sci.	Physics	Sociology/Anth.
Education	Biology	History	Chemistry	ELS
CPR	Mathematics	Historic Pres.	Economics	Art & Art Hist.
MDFL	Business Admin.	CPR	Theatre	Political Science
Computer Sci.	Historic Pres.	Education	Music	History
		Sociology/Anth.		Biology

4. Because the categories of the new general education requirements *are not* discipline specific, **ANY department may propose a course for consideration to any distribution area**, and there are no caps on the number courses that may be included as options in any of the requirement areas.
5. *Ad hoc* committees will apply the course criteria for each requirement area as specified in this general education report as the means for deciding whether a course will be included in a particular general education category. For existing courses, the department brings the recommendation to the *ad hoc* committee, and the committee’s actions are reported to the Faculty Senate for final approval. For new courses, the course must first be approved by the Curriculum Committee before it is reviewed by the *ad hoc* committee to be designated as a General Education option.

## Transition Plans

**Students and General Education Requirements:** All UMW BA/BS students matriculating in August 2008 or thereafter must follow the new general education program.

Students who matriculated before August 2008, and are under the “old” general education program will no longer be required to meet the Environmental Awareness, Race/Gender Intensive, or Global Awareness across-the-curriculum requirements, effective August 2008. Any students who have not fulfilled these requirements by August 2008 will be deemed to have satisfied them. The eight goals and the WI and SI requirements will remain in effect as they are described in the 1997–1999 through 2007-2008 *Academic Catalogs*. Courses designated as meeting the new general education distribution areas will, where appropriate, be added as options for meeting the eight goal areas of the former general education program. This will provide greater flexibility for students who remain with the old general education program. Students who have completed a first year seminar under the old general education program may elect to change to the new general education requirements.

Any UMW BA/BS student who matriculated prior to August 2008 and who is “readmitted” must satisfy the new general education program requirements. As part of the readmission process, the General Education Committee will determine if any adjustments are required in the individual student’s case to the *First Year Seminar Requirement* so that the student will be able to meet the new general education requirements feasibly. This is the only requirement that may be modified as part of the readmission process. This process will also apply to any students reinstated by the Committee on Academic Standing who were originally following the old General Education program but who would have to (by virtue of the interruption in their course of study) come back under the new general education program.

**General Education Program Faculty Governance:** The three curriculum advisory committees that support the discontinued across-the-curriculum parts of the present general education program will be disbanded in fall 2008. The General Education, Writing Intensive, and Speaking Intensive Committees will remain, although the duties of the General Education Committee as described in the *Faculty Handbook* will need to be rewritten to remove reference to the “eight goals” of the current general education framework. Beginning in fall 2008, oversight responsibility for the general education program will be the responsibility of the General Education Committee.

Because continuing oversight of and faculty development for the first year seminar program are necessary components of delivering this requirement effectively, *the Faculty Organization Committee is asked to establish the First Year Seminar Committee as a new Curriculum Advisory Committee*. It must be noted that, even with the addition of this one new committee, there is a net reduction of curriculum committees with oversight of general education. (There are presently six such committees, and this number decreases to four.)

**General Education Program Development and Support:** The Dean of the Faculty will provide grant funds for faculty and departments to “gear up” new general education courses,

teaching strategies, faculty development initiatives, and so forth. The Dean will issue the first call for proposals as soon as the new general education program is adopted by the faculty, and the first call for proposals will indicate the amount available per project and the necessary components and format of the grant proposal.

**Transfer Credit, AP, IB, and Other Equivalencies Under the New General Education**

**Program:** Routinely, departments review the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) course equivalencies lists to determine UMW credit to be awarded to those exams. This process will continue, and any new general education courses created will be reviewed by the department to see if there is equivalence to any particular AP or IB test. The lists of VCCS courses and their UMW equivalencies will be reviewed to determine if any of the new general education courses are equivalent to VCCS courses, and would thereby earn general education credit. The AP, IB, and VCCS transfer guides are updated annually. Cambridge Examinations and transfer courses from institutions other than Virginia Community Colleges (VCCS) are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and this process will continue.

**General Education Assessment:** The approaches used to assess the current general education program may not work to assess the new program. Similarly, there may be other more desirable approaches that would enrich assessment efforts. The Office of Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research, working with the General Education Committee, will design new assessment protocols that will be implemented no later than three years after the start of the new general education program.

