

In April of 1985 Vice President Haynes, after extensive discussion with the General Education Committee of the Academic Council, appointed a Task Force on General Education and charged it with determining the knowledge and skills that all Western Kentucky University students should develop prior to graduation and with devising the best possible program for insuring that our students receive such a true general education.

After inviting faculty suggestions, reading the recent national reports on general education, and studying several "model programs" across the country, the members of the Task Force began regular discussions (on Friday afternoons) and started constructing a statement of goals for general education. An early draft of this document was mailed to the entire faculty on December 13, 1985, and comments and suggestions were again invited. The document was also presented to Academic Council in February of 1986, and questions and comments were requested. After substantial response from faculty, the goals statement was revised.

The Task Force next discussed various combinations of courses designed to realize the goals of general education. After extensive and detailed discussion of such proposed courses, we sent a preliminary version of our working document to the Vice President in May 1987, with a request that the Council of Deans respond to the general direction that the Task Force had taken. The Deans chose to consult individual departments before responding and thus copies of this preliminary working document were distributed to faculty throughout the campus, unaccompanied by the goals and rationale statements.

After careful consideration of the responses provided by the deans, department heads, and individual faculty members to this early version, the Task Force went through the entire document and made several additional changes. The document is the result of compromise, consensus, and a lot of hard work. We believe that it is now ready for consideration by the Vice President and the Academic Council.

GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS STATEMENT

Western Kentucky University through its general education program provides students a broad academic preparation in basic areas of human knowledge and endeavor in order to orient them to the intellectual, social, and natural world. The program is designed to enable students to acquire certain fundamental knowledge, to improve basic communication and thinking skills, to develop intellectual curiosity, to strive for syntheses of knowledge and understanding, and to make informed decisions. Such a program will nurture in our students values such as independence, tolerance, responsible citizenship and an appreciation for the art and quality of living, as well as for the means of living.

We hope to foster in our students the development of:

1. the capacity for critical thought, the ability to acquire and organize large amounts of knowledge, and proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking.
2. the ability to understand and apply mathematical concepts.
3. a historical perspective and an understanding of connections between past and present.
4. an understanding of the scientific method and a knowledge of natural science.
5. the capacity for objectivity and an appreciation for values which govern moral and ethical choices.
6. an informed acquaintance with the major forms of literary and artistic achievement and an ability to make aesthetic judgments.
7. an appreciation for the complexity and diversity of the world's cultures.
8. an understanding of the interdependence between humans and the Earth.
9. an understanding of humans as social beings.

RATIONALE

In order to foster in our students the development of the capacity for critical thought, the ability to acquire and organize large amounts of knowledge, and proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking, the Task Force recommends the entire general education package of courses. To develop the ability to understand and apply mathematical concepts we recommend the courses listed in category IA, the mathematical reasoning section of basic skills. To nurture in our students a historical perspective and understanding of the connections between past and present, we recommend the western civilization courses in category II.

The Task Force recommends that our students develop an understanding of the scientific method and a knowledge of natural science through the courses included in category V. To develop the capacity for objectivity and an appreciation for values which govern moral and ethical choices, we recommend specifically the logical thinking course in category IV and, in general, the entire general education package. To give our students an informed acquaintance with the major forms of literary and artistic achievement and an ability to make aesthetic judgments, we recommend the courses in categories III and VIII.

For developing in our students an appreciation for the complexity and diversity of the world's cultures, the task force recommends the foreign language and world's cultures courses in category VII. To foster in our students an understanding both of the interdependence between humans and the Earth and of humans as social beings, we recommend the courses in category VI.

The Task Force also believes that the limited number of choices in our general education recommendations ensures a common experience and significantly contributes to the integrity and strength of the program. We also recommend that the Vice President for Academic Affairs appoint a small Implementation and Oversight Committee to monitor the implementation of the new program, approve courses developed to meet its specifications, and suggest assessment mechanisms.

GENERAL EDUCATION DOCUMENT

I. Basic Skills:

- A. Mathematical Reasoning Three hours. Taken during the freshman/sophomore years.

