

University Studies Program

GENERAL EDUCATION FOR THE 21st CENTURY

uwosh.edu/usp

EXPLORATION

HOW DO PEOPLE UNDERSTAND
AND BRIDGE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES?
AND ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY LIFE?
AND CREATE A
MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD?

CONNECTION

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QUESTION

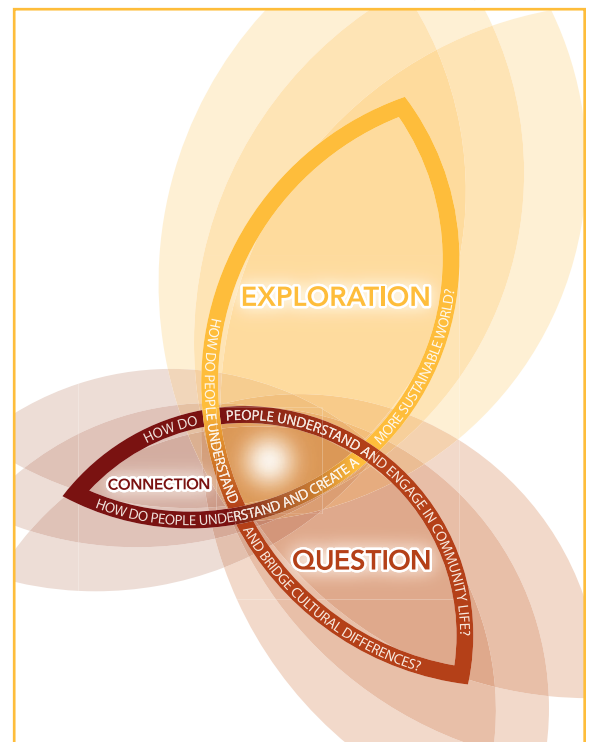
Introduction

One of more than fifty articles in the archive of Best Practice Resources on the General Education Reform website is Laurence Musgrove's piece from the Winter, 2008, issue of *Liberal Education*, "The Metaphors We Gen-Ed By," chronicling the general education reform process at St. Xavier University. During their accreditation visit, external evaluators noted that St. Xavier's core curriculum was "so open to choice within the disciplinary distribution requirements that it failed to guide students adequately through common experiences." Furthermore, the evaluators pointed out, students "were not particularly concerned about where they would end up, as long as they could get their tickets punched enough times to be exchanged for that bigger ticket, the diploma." The team also noted that "without a committee or administrative structure to oversee the curriculum, program assessment and improvement would be very difficult." In fact, there was no coherent general education program to oversee and assess, "just an incoherent flock of courses with responsibility for oversight nested within individual departments." It is impossible not to recognize how uncannily similar this sounds to the way general education has operated at UW Oshkosh for some thirty years.

In addition to these and other shortcomings of our current model, which prompted the now well-known demand from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) that we revise and twice assess a new general education program prior to our next accreditation visit in 2017 (see Appendix C), other data point strongly to the need for reform. National Survey of Student Engagement data gathered over nearly a decade has repeatedly shown that student engagement at UW Oshkosh consistently trails that at our peer institutions. Data from 2011, for example, show us to be significantly behind other UW System campuses in high-impact practice areas such as learning communities, service learning, faculty-student research, and senior capstone experiences.

The University Studies Program (USP) proposal is the result of years of dedicated work by people at UW Oshkosh committed to changing all of that.

This proposal is the product of years of complex, collaborative work by faculty and staff members from across the university. In 2007 the Liberal Education Reform Team began their work, culminating in the completion of a general education reform "framework," approved by the Faculty Senate in spring 2011. After LERT concluded its responsibilities, a new large group of faculty and staff were charged with moving the framework forward into a concrete and detailed proposal during the summer of 2011. Throughout the fall 2011, interim, and spring 2012 semesters, multiple public mechanisms for generating awareness and gathering feedback were put into place to ensure the transparency of the reform process, including dozens of meetings with academic departments and programs, several public presentations, open forums and web surveys to gather feedback to incorporate



in revised versions of the document (see Appendix E for a complete listing). These versions have been posted for additional campus input on the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the University Studies Program Proposal websites. This collaborative process has been informed by best-practice literature on general education reform; the **Liberal Education and America's Promise** (LEAP) initiative of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U); successful national models of reform at universities such as Portland State and Western Illinois; and the desire to incorporate data-supported, high-impact practices throughout the first three semesters of our students' academic careers. As such, it embodies exemplary local and national thinking on general education.

While many possible names for the proposed program have been considered to communicate the magnitude of this change for our academic community, the etymology of the word "university"—meaning both "combined in one" or "whole" and a "community of scholars"—provided a compelling point of departure for the reform team. We are envisioning a **Liberal Education** program that builds a vibrant community connecting teachers and learners across our campus.

All students at UW Oshkosh, regardless of their choice of major, will participate in a coherent 41-credit University Studies Program that addresses our **Essential Learning Outcomes** (see Appendix A) in a purposeful, coherent curriculum that serves a four-fold purpose:

- First, in our embedded First-Year Experience (FYE) **Quest I** course, students in small classes taught throughout the disciplines will engage in a range of FYE activities designed to ensure a successful transition into university life.
- Second, students will take an integrated series of liberal arts **QUEST** courses that feature an immersion in distinctive campus initiatives—**Sustainability; Intercultural Knowledge and Competence**; and **Civic Knowledge and Engagement**—which will prepare them for local and global citizenship in the 21st century. Simultaneously, students will be learning important transferable skills and habits of mind, among them the ability to solve complex problems; to write and speak effectively; and to collaborate successfully with others.
- Third, our program will require students to explore the diverse ways of knowing taught in the sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, and the fine and performing arts. Modeled on our current general education breadth requirements, this part of the proposal engages students' intellectual curiosity in courses chosen from the categories of **Nature, Culture, and Society**.
- Finally, this program will help students build coherent connections across their University Studies coursework in two ways. First, students will **CONNECT** their University Studies experiences in an advanced writing course that will promote further development of writing competence while synthesizing content related to the campus' distinctive initiatives. This course will also provide culminating, assessable opportunities for reflection on the purpose, value, and experience of **Liberal Education**. Second, all students will have a capstone experience in their chosen major that includes an opportunity to assess how successfully they have engaged the **Essential Learning Outcomes** in their academic careers at UW Oshkosh.

The current proposal provides our students with an assessable, common intellectual experience that also embraces the traditional breadth of a liberal arts education to prepare them well for the challenges of work, for engaged citizenship, and for a meaningful and satisfying life.

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Proposal At-a-Glance

The University Studies Program introduces UW Oshkosh students to the opportunities of university life and the goals of a **Liberal Education**. Students participate in learning communities and connected, invigorating experiences designed to build intellectual curiosity and to lay the foundation for lifelong intellectual development and global citizenship.

Student learning is the focus of the 41-credit University Studies Program. In addition to their broad exploration of knowledge and the development of essential skills, students will ask big questions related to three themes drawn from the “responsibilities” of the campus **Essential Learning Outcomes: Sustainability, Civic Knowledge and Engagement**, and **Intercultural Knowledge and Competence**. These areas of inquiry relate to our campus’ distinctive initiatives and are phrased in terms of **Signature Questions (SQs)**:

- How do people understand and create a more sustainable world?
- How do people understand and engage in community life?
- How do people understand and bridge cultural differences?

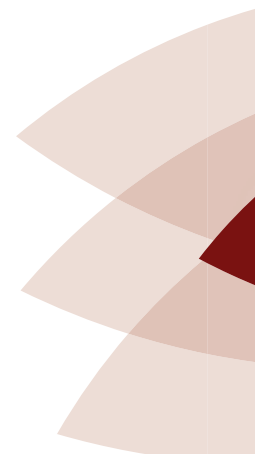
The program itself is divided among three interconnected areas: **QUESTION, EXPLORATION, and CONNECTION**.

- The **QUESTION** component is designed to promote students’ development of the foundational skills necessary to succeed at the university, an understanding of and engagement with the **Signature Questions**, and an awareness of the value and importance of a **Liberal Education**. Students will participate in small learning communities, as disciplinary courses are paired with writing and speaking courses in the first two semesters. In the third portion of this sequence, students will participate in a community engagement project.
- The **EXPLORATION** component is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of the human experience through different disciplinary ways of knowing about **Nature, Culture, and Society**. These categories reflect existing divisions of the College of Letters and Science, and students will take a required number of credits in each category.
- The **CONNECTION** component is designed for students to integrate and synthesize knowledge from their **QUEST** and **EXPLORE** experiences in an advanced writing course that synthesizes all three **Signature Questions**.

Through coordinated learning experiences, students will also explore their responsibilities as educated citizens in the 21st century. The skills, knowledge, and responsibilities that are the focus of University Studies student learning are drawn from the UW Oshkosh **Essential Learning Outcomes** (approved in May 2008 by the UW Oshkosh Faculty Senate).

As a community of scholars, the faculty and staff who teach in and support the University Studies Program will be committed to students’ academic success, the value of **Liberal Education**, and the implementation of research-based teaching and learning practices.

See Program Description that follows for an expanded explanation of the proposal.





Program Description

The purpose of the University Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is to inspire intellectual curiosity in our students, encourage them to understand their responsibilities as educated people, and lay the foundation for the skills and knowledge that will enable them to succeed not only as university students, but also as engaged local and global citizens. The program is structured around three interconnected areas:

QUESTION / EXPLORATION / CONNECTION

These terms build upon the successful Odyssey program for incoming UW Oshkosh students. They also reinforce the goal of assisting students in developing responsibility for their own learning while underscoring the fact that knowledge is driven by inquiry.

Our campus **Essential Learning Outcomes** list five “responsibilities,” three of which provide common intellectual experiences in the **QUESTION** and **CONNECTION** components of the program. (The other two “responsibilities” are integrated in other ways into the proposal, as noted in the pages that follow.) The AAC&U defines the three “signature” themes in flexible and wide-ranging ways. Faculty and staff teaching in the University Studies Program are likewise encouraged to interpret them broadly through the lens of their own disciplines. These three themes are highlighted because they correspond with distinctive campus initiatives and student learning commitments that are already established as identifying features of UW Oshkosh:

- ***Sustainability and Its Applications***
- ***Civic Knowledge and Engagement***
- ***Intercultural Knowledge and Competence***

The University Studies Program includes the following broad definitions, drawn from the Faculty Senate-approved **Essential Learning Outcomes** (May 2008). To build intellectual curiosity among students, these broad themes have in turn been phrased as **Signature Questions**, which provide the structure for the **QUEST** portion of the USP.

Knowledge of Sustainability and Its Applications is the ability to understand local and global earth systems; the qualities of ecological integrity and the means to restore and preserve it; and the interconnection of ecological integrity, social justice, and economic well-being.

Signature Question: How do people understand and create a more sustainable world?

Civic Knowledge and Engagement entails understanding political and non-political processes that influence a local, state, national, or global community and applying skills and strategies that can affect the life of a community in positive ways.

Signature Question: How do people understand and engage in community life?

Intercultural Knowledge and Competence is the understanding of one’s own culture as well as cultures beyond one’s own; the recognition of the cultural

values and history, language, traditions, arts, and social institutions of a group of people; the ability to negotiate and bridge cultural differences in ways that allow for broader perspectives to emerge; and the skill to investigate a wide range of worldviews, beliefs, practices, and values.

Signature Question: How do people understand and bridge cultural differences?

QUESTION

Incoming students will begin to question in a discipline-based first-year experience (FYE) course while concurrently enrolling in a second course focused upon the skills employers repeatedly name as the most crucial to success in the 21st century, among them the ability to solve complex problems; to locate and evaluate information; to write and speak effectively; and to collaborate successfully with others. By enrolling in these paired courses in their first two semesters on campus, students will be placed in learning communities and will begin to examine the campus' **Signature Questions**. By the end of their second year of study, they will have explored all three **SQs**.

Quest I (1st semester paired courses): **First-Year Experience (FYE) Quest I course + Writing** (currently WBIS) or **Speaking** (currently Comm 111)

The same **Signature Question** is addressed in both courses.

In **Quest I**, students will take two linked three-credit courses drawn from one of the three **Signature Questions**. By enrolling in paired courses capped at 25 and focusing upon the same **SQ**, students will be placed in cohort groups that will provide them with learning communities.

In all **Quest I** courses, students will be introduced to the value of a liberal arts education, the three **Signature Questions**, the UW Oshkosh **Essential Learning Outcomes**, and the **ePortfolio** documentation of their learning. This course will adopt an "embedded" FYE model, which includes the teaching of disciplinary knowledge, the use of peer mentoring, and the acculturating of students to the academic environment of this university through specific course components (see Appendix B for **Quest I** First-Year Experience [FYE] parameters).

Quest II (2nd semester paired courses): **Quest II course + Writing** (currently WBIS) or **Speaking** (currently Comm 111)

(Note that a 4-credit lab science course might identify as a **Quest II** course, with lab sections serving as matched learning communities with the paired writing or speaking course.)

The same **Signature Question** is addressed in both courses.

These disciplinary **Quest II** courses will include content connected to a **Signature Question** while simultaneously engaging the **Essential Learning Outcome** of Ethical Reasoning in the context of the course. In the USP, Ethical Reasoning can be broadly construed—from the deliberation of issues and claims to engagement with the driving or pressing questions within each academic field. The **Quest II** course will expose students to the process of reasoning within the stated focus of the course. The paired courses focus upon a different **SQ** from that which students explored in **Quest I** and, through this choice, they will be placed in new learning communities. **Quest II** is capped at 50 students because it will be paired with two sections of the writing or speaking class, each capped at 25 students.



Implementation note for **Quest I** and **II**:

- The pairing process for **Quest I** and **II** classes does not require two members of the teaching community to plan the pairing in advance (though professional development will provide the opportunity for such connections as desired). Rather, “pairing” entails the common **SQ** focus of both courses and students’ concurrent enrollment in them.
- Options for separating the course pairings in **Quest I** and **Quest II** will be made available for a subset of students (e.g. CAPP speech in high school, students with AP credits, transfer students with speaking or writing course credits, specified individuals who have declared select majors prior to their first semester enrollment at UW Oshkosh, and students who fail or withdraw from one of the courses in a **Quest I** or **II** pairing.) A course sign-in policy for these students will be created and administered by the University Studies Program, in part to prevent other students from inadvertently registering for an unpaired section of a **Quest I** or **II** course.

Quest III (3rd or 4th semester)

Students’ **Quest III** course will focus upon whichever **Signature Question** they have not yet addressed in **Quest I** or **II**. Students take the **Quest III** course in either the fall or spring semester of their second academic year. **Quest III** is capped at 50 students, with a substantial community engagement project documented through a paper, speech, or other method of learning assessment. (See Appendix B for the **Quest III** community engagement project parameters.)

Implementation notes for **QUESTION** component:

- **QUESTION** courses are taken sequentially (**Quest I**, **Quest II** and then **Quest III**). When students complete the **QUEST** sequence, they will have addressed all three **Signature Questions**.
- A Learning Technologies Specialist will support the **ePortfolio** component of the University Studies Program.
- As needed, the Information Literacy Librarian will support courses in the **QUEST** component of the University Studies Program, including writing and speaking.
- Initial and ongoing professional development for the **QUEST** teaching community is planned.

EXPLORATION

While they **QUESTION**, students will also be engaged in the **EXPLORATION** of disciplinary ways of knowing. Students will explore the question of knowledge itself by engaging in the critical examination of disciplinary content, modeling skills and strategies used to explore that content, and cultivating a methodological approach to accumulating, processing, and applying knowledge. Students will explore knowledge of **Nature**, **Culture**, and **Society** as delineated in the UW Oshkosh **Essential Learning Outcomes**. Existing divisions within the College of Letters and Science (Fine and Performing Arts, Humanities, Math/Science, and Social Science) are linked to and identified with the three categories:

Nature

Students will explore the physical and natural world, mathematics, life forms, scientific explanation, and/or the environment in courses in mathematics and lab sciences (Math/Science Division).

Culture

Students will explore human thought, its intellectual foundations, and/or creative expression in courses in the Humanities and the Fine and Performing Arts Divisions.

Society

Students will explore the past, political communities, local and global social relations, diversity, and/or rights and responsibilities in courses in the Social Science Division.

Implementation notes for **EXPLORE** component:

- **EXPLORE** courses need not be connected to a **Signature Question**, though courses with content that is connected to a **Signature Question** will be coded with an **SQ** designation to assist students with specific interest in further exploration of **Sustainability, Intercultural Knowledge, or Civic Engagement**.
- See Credit Overview for clarification of **QUEST** and **EXPLORE** credits.

CONNECTION

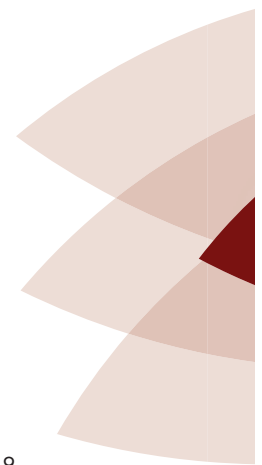
After students have completed 15 University Studies credits, or the **QUESTION** component of the USP, they will enroll in a **CONNECT** course. An advanced writing course, **CONNECT** will further develop writing competence while synthesizing content related to all three of the **Signature Questions**. The **CONNECT** course will also provide culminating opportunities for student reflection on the purpose and value of **Liberal Education** while serving as a University Studies assessment point, with **ePortfolios** that have been in progress since **Quest I**. (See Assessment Plan for details.)

With course content focused on the **Signature Questions** and the value and purpose of a **Liberal Education**, the **CONNECT** course will also develop advanced student writing competencies. Collaborative professional development will build upon the goals of the current Advanced Composition program (for example, rhetorical awareness, analytical reading, synthesis and judgment, craft, and information literacy).

As the improvement of student writing is a shared goal of all departments and programs, the University Studies Program, working with the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), the Writing Center, the **CONNECT** program, and other relevant campus entities, will develop collaborative professional activities and an infrastructure to address the ongoing improvement of student writing across campus. This infrastructure will include the development of an online Writing Resource Center to provide resources for faculty and staff teaching writing in their courses, as well as regular opportunities for ongoing conversation about writing pedagogy and student writing success.

Implementation notes for **CONNECT** component:

- **QUEST** courses will serve as pre-requisites for the **CONNECT** course.
- Currently, some sections of WBIS (Writing Based Inquiry Seminar) are open to instructors from other disciplines. A similar option for the **CONNECT** course is proposed in the USP.
- Students will take **CONNECT** *after* completing 15 University Studies credits and *before* reaching 90 credits toward their degree.





CAPSTONE

As students conclude their University Studies coursework, they will be prepared to engage in the focused work of their majors. Their majors, in turn, will conclude with a course or culminating experience that also provides a final opportunity for **Liberal Education** learning assessment. **CAPSTONES** in the major may include internships, study abroad, student teaching, undergraduate research projects, culminating courses (existing or to be developed), or other appropriate learning experiences.

CAPSTONE course credits are not part of the University Studies Program credit total; nevertheless, the **CAPSTONE** experience will serve as the connection between students' two programs of study (USP and the major). The **CAPSTONE** will enable students to retrace and reflect upon their University Studies journey while providing a final opportunity to assess how successfully they have met the **Essential Learning Outcomes**. Most importantly, it will underscore the value of **Liberal Education** at UW Oshkosh as students move forward as college-educated citizens.

As will happen in the **CONNECT** course, assessment of the entire University Studies Program will also occur in the **CAPSTONE** through a sample selection of student **ePortfolios**. While the programmatic assessment procedures are still in development, **CAPSTONE** instructors will not be responsible for the assessment of the University Studies Program overall. (See Assessment Plan.)

Implementation note for the **CAPSTONE**:

- Professional development and on-line resources related to assessment of the **Essential Learning Outcomes** will be ongoing.

TRANSFER STUDENTS

One of the goals of the University Studies Program transfer policy is to ensure maximum ease of course transferability both for students transferring into UW Oshkosh and for students transferring from UW Oshkosh to other institutions. Our attention to the specific academic needs of transfer students is critical to the student learning focus of the University Studies Program. While many campus procedures are already in place to address transfer students' needs, and UW System transfer agreements with two-year institutions guide the admission process for many, the University Studies Program at UW Oshkosh will provide clarity and hospitality designed to serve academic success for all transfer students.

Transfer students with 29 and fewer credits (freshmen):

These transfer students will be treated as entering freshmen beginning their University Studies Program. They will be required to take **Quest I, II, and III** courses as well as the **CONNECT** course. A course-by-course audit, in addition to courses approved for direct transfer in the UW System Transfer Information System (TIS), will allow credits for courses completed at other institutions in communication, writing, and other disciplines corresponding with **EXPLORE** course expectations. (Note: These transfer students will enroll in **Quest I** or **Quest II** courses but will not be required to enroll concurrently in the communication or writing courses if they enter with credit for those course equivalents.)

Transfer students with 30-59 credits (sophomores):

These transfer students will take a zero-credit Transfer Experience Course (TYE) designed to introduce the value and goals of a **Liberal Education** while providing a learning community and a substantive experience at no cost to transfer students. The course will be tailored to address the specific needs of sophomore-

level transfer students so that they may become acculturated to our campus. In addition, like the FYE, the TYE will introduce the three **Signature Questions** as well as provide an introduction to the academic resources, academic expectations, and academic identity of UW Oshkosh. The established Titan Transfer Center will develop, implement, and assess this course. As a component of the USP, the TYE for sophomore-level transfer students will be evaluated in two years' time to ensure that it meets the learning needs of these students and adjustments will be made as deemed necessary. As the course aims to acculturate transfer students to life at this university, it will also focus on the value of engagement in campus activities.

In addition to the TYE course, sophomore-level transfer students will take a **Quest III** course with other non-transfer sophomores. Their **EXPLORE** requirements will be determined after a course-by-course degree audit or automatic transfer through TIS.

Implementation notes for transfer students into the USP:

- Sophomore-level transfer students (30-59 credits) will not be required to take **Quest I** or **Quest II** courses, as these are specifically designed for first-year students. Most sophomore-level transfer students come to UW Oshkosh with their writing and speaking requirements fulfilled; those who have yet to take these courses will enroll in "unpaired" writing and speaking courses.
- Given our commitment to global learning and citizenship, the proposed University Studies Program requires one course each in Non-Western Culture and Ethnic Studies (UW System requirement). Transfer students should be aware of these requirements.

Transfer students with 60 or more credits (juniors and seniors):

The credits of these transfer students will transfer in course-by-course through the course audit or automatic transfer through TIS. They will not be required to take the **QUEST** sequence or the TYE. If students have completed an Associate's degree at a UW System institution, they will automatically fulfill the University Studies Program requirements on the UW Oshkosh campus.

Students transferring out of UW Oshkosh:

For students who transfer to another institution, **Quest I, II, and III** courses will be coded with the discipline in which they are offered. As such, they will meet requirements of other institutions' general education programs.

All current and emerging UW System agreements related to inter-institutional transfer will be honored by the University Studies Program.

NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Non-traditional students, including students in the Center for New Learning and others who complete the majority of their classes online, are important members of our student body for whom the **Essential Learning Outcomes** are as vital as they are to all other students. In addition, non-traditional students may be engaged primarily in "remote" learning, may have life experiences significantly different from those of traditionally-aged students, and may have logistical/life demands that affect their curricular and co-curricular choices. While some of these students will take "unpaired" **QUEST** courses given the demands of their curriculum, a designated committee is envisioned that will address matters related to USP requirements and non-traditional students, including how the current Credit for Prior Learning policy may relate to the **Quest III** civic engagement project and/or online options for USP courses.

Credit Overview

QUESTION

Quest I (students choose to focus upon one Signature Question [SQ] , e.g. Civic Engagement)	(3 credits*)
Quest II (students choose to focus upon a different SQ , e.g. Intercultural Knowledge)	(3 credits*)
Quest III (students choose to focus upon the remaining SQ , e.g. Sustainability)	(3 credits*)
Signature Question Writing Course (currently WBIS)	3 credits
Signature Question Speaking Course (currently Comm 111)	3 credits
Total *The 9 QUEST course credits fulfill EXPLORE course credits as delineated below.	6 credits

QUESTION credits are interconnected with **EXPLORATION** credits in two ways:

- The three **QUEST** courses (**I**, **II** and **III**) also count as three **EXPLORE** courses (nine credits);
- One Ethnic Studies course and one Non-Western Culture course are required in the USP. A **QUEST** course can fulfill only one of these. An **EXPLORE** course must fulfill the other.

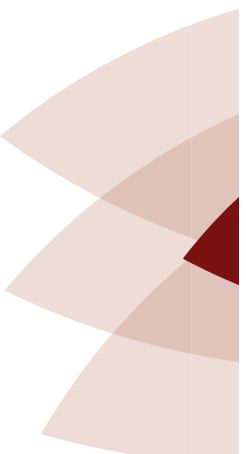
EXPLORATION

Nature Math and two Lab Sciences (+ exceptions) Note: One of the two lab sciences could be accomplished with a Quest II course.		11 credits
Culture Humanities, Fine and Performing Arts (+ exceptions) Note: Students must select courses from at least two different departments/programs.	3-credit Ethnic Studies or Non-Western Culture course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from either Culture or Society • whichever is not fulfilled by Intercultural Knowledge QUEST course 	9 credits
Society Social Sciences (+ exceptions) Note: Students must select courses from at least two different departments/programs		3 credits
		9 credits
Total		32 credits

CONNECTION

CONNECT Course: Advanced Writing	3 credits
Total	3 credits

University Studies Program Credit Total	41 credits
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Comparison Chart: Current General Education Requirements and the USP

	Current Requirements	Proposed Program
Total credits	42	41
Guiding Principles	Breadth of knowledge and skills	Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) ; Breadth and depth of knowledge and skills; National general education models and research-supported practices
Name	General Education	University Studies
Structure	Lists of classes and options that satisfy general education requirements	Cohesive three-part program (QUESTION, EXPLORATION, CONNECTION) related to campus distinctive initiatives (sustainability, inclusive excellence, civic engagement) phrased as Signature Questions
High-Impact Practices	Random and intermittent	Intentional and integrated into program
FYE/TYE	Limited number of optional FYE sections; optional orientation for transfer students	Quest I with embedded FYE for all first-time, first-year students; required 0-credit TYE course for designated transfer students
Common Intellectual Experience	WBIS common reading	Quest I and II paired with writing and speaking courses; Quest III with community engagement component. All QUEST courses focus on a Signature Question
Skills-based Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs): Written and Oral Communication; Quantitative Literacy	WBIS; PBIS; Advanced Composition, based on Division or College; Communication 111 as a degree rather than a general education requirement	Writing and speaking courses paired with Quest I and II , creating student learning communities; advanced writing course in CONNECTION synthesizing all three Signature Question ; math as part of EXPLORE
Breadth of Knowledge through Credit Distribution	Required number of credits in each Division of the College of Letters & Science (COLS)	Required number of credits in each knowledge area of EXPLORE (Nature, Culture, Society) . Existing COLS Divisions associated with each area. Exceptions allowed (e.g. interdisciplinary courses)
Assessment	None	Assessment based on ELOs using ePortfolio . Two programmatic points of assessment
Administration	Faculty governance through APGES	USP Director and faculty governance
Professional Development Support	No professional development specific to general education classes	Professional development support for initial implementation; ongoing support for University Studies teaching community through Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning; Learning Technologies support for ePortfolio and assessment component
Major Capstone Course/Experience	Not required for all majors; existing capstones not intentionally connected to general education; no assessment based on ELOs	Necessary for all majors. Not counted in 41 University Studies credits. Assessment based on ELOs



Assessment Plan

Currently, general education is decentralized and leaves assessment of learning outcomes to individual instructors, providing no opportunity to assess our overall general education goals. With this proposal for the University Studies Program comes the opportunity to construct a cohesive assessment plan that can address both individual University Studies courses and the program overall. The purpose of assessment in the USP will be to provide a systematic and developmental process for measuring student learning related to the **Essential Learning Outcomes**.

The primary mechanism for assessment in the USP—both of individual USP courses and the program overall—will be the **ePortfolio** that is integrated into D2L. In individual USP classes, an assignment (or assignments) of the instructors' choosing shall be uploaded into the **ePortfolio**. While students will receive feedback on individual assignments in each USP course, they will also have an opportunity to reflect upon and synthesize the full contents of their **ePortfolios** at distinct points in their academic careers, as described below.

