

**Report on General Education Reform Imperatives
York Convocation
February 17, 2009**

The co-chairs of the General Education Task Force would like to update you on the current state of general education reform at York and share with you what we have figured out so far. We believe that we have made substantial **progress** in the last six months towards general education reform at York and that we are at a critical juncture in this work. This is because faculty involved in general education reform have delineated a set of imperatives about why a new general education is needed and what it must look like.

One impetus for our continued work concerns why we need to reform general education at all. York College is awakening and responding to the **changing world**. This may be a cliché but this world - fraught with threat and uncertainty - holds a promise of numerous rewards for those who are capable of understanding and navigating this new environment. It is our mission, as an education institution to become attuned to the challenges of the new world. We need to reinvent ourselves for the sake of our students and our community.

A new general education at York College is a key component of the reform. Most CUNYs have redesigned their general education curriculums and are at various stages of implementation. While we are late comers to this process, we are rapidly catching up: we are **on the map**. Our work in reforming general education stands on the shoulders of scholars and innovators from York prior to fall 2008, as well as on the shoulders of the General Education Reform Task Force and Faculty Inquiry Groups who are in the process of developing a unique Signature General Education Curriculum at York College.

We are happy to report to you that the first leg of the voyage has been completed and that we've reached an important milestone. The tireless labor of those involved in the reform has yielded voluminous reports in many areas of inquiry about what general education is and should be at York. These reports point to **nine imperatives** shaping the development of the new general education curriculum. We would like to share these imperatives with you. They are:

1. The new general education curriculum should promote **literacies**. These literacies can be broadly defined as encompassing three areas – analytical, communication, and institutional. Analytical literacies include critical thinking, quantitative literacy, research literacy, and information literacy. Communication literacies include reading and writing literacy, oral communication, and use of communication technologies. Institutional literacy includes student acculturation to the College community and to college life et-large.
2. In the new general education, promotion of these literacies would require **interdisciplinary and across-the-curriculum strategies, pedagogies, and assessment**. Thus, the new curriculum must move beyond a silo, distribution model of education.
3. The new general education curriculum should utilize **signature pedagogies** that increase students' active, experiential, cooperative learning. This, the new curriculum must include active learning pedagogies developed and implemented by faculty from every department and program so that active, collaborative teaching and learning is truly a college-wide endeavor.

4. The new general education curriculum should promote **breadth and depth in the major**. Thus, the new curriculum must provide the necessary supports so that students are able to link arts and sciences courses learning to learning that takes place in their majors and programs.
5. The new general education curriculum should **reduce the number of credits required for general education**, and not be unwieldy for professional program students. The new curriculum must work both for students pursuing liberal arts and sciences majors and for students entering professional programs.
6. The new general education curriculum should reflect the **central role of the arts and humanities**, and thus ensure that arts and humanities are not disproportionately decreased.
7. The new general education curriculum should **reflect the Six General Education Principles**. The new curriculum must operationalize these six principles - Ethical, Global, Technological, Collaborative, Experiential, and Integrative - at every turn.
8. The new general education curriculum must **resolve resource issues**. Thus, the new curriculum must secure adequate staffing, appropriate class size, student interaction with fulltime faculty, faculty training for pedagogical and interdisciplinary approaches, oversight of general education et-large, and transfer articulation.
9. The new general education **reform process must foster collegiality** - including campus buy-in from faculty across all departments and programs and student involvement. Collegiality has been a cornerstone of the process so far. The Task Force includes faculty from a diverse cross section of rank, discipline and experience as well as York students - including Stephan Kishore standing before you today. In addition, FIG leaders cast a wide net to form their FIGs and many faculty volunteered after the fall 2008 convocation while others sadly were invited to participate but declined.

Our next challenge in general education reform is to operationalize these nine imperatives into a **viable curriculum**, one that is innovative and effective. Many ideas are on the table. It is too early at this stage to talk about specifics, as the FIGs are being reconfigured and charged with a new set of tasks. What is ahead is more hard work by the FIGs and rest of the college community on the model of the curriculum design.

General education reform is not a product but a **continuing process** of assessment, re-assessment, and ongoing innovation in the service of the College, students, and the wider community. The architecture of the new General Education at York should finally take shape late in the fall of 2009 when the Task Force will submit its final recommendations. Spring 2010 is the time of fruition - when the real work of deciding how to implement the new general education curriculum will begin.

We invite you to come on board as FIG members or Gen Ed activists - join in the conversation, offer ideas, support, and expertise. Be **agents of change** in general education reform. Help your faculty colleagues lead and make the new general education at York College happen.