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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

ACADEMIC SENATE, MERCED DIVISION
GENERAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED
5200 NORTH LAKE ROAD
MERCED, CA 95343
(209) 228-7930; fax (209) 228-7955

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**To: Deans Council
Undergraduate Council
Participants in 2014 and 2015 GE Retreats**

From: General Education Subcommittee (GESC)

During 2015-16, the General Education Subcommittee has developed GE program learning outcomes and a draft GE program proposal. Our campus goal is a comprehensive campus GE program that will begin in 2017 for first year students, and in fall 2018 for transfer students.

We are sending you the current version of the GE program proposal, along with the Hallmarks of Undergraduate Education (reviewed in Spring 2015) and the draft GE PLOs. As a reminder, our GE program review emphasized developing:

- A broadly inclusive GE program that is reflective of our campus context;
- Structures for allocating appropriate resources and incentives to engage Senate faculty in the oversight and delivery of GE;
- Significant reconsideration of content and delivery for a new GE framework.

While we will be sharing the curriculum with the wider community at the end of the summer, at this point we are requesting feedback on some basic questions from people who have been involved in thinking about GE, or will be involved in its implementation.

Our two main questions are:

1. Is the alignment of the Hallmarks, PLOs, and GE Curriculum visible? Have we missed anything?
2. Is there anything in the curriculum that is not clear?

We know that resources will be an important consideration, but this preliminary review is about the substance of this program. Additional opportunities (online and in-person) to provide comments will be provided through September.

For this stage of review, please send responses to the Senate Office (senateoffice@ucmerced.edu) by 15 July 2016. We look forward to your input and appreciate your ongoing engagement with GE program revision and development.

General Education at UC Merced: A Campus Program Proposal

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to offer and describe a proposal for a new General Education program for UC Merced. The General Education Subcommittee of Undergraduate Council (GESC) developed the proposal with the involvement of faculty and staff members across campus, including at General Education retreats in 2014 and 2015, as well as with the guidance of the academic program review of GE in 2014-2015.

The GESC will provide many opportunities for campus community members to discuss this proposal in the coming months. The final version of the proposed GE program will be presented for comments from Senate entities and UGC approval in Fall 2016. We begin that process with this draft document. A brief synopsis of the proposed GE program is followed by an overview of the background and context for the process by which the proposal has been developed. The document concludes with a detailed description of the proposed GE program.

Executive Summary

In light of our identity as a research university, curiosity and inquiry, and different disciplinary approaches to them, are at the heart of our proposed General Education (GE) program. This program is developed in a sequence of integrative GE learning experiences that respond to the first GE Program Learning Outcome (PLO): that students take an inquiry-oriented approach to the world.

Our proposed GE program begins with a **first-year** Spark seminar, which explores the nature of inquiry by focusing on a single topic; in the **second year**, as part of their “jumpstart” meeting with their advisor, students will propose a plan for meeting their educational goals; in the **third year**, students will take an upper division “Crossroads” course, a team-taught course that brings the perspectives of two disciplines to bear on a particular topic, and which will be cross-listed in the relevant programs; and in the **final year**, students have a culminating integrative experience in their major.

The common courses in the first and third years provide a foundation for integrative work across the curriculum and for more focused study in the major. The Spark seminar is particularly important for our student population, as it provides both an intellectual focus and an introduction to the work and resources of a research university. In addition, such intellectually rigorous small classes, when properly designed and implemented, have been shown to have a significant positive impact on student success. The Crossroads course allows students to see how two different disciplines approach a shared issue or problem, from evidence to evaluation; it will also provide a shared experience for transfer students. Finally, the culminating experience (which may include, but is not limited to, capstone class, senior seminar,

service learning project, portfolio, thesis) in the major provides an opportunity to integrate their studies in GE and in the major.

These shared courses are supplemented by courses that introduce students to major **Approaches** to knowledge, and a range of intellectual **Experiences** which allow students to engage with a range of topics and analytical methods.

Background

General Education is a required element of the UC Merced undergraduate curriculum that defines the knowledge and skills students need to be successful in college and as they pursue professional, academic, and personal goals after college.

The development of the proposed GE program was shaped both by the Hallmarks of the Baccalaureate Degree at UC Merced (attached with this email), and by GE's mission:

UC Merced's General Education program engages students with the values, practices and contributions of a research university to provide a framework for integrative learning. We do so in the context of the culturally and economically diverse Central Valley. In tandem with the major and the co-curriculum, General Education supports student development of the Hallmarks of the Baccalaureate degree. It nurtures the spirit of critical inquiry, building students' knowledge of various fields, cultures, and perspectives. General Education fosters collaboration, communication, and ethical action. It empowers students to share their learning and skills to address the local and global challenges of an interconnected, changing world.

Therefore, the GE program proposed here by the General Education Subcommittee of Undergraduate Council (GESC) is shaped by our understanding of our distinctive institutional context as a small research university in the Central Valley with a diverse student body and a small faculty. That understanding – and the goals reflected in the Hallmarks of the Baccalaureate Degree at UC Merced – were shaped by many faculty and staff members in two retreats, held in 2014 and 2015.

The proposed program was also informed by the GE Program Review from 2015.

As a result of that review, the GESC was asked to create a comprehensive GE program that

1. Includes common academic experiences across all four undergraduate years,
2. Is taught primarily by Senate faculty,
3. Is distinctive to UC Merced and our student body,
4. Is sustainable in terms of UC Merced's financial and human resources, and
5. Includes and integrates curricular and co-curricular experiences.

Furthermore, the GESC sought to ensure that

1. The program could be completed in four years, and

2. The program could be integrated with requirements of all of our undergraduate majors

The proposed GE program is designed to extend over four years, and there is some point of student contact with GE in every year. To keep track of their learning, students will compile an e-portfolio. The purpose of the e-portfolio (which is part of CatCourses) is to give students a chance to review the development of their education. Every course that meets a GE requirement will have an assignment related to that requirement that will be uploaded into the student's e-portfolio on Catcourses; students may add other projects as they wish. That portfolio will provide the basis for reflection on learning to be integrated into the culminating experience in the major; it will also be used to help students prepare for life after graduation. Portfolio development and assessment will be coordinated by the Office of Undergraduate Education in collaboration with the GESC and faculty members in the majors, as well as the Center for Career and Professional Advancement.

While the proposed program has not been defined by resources, we are aware of the resource constraints on the campus. To ensure the sustainability of the program, courses other than the Spark seminar can be met either by existing courses (with slightly modified Course Request Forms (CRFs) and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), or by new courses that will meet major requirements. Crossroads courses might require additional resources for discussion sections. The GESC includes a work group focused on resources, which has assessed the resources that are used for our current GE program, as well as the human and financial resources needed for the proposed GE program.

The Program

A. Course Requirements

I. Lower Division Common Requirements (8-16 credits)

A. Spark Seminar (4 units)

The Spark seminar has been designed in response to research that demonstrates that rigorous small first-year seminars led by faculty passionate about the topic on which the course is focused have a significant positive impact on student retention.

1. The Spark seminars are topical first-year courses focused on themes of contemporary importance (e.g., topics and themes from the Strategic Academic Focusing (SAF) Pillars, Global Grand Challenges, Millennium Sustainability Goals, NEH Initiatives) that can be viewed from multiple perspectives. The themes for each year's Spark seminars will be chosen by the GESC, with extensive input from the campus community.
2. In addition to focusing on a contemporary question or problem, Spark seminars introduce students to research questions and life at a research university. Therefore, the seminars will include:

- a. Projects engaging at least two different methods of communication.
- b. Defining a research question and understanding research processes, as well as doing research
- c. Identification of multiple campus and community resources related to the topic discussed in the seminar.
- d. Consideration of ethical, local, and global issues related to the topic.

3. For each theme there will be monthly lectures by UCM faculty and other scholars and/or artists.
4. Sparks seminars will be taught by Senate faculty and Unit 18 lecturers, perhaps with the assistance of advanced graduate students and post-docs.
5. At least 20% of the Spark seminars in any given year will be taught by faculty associated with each school, and 20% by Senate faculty; no more than 20% should be taught by faculty from any one program
6. Enrollment will be capped at 20 students in each seminar.
7. Spark seminars may be taken concurrent with either WRI 1 or WRI 10
 - GE PLOs: 1,2, 3

- B. Written Communication (4 units) (University Requirement)
Writing 10 (perhaps with a link to a Common Read)
 - GE PLO: 3

- C. Quantitative Reasoning (University Requirement)
 - GE PLO 2

D. Language (0 to 8 units)

The study of language exposes students to different ways of structuring thought. Engagement with multiple languages introduces students to a range of ways to structure and express thought.

