

## ***The New General Education Curriculum: A Blueprint for Implementation***

As we begin the third year of the General Education Reform process, we are now in a crucial phase as the proposal moves through the governance structure of the College. In anticipation of its approval we offer the following blueprint for implementation. At its heart, this signature curriculum is interdisciplinary; it is built on a series of foundation courses and bridging into the major. It is a smaller General Education Curriculum than our current one in terms of credits, but a richer one in terms of the competencies, learning objectives and experiences that will provide students.

The Curriculum must pass the College Curriculum Committee, The College Senate and then the Board of Trustees. Therefore, this implementation blueprint is designed on the premise that the full General Education Curriculum will be rolled out in Fall 2012 and be required at that point for incoming students. A pilot program is envisioned for the Spring of 2012, as described below.

### **Coordination**

Most of the Cornerstone component of the curriculum will be directly under the supervision and coordination of the individual departments, just as they are at present. Therefore, there is no change needed in this area. In the same way, the Capstone experience, much like the upper division WI courses at present, will be a departmental responsibility.

Since the Keystones do not sit within departments, a coordinating structure will need to be put in place. The model for this can be found on campus, in the successful WAC program. A faculty member with release time will serve as coordinator of General Education, assisted by the General Education Coordinating committee comprised of full-time faculty members. The coordinator will schedule sufficient numbers of sections of Freshman Seminar and Keystones, each semester. The coordinator will also work with the Director of CETL to plan and implement faculty development activities. The coordinator and the committee will develop an approval process and set parameters for new Keystone themes as they are developed in the future, along the lines of the WI course approval process.

### **Delivery**

Parallel General Education programs: Since students legally have the right to follow the Bulletin in effect in the year that they entered the college (or returned to it after an extended leave), both General Education programs will need to be offered for about a 3 year period.

The phase-out of the current General Education will have to be very well-publicized so that students are aware of the need to finish their courses on time. This information will need to be publicized in all advisement, orientation, and registration materials, in mailings and emails, on the college homepage and on Plasma screens, etc.

Class size and staff: While the General Education Freshman Seminar and the Keystone courses will be interdisciplinary in nature they will be taught by a single faculty member.

- The Freshman Seminar is designed for a maximum class size of 25 students.
- Keystones will vary in size. The WI seminars will be capped at 25. In other seminars, larger groups of students can be served.
- The Keystone in Scientific Literacy has a lab component so the lecture/recitation portion could be delivered to larger groups but lab sections must be capped at 20 due to laboratory classroom size .
- As the new General Education curriculum is put into place, on-line and hybrid offerings of the Keystones will be developed. As the curriculum moves forward this will give students more flexibility, alleviate space issues, etc.

### **Scheduling:**

Year I: In this year the number of New GE courses will be at the lowest number, and the Old GE will be very similar to the current offerings. The College should offer the courses needed for the New Gen Ed that first time freshman students must take, and which can also be used by continuing students such as Math, and Foreign Languages. We might also consider substitutions which would allow continuing students to choose HE 110 instead of PE 150 since it is a liberal arts course and for the English sequence. Since the current FL requirement is 0-8 credits, continuing students can take the new 3 credit courses without any penalty. Some Old Gen Ed courses that are primarily taken by freshman will be the first to be reduced in number, since continuing students will for the most part, have completed these. This will streamline some offerings. In the second semester, there will be further reductions. For the New Gen Ed, the Cornerstone courses and Freshman seminar along with 1 or 2 Keystones could be offered. In the first year there is no need for WI Keystones since students will be in the English composition sequence.

Year II: The number of courses in Old Gen Ed will be reduced further, with reductions increasing from semester to semester, and the number of courses in the New Gen Ed will increase. In addition to the courses offered in Year I, at least one of the WI Keystones should be integrated into the offerings.

Year III: Students following the Old Gen Ed should now be well aware that many of those courses will not be offered after this year. (Some will always be offered since they fulfill major or minor designs, or are liberal arts electives). There will be many fewer sections of courses required for the Old Gen Ed. Some courses will be eliminated from the course schedule by this point.

Year IV: Delivery of the New Gen Ed courses will fully replace delivery of the Old Gen Ed courses. If there are “stragglers” who need to fulfill some requirements of the Old Gen Ed to graduate, substitutions will be granted.

## **Faculty Development:**

The success of the New General Education is directly related to the success of a robust Faculty Development program. Such an initiative need not be overly costly. Much of the work can be done in house, through peer programs for faculty.

A small group of faculty interested in and committed to General Education faculty development will oversee many of the activities, coordinated by the director of CETL.

Beginning in mid Spring 2011 (pending Senate passage of the proposal) Faculty development activities can begin. As evidenced by the substantial bibliography developed over the past 2 years, there are many excellent resources available. Faculty, through CETL, will be invited to participate in book discussion groups on interdisciplinarity and related issues. These discussions will be lead by GERTF members. Also during the latter part of the Spring semester a Keystone Faculty Fair can be held. Members of the FIGs which developed the Keystones will be asked to develop some materials to display in the Faculty Dining Room and faculty will be invited to come and see where they might fit into the new opportunities for teaching. Lists will be developed of interested faculty members for future activities.