## Recommendations for Academic Policy Changes

To help ensure the effectiveness of the new general education requirements, and to simultaneously adjust some existing academic policies that are in need of repair, the following academic policy changes should be implemented at the same time the new General Education program is adopted.

**Transfer articulation agreements:** Virginia Community College transfer students with a “transfer oriented” associate degree<sup>1</sup> enter UMW with junior status, and will be considered to have met the new general education requirements with these exceptions (unless the student had specific transfer courses that were awarded UMW equivalencies that met these requirements): foreign language competence, the Writing Intensive Requirement, the Speaking Intensive Requirement, and the Experiential Learning Requirement. Currently, VCCS students transferring to UMW with a transfer-oriented associate degree must fulfill the foreign language competence requirement and the five current across the curriculum requirements. A VCCS transfer currently may have to take as many as 14 courses (four foreign language and 10 for the across the curriculum) if there are no applicable transfer courses. Under the new plan, this maximum number is 11 (if the experiential requirement is counted as a course), and represents a 20 percent decrease in total of general education courses required if the transfer student had nothing that counted in those areas. *The General Education Task Force asks that the Academic Affairs Committee recommend this change to the faculty and, if approved, that the change be incorporated into all relevant BA/BS transfer articulation agreements with the VCCS.*

**The number of credits required for graduation with a BA/BS degree:** We propose that this number, currently 122, become 120 credits. Eliminating the two physical education credits currently required for graduation makes the total needed 120 credits, which is the standard established by SACS accreditation standards. A maximum of 90 transfer credits are allowed; this again follows SACS standards stipulating that at least 25 percent of the credits required for graduation must be earned at the institution awarding the degree. *The General Education Task Force asks that the Academic Affairs Committee propose this change to the faculty.*

**Cap on the maximum hours in the same discipline that count toward graduation:** *The General Education Task Force asks that the Academic Affairs Committee raise the maximum number of credits in the same discipline that may be counted toward graduation to 60 credits.* In recent years, the current 55-credit limit in one discipline has become increasingly problematic as more students want to take additional courses in their discipline of choice beyond what is needed to complete the major. In some cases, this is the result of courses required for certifications (as in the case of business students preparing to qualify for the CPA exam). A cap of 60 credits in the same discipline means that at least half of the student’s work will be in other disciplines, thereby reinforcing the diversification objective inherent in a liberal arts course of study while, at the same time, affording students additional flexibility.

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<sup>1</sup> The transfer oriented associate degrees are the Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Arts and Science, and the twelve specified General Studies associate degrees as sanctioned by the State Committee on Transfer.

**Requirements for Major programs:** One goal of the general education program revision is to promote greater connection between major programs and general education, and fulfillment of this objective may require some modification of the rules currently imposed on major programs as those rules are described in *The Dictionary of Academic Regulations*. *The General Education Task Force asks that the Academic Affairs Committee review the policies “defining and constraining the major,”* paying particular attention to these points – the maximum number of credits that may be required in a major program, the amount of overlap permitted between majors, and the role of prerequisites in the major and how those prerequisite courses are counted in the total of major requirements.

**Information and Technology Competency at UMW:** The Task Group recommends that students acquire an understanding and skills related to technologies particularly as they are used in the disciplines. The Task Group notes the efforts of the Academic Affairs Committee to develop a “Proposal for Addressing Undergraduate Information and Technology Competencies in the UMW Curriculum.”

### **Recommendations to the WI and SI Committees**

**Reexamination of the WI and SI Course Criteria:** The General Education Task Group reaffirms the WI and SI requirements. The Task Group further recommends that all existing WI and SI courses retain those designations in the new General Education program. Just as all faculty committees involved in curriculum review will examine curricular components that fall under their charge, so too should the WI and SI Committees. During the ongoing implementation of the new General Education requirements, should the WI and SI Committees revise course criteria, they will present those proposals to the Faculty Senate.

## **Members of the Task Group on General Education**

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### *Committee Members*

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- Terry Kennedy, Department of English, Linguistics, and Speech
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- Keith Mellinger, Department of Mathematics
- Tim O'Donnell, Department of English, Linguistics, and Speech
- Gregg Stull, Department of Theatre and Dance
- Scott Zagrodny, (*Class of 2008*), Geography and International Affairs

### *Ex-officio Members*

- Rosemary Barra, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty
- Nina Mikhalevsky, Acting Provost and Vice President for Strategy and Policy
- John Morello, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs