

Preliminary Report

Core Curriculum Action Team December 23, 2021

Context

This is an internal 2030 initiative document meant to inform the Provost on the progress and pending recommendations of the Core Curriculum Action Team (CCAT). After meeting with the Provost in early 2022, the document would be updated for broad distribution as CCAT moves to its next steps in implementation in Spring 2022.

Core Curriculum and General Education

General education is the foundational component of a college experience and provides the baseline critical thinking, communication skills, and understanding of the human environment that define a college-educated citizen. General education also expands student's life-planning in college and provides skills necessary to succeed not only in courses related to their major but also in their career, society, and culture. A well-designed general education program can act as a recruiting tool and more importantly, help create a meaningful and efficient pathway to degrees and careers for our students.

Executive Summary

1. Preliminary Recommendations

1. Model #2: Areas of Inquiry

- a. CCAT recommends an Areas of Inquiry model. Below is an example construct with six Areas of Inquiry. Students would take one course in each for a total of at least 18 student credit hours, satisfying distribution and cultural diversity requirements. This is down from 21 credit hours in current GER.
 1. The Natural World (must include laboratory science component).
 - Science, Engineering, Technology, and Environment
 2. Shared Human Experiences
 - Society, Humanistic Perspectives, Social Justice, and Ethics
 3. Creativity and Innovation
 - Arts, Design, and Communications
 4. Global Perspectives and Challenges
 - Sustainability, Globalization, Politics & Economies, and Civics
 5. Cultural Diversity
 - Ethnic Studies in America
 6. Health and Wellness
 - Physical, Social, and Psychological aspects of positive health.
- b. Consider adding a 1-unit University Experience course for new freshman and transfer students. It could be offered by student services staff and introduce students to university student services and offer opportunities to discuss majors and/or career paths.

- c. Rationale: The Action Team saw considerable merit in each of the three models and there was interest in mixing some of the attributes between the models. An identified strength of Model #2 is the clear connection between GER and broad concepts that are relevant to students rather than relying on the disciplinary divisions as the grouping (Model #1). The model also better recognizes interdisciplinarity and the areas of inquiry could contain classes from multiple traditional academic divisions. In addition, many current GER courses could align with the Areas of Inquiry and could be included if they met other criteria in the rubric, thereby creating straightforward pathways to implementation with less lead time than Model #3, which would require more curriculum development.

2. Rubric and process for Inclusion in GER

- a. Develop specific guidelines to address rubric goals.
 - i. Define acceptable assessment mechanisms.
 - ii. Define parameters for setting the size attribute for included courses. This attribute would be used as a management tool for determining the optimal number of GER sections needed in each Area of Inquiry.
 - iii. Define practical boundaries for course inclusion in each of the Areas of Inquiry.
- b. Develop procedure for applying for and in remaining in GER Areas of Inquiry.
 - i. Set target number of courses in each Area of Inquiry.
 - ii. Develop prioritization scheme for inclusion in Areas of Inquiry.
 - iii. Timely assessment and hitting enrollment goals would be factors in continued inclusion in the GER program.
 - iv. Reapplication required on a multi-year cycle for all Area of Inquiry courses.

3. Management Model

- a. An office in Academic Affairs would be developed to support APCC in managing the ongoing aspects of the General Education program. This office would also provide guidance to schools and colleges on the GER courses offered in their units.
 - i. Assist APCC in vetting proposed GER courses for alignment with the GER rubric.
 - ii. Coordinate with APCC on the selection of courses to be included in each Area of Inquiry.
 - iii. Monitor enrollment in GER courses and provide guidance to schools and colleges on appropriate numbers of GER sections.
 - iv. Coordinate the collection of assessment data from GER courses.
- b. The management unit will work with BFS to assess the cost/revenue balance for the GER courses in each of the schools and colleges. This information can be used as part of a redeveloped New Budget Model or as a guide to decisions on subvention funding. This function aimed at buffering impacts of GER revision on school and college cost balance.

2. **Benefits of Proposed Revision**

- 1. Framework aligns with student interests - value of GER can be articulated through the focus on broad concepts that are relevant to learning goals.
- 2. Highly structured GER program, with fewer courses but more regular offerings, simplifies class scheduling for students and advisors.

3. The Areas of Inquiry align tightly with UW System Learning Goals.
4. Management guidelines and rubric designed to eliminate barriers to transfer to and within UWM.
5. Areas of Inquiry can build from current investments in the GER program.
6. Departments, faculty, and instructors can focus their labor on narrower set of GER courses with high impact.
7. Management model and rubric create straightforward assessment of course array in GER program.
8. Model does not favor any specific unit at UWM.
9. Management plan addresses financial implications in potential changes in credit hour distribution between schools and colleges that might occur during implementation.

3. Next Steps

1. Meet with Provost to discuss and refine preliminary recommendations.
2. Assess the instructional impact on units by modeling potential outcome with existing courses.
3. Work with BFS to assess and address any new budget model impacts of the GER model.
4. Seek revised feedback on refined model including Grouping Model, Rubric, and Management Model from multiple stakeholder groups (those consulted in Fall 2021).
5. Refine model to address feedback.
6. Write governance documents to formally propose GER revision.

Background and Process to Preliminary Recommendations

1. Core Curriculum Action Team

The Core Curriculum Action Team was charged with continuing the implementation of the 2030 Initiative's recommendations focused on general education and the core curriculum more broadly. The following summarizes the charge found in the document from the 2030 Think Tank.

(<https://uwm.edu/chancellor/wp-content/uploads/sites/290/2020/06/Think-Tank-2030-Final-Report-20200528.pdf>).

One of the highest-priority changes the committee identified is to revamp GERs by updating and modernizing the core competencies and creating a more streamlined and cohesive list of eligible GER courses. In addition to the core competencies of a traditional liberal arts education, the committee recommends that local and global community literacy, technological literacy, team skills, leadership & initiative, and entrepreneurship be included in some fashion. UWM is well positioned to infuse these competencies into its core curriculum which will distinguish the UWM brand from our regional competitors. Specific GER recommendations include:

- No more than 150 total GER approved courses across campus.
- Explore an alternative revenue model where GER revenue is pooled in order to change the financial incentives.
- Implement a learning outcome-based GER model.

The team began meeting in Spring of 2021 and has met throughout Fall 2021. During this time, the team has also created multiple opportunities for feedback from various stakeholders (see below). The team was designed to contain a mix of previous members of 2030 groups and new contributors to the 2030 initiative. The team also has representation from advisors, faculty from multiple academic units, and a student.

- Simon Bronner, Dean of CGS
- Dave Clark*, VP of Student Success
- Scott Gronert*, Dean of L&S
- Brian Hinshaw, Director of Pathway Advising
- Nadine Kozak*, Associate Professor, SOIS
- Alejandra Lopez, Asst. Director, UG Student Services, Lubar
- Margaret Noodin, Associate Dean, Humanities, L&S
- John Reisel*, Professor, Mechanical Engineering, CEAS
- John Roberts, Professor, Sociology, L&S
- Gillian Rodger, Professor, Musicology & Ethnomusicology, Peck
- Ann Swartz, Professor, Kinesiology, CHS
- Shevaun Watson, Associate Professor, English, L&S
- Alyssa Fuller, Student, Peck

2. Stakeholder Meetings

September 30: APBC
October 6: Deans
October 8: APCC GER sub-committee
October 22: Associate Deans
October 27: Chairs
October 29: Campus Listening Session

November 7: Student Association
November 9: APCC
December 16: APBC

3. 2030 Phase 2 Statement on General Education Requirements (pp. 4-5 in the Implementation Team Report)

UWM's core curriculum has developed to include a complex, confusing maze of University, College, and Program requirements that can be difficult to navigate, impede student progress, and discourage academic collaboration. Some of these issues arise from history and others from financial considerations. These should not prevent us from aligning the core curriculum to common learning outcomes and removing the barriers students face. The importance of this effort is to (1) focus the General Education program explicitly on developing students' lifetime skills and abilities; and (2) break down barriers to students' progress and reduce time/credits to degree completion. This initiative will move our core curriculum to focus on our students.

4. Scope of Work

The charge of the CCAT was very broad, including the campus General Education Requirement as well as potential core curriculum elements that could lead to more shared learning experiences for students, particularly early in their academic careers at UWM. Currently, the General Education Requirements span the following areas.

1. Competencies: Oral and Written Communication (OWC-A and OWC-B) and Quantitative Learning (QL-A and QL-B) requirements. These requirements represent about 12 credit hours but can vary based on student's previous preparation.
2. Distribution: Credit hours in the four traditional divisional areas, Humanities (6 units), Social Science (6 units), Natural Science (6 units including a laboratory experience), and Arts (3 units).
3. Cultural Diversity: Specific UW System requirement aimed at American Ethnic Studies. It is a 3-credit requirement that is usually satisfied by a course also used in the Distribution Requirement.
4. World Language: The equivalent of 2 semesters of college work in a single language that is often satisfied by 2 years of high school work in a language.

In recent years, UWM has continued to refine the courses in its OWC and QL portfolios. For this reason, CCAT did not prioritize any changes to the Competencies in this revision of the core curriculum. The largest component of the UWM GER is in the Distribution requirement, both in terms of credit hours and number of unique courses in the GER portfolio. Universities that employ a distribution model in general education implement it in many different ways, but usually with a more intentional and managed approach than at UWM. The CCAT viewed this part of GER as the highest priority for revision. The Cultural Diversity requirement is a UW System mandate with a narrow definition, so it is not a target for revision, though infusing a broader set of courses into the Distribution requirement that touch on aspects of cross-cultural understanding and related topics is a goal. Given that most incoming students meet the World Language requirement with high school work, it was also not a priority for revision.

For Fall 2021, CCAT focused on building new models for or alternatives to the Distribution requirement and did not focus on the other three parts of the UWM GER. In addition, CCAT examined management models that could augment the governance provided by APCC over the GER.

5. Concerns with Current GER at UWM

Through the initial two phases of the 2030 initiative, many issues with GER were identified and were targeted for revision. The issues focused on student experience, progression to degree, cost and labor efficiency, and assessment capability. CCAT sought to develop models that would address these concerns. The key concerns are elaborated here.

Student Issues

1. No cohesive theme to GER courses
 - GER courses are presented in terms of divisional distributions with no clear connections to how the distribution addresses key learning outcomes or why the distribution is valuable.
2. Overwhelming number – some rarely offered
 - The number of courses in distribution is extremely large and many courses are rarely offered. Because the GER lists are so long, advisors indicated that they created their own lists of regularly offered courses that they viewed as useful to students.
3. Roadblocks created by schools/colleges effectively requiring or excluding GER courses
 - GER courses have been embedded in other campus requirements, limiting their portability. This includes L&S not allowing non-L&S GER courses to count in its breadth requirement, and departments incorporating specific GER courses into their major requirements. Each limitation potentially requires students to take additional GER when changing majors.

Institutional Issues

1. Not well connected to learning outcomes
 - The GER courses have evolved over time and the relevance of the overall portfolio of GER courses to the UW System learning outcomes has not been reviewed nor intentionally designed.
2. Driven too much by budget/revenue concerns rather than student outcomes
 - Supporting major and graduate programs has been viewed as a role for GER. Many stakeholders indicated that student credit revenue was the key concern in any changes to GER.
3. Grown too large to be adequately managed
 - With hundreds of potential GER courses being managed by dozens of units, management becomes a challenging issue both at the governance and decanal levels.
4. Assessment of unwieldy GER portfolio is impractical and threatens our HLC accreditation
 - With many courses managed by many units, it is very difficult to conduct adequate assessment in the current governance structure. Non-compliance can overwhelm governance structures.

- GER at UWM barely meets the minimum number of credits recommended for General Education of 30 credits.

6. CCAT Guiding Principles

As a starting point, CCAT set forward guiding principles that would (a) align with the goals of the 2030 Initiative, (b) address the concerns that had been identified, and (c) produce a student centric GER program.

1. Design GER in an intentional and coordinated way that focuses on student needs such that the value of GER can be clearly articulated to them.
 - GER represents about 25% of an undergraduate's required credit hours and should be carefully designed to provide critical skills that are valued by students.
2. Focus and structure GER around learning outcomes (LO) – link to UW System LO.
 - Although the current distribution aligns with some UW System LO, it is not designed around a learning outcome strategy.
3. GER should not be a barrier to changing majors, moving between Schools/Colleges, or transferring to UWM.
 - Many stakeholders viewed the lack of portability of current GER as a major problem for student progress if they moved from one major or school to another. This is a key limitation of current GER and must be addressed to offer a student centric GER program.
 - GER should be consistent across the campuses of UWM.
4. Recognize and utilize previous investments in personnel.
 - Much effort has been expended on current GER courses and many long-term personnel (faculty, indefinite status academic staff, and multi-year academic staff) are associated with the current GER. Given current budget and personnel limitations, these previous investments should be leveraged or repurposed as much as possible.
5. Address impact of GER reform on School and College revenue through central budgeting rather than through a forced distribution of GER courses across Schools and Colleges.
 - With highly constrained budgets, any changes in revenue could have major impacts on the financial situations of schools and colleges. Rather than constrain the core curriculum to maintain the current revenue balance, this should be managed through tools in the budgeting process. Dictating student experience to attain local budget goals is not student centric and offers only short-term benefits.
6. Manage GER course array via staff or a dedicated GER unit in Academic Affairs that coordinates with faculty governance and instructional units.
 - Curriculum is the province of faculty governance, but the semester-by-semester management of a program that encompasses >25,000 enrollments*in GER classes each semester and the reporting requirements of hundreds of courses can exceed the labor capacity of a relatively small faculty committee. An entity aimed at these aspects of GER management would create efficiencies and free governance, i.e., APCC, to focus on the fundamental curricular aspects of GER.

*However not all the enrolled students are necessarily using the class for a campus GER requirement.

7. Key Decisions in GER Revision

To revise the Distribution requirement of GER, three main areas of decision making were identified by CCAT: (1) Model for GER structure, (2) Rubric for including courses in GER, and (3) Management structure.

1. Model for or alternative to the GER distribution
 - Three models were considered in addition to the traditional divisional model currently used at UWM.
2. Rubric for including courses in GER
 - A more restrictive rubric is needed to ensure that the courses meet the learning outcomes, can easily be assessed, and are cost-effective.
3. Management structure
 - An augmented management structure is needed to take some of the weight of semester-by-semester tasks from faculty governance.

Models for the GER grouping

- Current distribution
- Hybrid conventional distribution plus connected learning
- Areas of inquiry-based distribution
- Foundational core curriculum approach

Rubric for including courses in GER

- Meets at least one learning outcome
- Automated assessment mechanisms
- Fits size attribute, i.e., large, information-based, or small, communication-intensive.
- Fits connected learning scheme in GER, i.e., distribution or grouping.

Management structure

- Continued management through APCC and its GER subgroup.
- Central support/management provided by Academic Affairs in coordination with faculty governance through APCC.
- Central unit that delivers GER courses via agreements with Schools and Colleges to provide courses and needed staffing.

8. Grouping Models for Distribution Requirement

A. New Model # 1: Hybrid Conventional Distribution plus Connected Learning

1. GER Grouping: There are three sets of requirements that satisfy the breadth and cultural diversity aspects of the GER program.

- i. Traditional distribution model with a course in each of the divisions: Humanities, Natural Science, Social Science, and Art.
 - ii. Connected learning courses that span multiple disciplines and perspectives. These are likely new courses and form part of the common experience element of the model. Allows for intentional inclusion of coursework aimed at critical analysis of complex problems
 - iii. University experience course(s) that introduce students to the University. Possibly also a course aimed at preparation for post-college.

- 2. Examples of Groupings: The connected learning courses could be grouped into themes such as:
 - a. Sustainability
 - b. Cultural Heritages
 - c. Global Health, with requirements that they include content aimed at topics such as social justice, climate change, etc.
 - d. Required experiential learning could also be introduced into this part of the GER model.

- 3. Distribution of units.
 - a. 12 units in the divisional foundations.
 - b. 6-9 units in the connected learning.
 - c. 1-2 units in the university experience.

- 4. Fundamental differences from current model
 - a. Traditional divisional distribution dropped from 21 to 12 units
 - b. New 6–9-unit block of courses aimed at connecting ideas and learning from multiple disciplines to address complex issues. These are expected to be limited in number and can offer common experience to students while including desired learning in specific areas.
 - c. A new 1-unit University Experience course to introduce to the university, its resources, and its values. Potentially also a 1-unit prep for post-college. These also form a common experience.
 - d. GER unit load (excluding competency courses) is similar 19-23 vs. 21.

- 5. Potential impacts on courses that could be included in GER
 - a. Retains the traditional divisional requirement so structure does not fundamentally exclude any current GER courses. Number of credit hours for them would be reduced by about 40%.
 - b. Unclear how many, if any, current courses would fit in the connected learning group.

- 6. Attributes
 - a. Relatively straightforward to adapt current GER system to this model because distribution component is retained.
 - b. Portability between schools and colleges still depends on whether they stipulate specific courses or subsets of GER that meet their requirements.

- c. Creates relatively few new challenges for transfer students if flexible approach is found for transfer credit in connected learning courses.
- d. Common student experience is attained with 2-3 connected learning courses as well as university experience courses.
- e. Coordinated efforts to deliver learning outcomes rest in connected learning courses and they could also convey desired content in areas such social justice, sustainability etc.
- f. Impacts on school/college SCH are mainly dependent on who is delivering connected learning curriculum.

B. New Model # 2: Areas of Inquiry

1. GER Grouping. There would be areas of inquiry that spanned the traditional divisional areas.
2. Examples of Generic Groupings
 - a. Creativity, Innovation, & Aesthetic Inquiry
 - b. Diversities in the Human Experience
 - c. Global Perspectives
 - d. Scientific & Logical Reasoning
3. Distribution of units. Total of 18 credits across the areas of inquiry in addition to the competency requirements, plus potentially a 1–3-unit University Experience course.
4. Fundamental differences from current model
 - a. GER unit load (excluding competency courses) drops to 18-21 from 21.
 - b. No longer an explicit distribution between traditional divisions.
5. Potential impacts on courses that could be included in GER
 - a. Courses would need to align with chosen areas of inquiry and this limitation would depend on the areas and how narrowly they were defined.
 - b. Total unit count in breadth courses would be reduced.
6. Attributes
 - a. Involves major reorganization of how courses slot into GER groups.
 - b. Portability between schools and colleges still depends on whether they stipulate specific courses or subsets of GER that meet their requirements.
 - c. For transfer students, would require developing some flexible mechanism for mapping conventional distribution-based GER credits to the areas of inquiry.
 - d. Common student experience is attained through the shared areas of inquiry and university experience courses.
 - e. Coordinated efforts to deliver learning outcomes rest in the choice of the areas of inquiry.
 - f. Impacts in school/college SCH is unpredictable, but no inherent bias towards any unit.