Fall 2011: Groups of faculty preparing to teach Keystones or Freshman Seminars in the new Gen Ed will be formed. They will meet regularly to support each other in curriculum development and in developing expertise in areas that might be outside their discipline, using the CLDV 210 staff development model. Recommendation: The College should dedicate the Club Hours on the First Thursday of each month exclusively for this activity (this is the time slot that the GERFT has been using to meet for 2 years). Departments and Administration should not schedule meetings in conflict with this time.

Spring 2012: Course development continues as above.

Costs: In the 2011-2012 academic year faculty who are working in the course development groups could be compensated using the model of the Honors Program course development incentive. Faculty could choose to be released from 1 credit hour of teaching in one semester or receive \$1,200. Faculty working on online or hybrid course development could apply for the college's existing support program.

### Ongoing:

- Mentoring: Faculty teaching for the first time in the GE program will have a mentor from their Keystone or Freshman Seminar area to guide them.
- Course development: As faculty develop new offerings for Freshman Seminar or Keystones, CETL will provide materials and in-house consultants to support course development. The courses will go through an approval process that is similar to the WAC Writing Intensive course model, overseen by the General Education Coordinator and a General Education Committee.

- Peer Observations: Although clarification will be needed from PSC, members of the faculty developing each Keystone could observe one another in the classroom both to offer suggestions and to learn by observing. These would be very informal activities, not written down and only by consent of the “observee.”

### **Assessment**

The General Education Curriculum now in proposal form was designed with assessment in mind. The curriculum lays out the learning objectives and competencies for the entire program, and each course proposal clearly states the specific learning objectives and competencies. These objectives and competencies can be assessed in courses and in the majors using formative assessment or they can be assessed across the curriculum using summative assessment via in-house or external assessment tools. During the run-up to implementation in the 2011-2012 academic year, the College Outcomes Assessment Committee and the General Education Coordinating Committee will develop a specific plan.

### **Articulation and Transfer**

During the academic year 2011-2012 the Deans of each of the three schools of the College will be charged with revising all articulation agreements effected by the new General Education Curriculum. The new General Education Curriculum designates equivalency waivers of up to two Keystones for students who enter the College with 45 Liberal Arts and Sciences credits, and this can be used as a blueprint for the revisions of the existing articulation agreements. Chairs and Program directors should be consulted during the process

Since this new curriculum does not remove any course from the College’s existing Course Master List, transfer students entering the college will receive the credits they would normally receive under the current curriculum. There will be no change in the actual number of credits transferred into York College by a student. The Freshman Seminar and Keystone courses, for students who transfer out of York College, will in all likelihood transfer the same way that CLDV, Honors, and certain Humanities courses do, depending on the articulation agreements which will be re-negotiated."

### **P&B Issues**

The New General Education Curriculum is designed to be taught primarily by full-time faculty of the College, but we also realize that many adjuncts will remain involved in the delivery of General Education. If a full-time member of the faculty opts to teach the Freshman Seminar and/or one of the five Keystone courses these courses could count as part of the individual faculty member’s regular teaching load, and would require the support of the department chair. Faculty members in concert with their chairs will decide which course in a given semester will serve as the course to be observed for the official classroom observation. Therefore, no one will have to have an official observation in a Freshman Seminar or a Keystone course.

Full-time faculty members from all departments will be encouraged to teach the Freshman Seminar and/or Keystone courses. The “Special Topics” nature of the courses should be attractive to many faculty. The Freshman Seminar is especially suited to being taught by faculty from such areas as Cultural Diversity, Counseling, and professional programs, as well as the traditional liberal arts and sciences. Therefore, there should be no negative impact on the size of the full-time faculty.

A large portion of the General Education curriculum could be taught by full-time faculty. However, no one will be forced to teach the Freshman Seminar or a Keystone, but all will be encouraged and welcomed so that the goal of having as many students be taught by as many full-time faculty as possible early in their career may be met.

The streamlined nature of the General Education offerings will allow for the mentoring and support of adjuncts teaching in the program. Since adjuncts in the Keystone areas and Freshman Seminar will be teaching in only 6 courses guidance, teaching suggestions, test norming, etc., can be offered more effectively.

### **Piloting—Spring 2011:**

Freshman Seminar: Several sections will be piloted in place of SD 101. Students could receive elective credit for it, or depending on the content of their section, they could be given a substitution for a current Gen Ed requirement.

Keystones: One or two sections of each Keystone will be piloted as Liberal Arts Electives or in substitution for current General Education requirements.

At the end of the semester those who taught the courses, together with other members of the faculty for the course, will meet to assess and refine the courses.

The General Education Curriculum is a streamlined program. In the run-up year of 2011-2012 the careful planning and energetic participation of the faculty, supported by the administration will lay the groundwork for a smooth implementation. The greatest costs will occur during the transitional years, while the current General Education program is phased out and the new General Education is phased in. However, once that phase out is complete the new General Education is likely to be more cost effective since it relies on fewer course requirements. The next few semesters will give even more meaning to our motto, “York is on the move!”

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