- GE PLOs 3, 4:

The Language requirement can be met by:

- Coursework: Successful completion of the second semester of a UCM foreign language class OR Successful completion of a computer coding course (CSE 20/21, ME 21) OR
- Campus based test: Passing the campus-administered Foreign Language test demonstrating proficiency equivalent of one year of college foreign language OR
- AP/IB Exams: Earning a score of 3, 4 or 5 on a College Board AP exam in a foreign language; earning a score of 5, 6 or 7 on a Higher Level IB exam in a foreign language

or literature; earning a score of 4 or 5 on the College Board AP Exam in Computer Science A OR

- High School Coursework: Completing the third year of one language in high school with a course GPA of at least C

II. Upper Division Common Requirements

A. Crossroads course (4 credits)

The Crossroads course is an upper division, team-taught course, with enrollments of 90-120 students. Like the Spark seminar, the Crossroads course will focus on a specific topic, but it will be taught by faculty members from two disciplines; it therefore emphasizes different, yet complementary, disciplinary approaches, methods, and assumptions, and provides opportunity for research and analysis. Crossroads also will provide an entry point for transfer students into GE at UC Merced. Given the size of the Crossroad course enrollments, they also will include TA-led discussion sections.

Crossroads will be cross listed in two (or, perhaps, three) programs, and serve students for either GE or major elective requirements (but not both).

- GE PLOs: 1, 2, 3, 4 (others as appropriate)

B. Communication in the Discipline

An upper division writing course, or writing intensive course in the major, focused on how to write for a particular field.

- GE PLO: 3

C. Integrative Culminating Experience (4 units within major)

The Integrative Culminating requirement may be fulfilled through traditional capstone courses, senior or advanced seminars, service-learning courses, portfolios, or other methods majors choose to integrate learning in the program.

Regardless of the specific format, the Integrative Culminating Experience should have strong components of:

- Communication, including at least two different methods
- Research
- Engagement with others (team-building components, collaborative work, student leadership of discussion, etc.)

- GE PLOs: 1-5

III. Approaches to Knowledge (6 Courses, 22-24 credits)

Courses in this area introduce students to the different ways disciplines (and broad branches of knowledge) ask questions and think about the world. All courses that meet this requirement will (a)

address methodological, theoretical, or epistemological issues relevant to the subject and (b) include a project that can be uploaded to the student's e-portfolio.

All students will take two courses in each of the following three areas. Note: Students may take no more than one course from any academic program.

1. Science: Courses which take a scientific approach to the study of the world.
2. Social Science: Courses which take a social scientific approach to the study of individuals and societies.
3. Arts and Humanities: Courses which take artistic and/or humanistic approaches to understanding the self, societies, and cultural products
 - GE PLOs: 1, 2

B. Experiences and Activities

I. Intellectual Experiences

In addition to the broad divisions of knowledge represented by **Approaches** courses, there are general intellectual outcomes UCM students are expected to have as part of the Hallmarks of the UC Merced Baccalaureate Degree. The intellectual knowledge and tools leading to these outcomes are made explicit in the proposed GE program to ensure they are part of all students' curricular and co-curricular experiences. These **Experiences** can be fulfilled in courses, including **Approaches** courses Sparks seminars, Crossroads courses, courses in the major. To emphasize the ways GE is part of the entire curriculum, at least three of courses used to fulfill Intellectual Experiences must be at the upper division. In addition, the Experiences can be fulfilled in the co-curriculum.

These intellectual experiences are:

1. **Literary and Textual Analysis**
Students learn how language creates meaning and ambiguity.
 - GE PLOs: 2, 3
2. **Media and Visual Analysis**
Students explore how media and images create, shape, and express meaning.
 - GE PLOs: 2, 3
3. **Quantitative and Numerical Analysis**
Students evaluate data and develop quantitative reasoning skills.
 - GE PLOs: 2, 3
4. **Societies and Cultures of the Past**
Students explore the interactions between multiple dimensions of past societies.
 - GE PLO: 4

5. Diversity and Identity

Students consider how multiple kinds of difference – ethnic, racial, gender, and sexual – impact individuals and societies in the past and present.

- GE PLOs: 4, 5

6. Global Awareness

Students learn about environments, cultures, and issues in nations and regions outside the US.

This experience may be met by courses about other parts of the world (including intermediate or advanced language study that includes culture), or by study abroad.

- GE PLOs: 4, 5

7. Sustainability

Students explore the ways in which humans affect and are affected by the natural world.

- GE PLOs: 4, 5

8. Practical and Applied Knowledge

Students carry out field work, laboratory experimentation, or artistic practice.

- GE PLO: 2

9. Ethics

Students investigate the ethical implications of research, policy, or behavior. *This requirement can be met by a methods course in the major that makes research ethics a central theme.*

- GE PLOs: 1, 5

10. Leadership, Community, and Engaging the World

Students take their work at UC Merced off the campus in one of multiple ways: they may engage in at least one of a range of experiences ranging from study abroad, UCDC, UC Sacramento, leadership in campus organization, community engaged research or service, or off-campus internships.

- GE PLO: 5

- To ensure breadth and depth, a student cannot use any one course to “count” as more than one GE Intellectual Experiences requirement. For example, a study abroad experience may fulfill the “Global Awareness” requirement or the “Leadership, Community, and Engaging the World” requirement, but not both.
- Transfer students, like all UCM students, will be required to meet three Experiences at the upper division level.
- For course review and approvals, an individual course may address no more than two of intellectual experiences. The processes of recording and keeping

track of students' fulfillment of the Intellectual Experiences requirement will include the Degree Audit System, as well as the E-Portfolio described in the next section.

II. Activity: E-Portfolio

In UCM's proposed GE program, students will maintain an electronic GE portfolio in all related courses, beginning in the Spark seminar. The portfolio will reflect students' best work based on signature assignments in the GE program (identified in course syllabi); when students submit work to their portfolio, they will be prompted to enter a brief reflection on their learning experience. Those reflections, and the work itself, will be reviewed as part of the JumpStart advising meeting for sophomores. They will be used with the Center for Career and Professional Advancement to help students plan life post-graduation, and majors may use them as part of a culminating experience. Portfolio development and assessment will be coordinated by the Office of Undergraduate Education in collaboration with the GESC and faculty members in the majors.

- GE PLO: 1

GE PROGRAM SUMMARY

Required Courses	
A. Lower Division Common Requirements 1. Spark Seminar 2. Writing 10 3. Quantitative Reasoning 4. Language	12-20 credits 4 4 4 0-8
B. Upper Division Common Requirements 1. Crossroads Course 2. Writing in the Discipline 3. Culminating experience in the major	12 credits 4 4 4
C. Approaches to Knowledge 1. Science 1 2. Science 2 3. Social Science 1 4. Social Science 2 5. Arts and Humanities 1 6. Arts and Humanities 2	24 Credits 4 4 4 4 4 4
Experiences and Activities	
A. Intellectual Experiences 1. Literary and Textual Analysis 2. Media and Visual Analysis 3. Numerical and Quantitative Analysis 4. Societies and Cultures of the Past 5. Diversity and Identity 6. Global Awareness 7. Sustainability 8. Practical and Applied Knowledge 9. Ethics 10. Leadership, Community, and Engaging the World	[10-12 upper division cr.]
B. E-Portfolio	

Distinctive Institutional Context:

A Small Research University

An ethos of discovery, creativity, and rigorous questioning of extant knowledge permeates all aspects of UC Merced. The skills, knowledge and attitudes of a researcher are synonymous with attributes essential for post-graduate success.

In Merced, California

Merced is at a crossroads – culturally, socioeconomically, environmentally, geographically, historically -- for addressing problems of local, regional, and global significance.

With An Undergraduate Student Body Unique in the UC System

UCM undergraduates are predominantly first generation students from groups under-represented in higher education (e.g., race, ethnicity, family income).