Any of the following courses will satisfy the mathematical reasoning requirement: Math 109, Math 116, Math 118, Math 119, Math 120, Math 126.

The current Math 109 will be upgraded as follows:

Math 109. General Mathematics

Prerequisite: High School Algebra II, or successful completion of an algebra competency exam, or Math 100.

Topics may include logic, probability, systems of linear equations and linear inequalities, linear programming, and introduction to statistics.

- B. Writing I. Three hours; taken during freshman year.

A course in effective college-level writing. Special emphasis on a variety of writing situations and effective ways of developing, organizing, revising, and editing. Also introduces research skills.

- C. Writing II. Three hours; taken during junior year.

An interdisciplinary writing course. Students will read and write about challenging essays in a number of fields. Each student will produce a substantial research project.

- D. Introduction to Library Research. One hour; taken during freshman year.

An introduction to library resources and services and to library research. Topics covered in this course will include basic information on the organization of the WKU libraries; general reference tools; specialized library departments and services; research strategies and basic courses in the disciplines; and information on how to do a research paper.

Departmental competency exams may be used to receive credit for the above courses.

- II. History of Western Civilization. Six hours in two three-hour courses. Taken during freshman/sophomore

years.

These courses should include the religion, culture, outlook, and ideas of each historical period as well as the historical flow of events.

III. Landmarks of Literature. Three hours. Taken during sophomore year.

This course will cover fiction, poetry, and drama of demonstrable literary and cultural value in the western literary tradition. The purpose of the course will be to provide students a critical understanding and appreciation of the works through study of their literary techniques and their enduring themes. Historical background of individual works will be discussed as appropriate. The course will include works from major cultural epochs and from various countries, although emphasis will be given to the literature of England and America.

IV. Analysis and Application of Logical Thinking. Three hours. Taken after completion of I.A. (Mathematical Reasoning) and I.B. (Writing I).

A careful analysis and application of the ways in which conclusions are to be established and the grounds on which the merits of an assertion depend.

V. Physical and/or natural sciences. Two courses (four hours each). Taken during freshman/sophomore years.

Students will select introductory courses from two of the following disciplines: Physics, Biology, Earth Science, and Chemistry. A single introductory overview course with a laboratory component will be offered in each discipline. Students may substitute respective parallel introductory courses required in their major or minor programs for approval as general education courses in this category.

VI. Social Sciences. Two three-hour courses. Taken during freshman/sophomore years.

Each social science department will develop an introductory overview course which will serve as its single general education course. A department with responsibility for more than one social science will develop one course for each science. We recommend basic courses in Anthropology, Economics, Government, Human Geography, Psychology, and Sociology. Students will be required to select courses in two different fields.

VII. Foreign Languages and World Cultures. Six hours, in any combination of courses from A. and B. below. Taken during freshman/sophomore years.

A. Foreign Languages.

Students for whom English is a second language may satisfy three hours of this requirement by demonstrating competency in English. Only three semester hours in Category VII. may be satisfied by a competency examination in English or another language.

B. World Cultures.

This section includes courses either interdisciplinary or discipline-based which introduce a contemporary culture outside the United States, Canada and Western Europe. Courses in this section must be broad and should include an introduction to subjects such as the history, geography, literature, politics, economics, visual arts, religion, music, and domestic arts of the cultures. In addition to existing or new discipline-based courses in this area, the Task Force would particularly welcome the development of interdisciplinary courses focused on the cultures of Black Africa, East Asia, South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, the Soviet Union, Latin America or comparative world regions. Courses proposed for credit in this section would require specific approval by a general education review committee.

VIII. Fine Arts. Two three-hour courses taken during the freshman/sophomore years.

Each department responsible for a fine arts area--Art, Music, and Theatre and Dance--will develop a single introductory overview course which will serve as its general education course. The courses will provide a critical introduction to the appropriate fine art and will give a historical overview of significant artistic developments and movements associated with that art.

Writing, library research, and oral presentations should be emphasized in all general education classes, although these will receive differing emphases in the particular courses.