C. New Model #3: Foundational Core Curriculum/Common Experience

1. GER Grouping: In addition to existing competency requirements (QL, OWC, language).

- a. A grouping of specially designed connected-learning courses constituting the Core Curriculum which replaces the former discipline-based "distribution requirements"
 - b. An "Academic and Professional Success" grouping is added
- 2. Examples of Groupings and 3. Distribution of Units
 - a. Core Curriculum —18 to 27 credits (6-9 in each section)
 - i. Grouping 1:
 - 1. Arts and Humanities [UWS Outcomes of Creative Thinking Skills; Individual, Social, and Environmental Responsibility]
 - a. Creative Expression and Imagination heading with variable sections
 - b. Themes, Ethics, and Ideas heading with variable sections
 - c. Interpretation in the Arts and Humanities
 - ii. Grouping 2: Sciences and Technology [UWS Outcomes of Knowledge of the Natural World & Critical Thinking Skills]
 - 1. Scientific Method and Practice
 - 2. Health and Wellness
 - 3. Laboratory and Technological Knowledge
 - iii. Grouping 3: Society and Culture [UWS Outcomes of Knowledge of Human Cultures & Intercultural Knowledge and Competence]
 - 1. Functions of Society and Organizations
 - 2. Leadership, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship
 - 3. Cultural Heritage and Diversity
 - iv. Academic and Professional Success –2 to 6 credits
 - 1. Gateway to University Studies
 - 2. Career, Financial, and Life Planning
- 4. Fundamental differences from current model
 - a. Core curriculum is not a distribution requirement; number of courses will not proliferate
 - b. Courses are intentionally designed by teams for General Education population and connected-learning purpose
 - c. Courses are transdisciplinary and problem centered
 - d. Academic & Professional Success component helps students find majors and career pathways from wide array at UWM
 - e. Has advising component built into the design of broad headings guiding students
- 5. Potential impacts on courses that could be included in GER
 - a. As with all models, review by departments of major requirements that utilize General Education courses will be required
 - b. Departmental gateway courses for university studies would need review and could be incorporated into a campus wide GER design for "Academic and Professional Success" heading
 - c. Review Needed for Relationships with Honors College
- 6. Attributes
 - a. Involves major reorganization of how GER is delivered at UWM, creation of an entity to house the GER program, and may have a more extended start-up time.

- b. Portability between schools and colleges is controlled by a tightly managed, common core curriculum.
- c. For transfer students, it would involve developing some flexible mechanism for mapping distribution-based GER credits to the common core curriculum.
- d. Design is focused on delivering common student experience.
- e. Coordinated efforts to deliver learning outcomes embedded in program.
- f. Fundamentally different budgeting approach that removes GER course SCH as a factor in GER revenue distribution. Revenue sharing model would be needed.

9. Rubric for including courses in GER

1. Meets at least one learning outcome
 - Basic requirement for inclusion in GER.
2. Automated assessment mechanisms
 - To aid in assessment, measures of learning outcomes should be built into Canvas in such a way that it can easily be extracted for analysis.
3. Fits size attribute, i.e., large, information-based, or small, communication-intensive.
 - Optimal course size should be set in intentional way around pedagogical needs of the course. This will aid in schedule development and prioritization.
4. Fits connected learning scheme in GER, i.e., distribution or grouping.
 - Must align with one of the groupings in the model scheme.

10. Management Structure Options

1. Continued management through APCC and its GER subgroup.
 - Puts a heavy burden on governance group with limited enforcement powers.
2. Central authority in Academic Affairs coordinating with faculty governance through APCC.
 - Create a small team to manage GER with administrative tools to manage GER through mechanisms not available to governance, such as budget control.
3. Central unit that delivers GER courses via agreements with Schools and Colleges to provide courses and needed staffing.
 - Create academic entity that would contain the GER program and deliver it through its own prefix, e.g., UNIV XXX.
 - Entity would collect all GER revenue, support instruction from revenue, and return excess to units via a mechanism like the new budget model.