These shape the following

Hallmarks of Baccalaureate Degrees at UC Merced

1. *Depth and breadth in academic and intellectual preparation, consistent with the values of a research university, such that UC Merced graduates*
 - a. Demonstrate a strong disciplinary foundation
 - b. Engage in interdisciplinary thinking which could include appreciating different approaches to problem solving, informed by an understanding of humanities, arts, STEM, social sciences
 - c. Bring a critical, evaluative lens to problems, questions, situations
 - d. Employ effective problem-solving skills in multiple settings
 - e. Evaluate facts, knowledge and information, applying the varied aspects of information literacy
 - f. Know what they know, as well as *how* they know it, and monitor and guide their own learning
 - g. Describe the origins of knowledge, informed by cultural and disciplinary epistemological and ontological assumptions
 - h. Demonstrate an inquiry-oriented approach to the world; possess curiosity, employ inquiry, and take appropriate and creative action in response to ambiguity
2. *Cultural awareness, sensitivity, and responsiveness, such that UC Merced graduates*
 - a. Respect and value diversity
 - b. Seek and recognize new cultures; join a new community anticipating and engaging in potential cultural differences or intersections.
3. *Community engagement and citizenship -- local and global--, such that UC Merced graduates*
 - a. Understand what it means to be a member of a community, including an academic community
 - b. Contribute to the communities of which they are members
 - c. Possess a sense of place, and the ability to determine own place within local community and global context, and affect own community through giving back
 - d. Act ethically, including in the realm of environmental stewardship and sustainability
 - e. Are responsive to the needs of society – through application of knowledge and research to address problems, challenges, and opportunities
4. *Interpersonal skills necessary to the outcomes identified above, as well as to lead productive lives after graduation, such that UC Merced graduates*
 - a. Are proficient in collaboration and teamwork
 - b. Possess strong communication skills, oral, written, and visual, academic and professional
 - c. Are leaders in their professional and civic lives
 - d. Are ethically aware and proficient in ethical reasoning
5. *Self-awareness and intrapersonal skills, such that UC Merced graduates*

- a. Demonstrate initiative, including an entrepreneurial, innovative, pioneering spirit
- b. Respond with resiliency to obstacles and challenges, and learn from failure
- c. Assume responsibility for their own education and develop the skills and attitudes of life-long learners

*The draft of this document was created by participants in the UCM GE Retreat in May, 2014. The draft was distributed to faculty and staff groups in AY 2014-2015 for discussion and suggestions; the revised draft was reviewed by the Academic Senate in 2015.

DRAFT

General Education at UC Merced

Mission

UC Merced's General Education program engages students with the values, practices and contributions of a research university which provides a framework for integrative learning. We do so in the context of the culturally and economically diverse Central Valley. In tandem with the major and the co-curriculum, General Education supports student development of the Hallmarks of the Baccalaureate degree. It nurtures the spirit of critical inquiry, building students' knowledge of various fields, cultures, and perspectives. General education fosters collaboration, communication, and ethical action. It empowers students to share their learning and skills to address the local and global challenges of an interconnected, changing world.

Program Learning Outcomes

1. *Life at the Research University: Asking Questions*

UC Merced graduates take an inquiry-oriented approach to the world that reflects engagement with the mission and values of our research university.

- They can articulate the benefits of attending a research university for their development as scholars, citizens, life-long learners
- They generate questions, identify problems, and formulate answers by applying appropriate theoretical, evidentiary, analytical and ethical frameworks from multiple intellectual perspectives
- They demonstrate intellectual curiosity and an understanding of the nature of knowledge and of themselves as learners
- They identify and act on their own values and talents through self-reflection
- They are at ease with the ambiguity that is inherent in the process of discovery.

2. *Reasoning: Thinking Critically*

UC Merced graduates are equipped with multiple tools of analysis to support accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion

- They use analytical tools from scientific, social scientific, and humanistic disciplines
- They are able to identify and evaluate sources of information
- They identify, interpret and evaluate multiple kinds of data, including texts, media, observations, and experimental results.

3. *Communication: Explaining and Persuading*

UC Merced graduates communicate in a variety of ways to diverse audiences

- They use written, visual, oral and numerical modes of communication to explore and convey ideas
- They can adjust their communications depending on occasion, purpose and audience.
- They can work independently and collaboratively.

4. *Cultural and Global awareness: Engaging with differences*

UC Merced graduates see themselves in relation to local and global cultures and systems of power, past and present.

- They engage with multiple belief systems, social structures, and ways of thinking through attention to societies, languages and cultures of the past and the present
- They can identify the ways in which cultural, political, economic, technological, and environmental dimensions of society interact
- They can place their own experiences in relevant analytical frameworks through attention to the relationships of diverse cultures to each other
- They gain emotional maturity and resilience by understanding themselves in the world

5. *Citizenship: Contributing to the Public Good*

UC Merced graduates are engaged with their communities for the benefit of society

- They are engaged citizens, having contributed to the building of academic and co-curricular communities at UC Merced
- They understand and work in diverse communities
- They engage with the ethical dimensions of their various roles
- They can articulate and act on their responsibilities to the multiple communities in which they participate.