- **QUEST courses:** students will be introduced to the **ePortfolio** in each of their **QUEST** classes, in which they will also begin to archive their learning. Instructors may select the number and type of learning "artifacts" (papers, speeches, community engagement reflections, videos, posters, etc.) that students will upload. In this way, all UW Oshkosh students will develop electronic repositories with similar content, all of which will have been evaluated by individual instructors, and thus students will have accurate, current information about their achievement of the campus **Essential Learning Outcomes**. This information can be sampled for campus-wide assessment purposes and will also allow UW Oshkosh to evaluate and enhance USP courses.
- **CONNECT course:** students will have completed their 15-credit **QUEST** sequence before enrolling in the **CONNECT** course. The learning artifacts from their **CONNECT** course will be evaluated by **CONNECT** instructors. At the same time, the placement of the **CONNECT** course in the USP curriculum will provide an opportunity for programmatic assessment through a sample selection of student **ePortfolios**. These data will shed light on how well the University Studies Program is meeting our student learning goals. While the programmatic assessment procedures are still in development, **CONNECT** instructors will not be responsible for assessment of the University Studies Program overall.
- **Major CAPSTONE course/experience:** While most programs at UW Oshkosh have already incorporated a **CAPSTONE** experience into their curricula (course, internship, clinical experience, study abroad, research project, or other experience), the University Studies Program proposes that every student participate in some form of culminating experience. Using the **ePortfolio**, students will have the opportunity to synthesize the learning that has been documented electronically throughout their University Studies coursework. Furthermore, the **CAPSTONE** will provide another mechanism for programmatic assessment through a sample selection of student **ePortfolios**. As noted above, while the programmatic assessment procedures are still in development, **CAPSTONE** instructors will not be responsible for the assessment of the University Studies Program overall.

While the **ePortfolio** is the primary mechanism for assessing the University Studies Program, departments may also integrate the tool into their own assessment plans.

Fully integrated into the USP, this assessment plan builds upon existing efforts by the university and provides a cohesive method to evaluate and enhance students' **Liberal Education** at UW Oshkosh. To support and sustain these efforts, the campus has recently added an Assessment Analyst in the Office of Institutional Research and will soon be hiring an **ePortfolio** Specialist in the Department of Learning Technologies. In addition, professional development and online resources related to the assessment of the **Essential Learning Outcomes** will be ongoing.





Frequently Asked Questions

If this proposal is adopted, when will the University Studies Program begin?

The new USP program will begin with students entering for the first time in fall 2013. A multi-year phase-in process will begin at that time to allow in-progress students to complete their general education requirements. **Quest I** courses, paired with speaking and writing courses, will be offered for the first time in fall 2013; **Quest II** courses (also paired with speaking and writing courses) will be offered for the first time in spring 2014; **Quest III** courses will be offered for the first time in fall 2014; and the **CONNECT** advanced writing course will be offered for the first time in spring 2015.

How will these general education changes be implemented?

Discussions with the Faculty Senate are currently underway regarding initial implementation and subsequent maintenance of the proposed University Studies Program. That implementation plan is designed to maintain faculty governance, contribute to the creation of a high quality program, and meet necessary deadlines for the course-review and upcoming re-accreditation processes. When the implementation plan proposal is finalized, it will be posted to the USP website. In the meantime, departmental and program dialogues regarding potential participation in the USP are strongly encouraged. Note that the ongoing aim has been to maintain FTE currently committed to general education in each department.

Release time for a University Studies Program Director has been approved, to ensure that this new and cohesive program will have consistent coordination.

A first implementation step will be a preliminary identification process in spring 2012. Departments will be asked to identify the courses they want to teach in the USP. Three options will be possible: existing courses may identify into the program with little or no change; existing courses may require modification to identify into the program; and entirely new courses may be proposed.

Individuals and departments are strongly encouraged to consider teaching in the **QUEST** component of the program. A professional development workshop to support **Quest I** instructors (including instructors of paired writing and speaking classes) is tentatively scheduled for spring semester interim: May 22, 23 and 24. Similar workshops to support **Quest II** and **Quest III** instructors are also being planned.

Though hundreds at UW Oshkosh have been engaged in this reform effort, what if unforeseen challenges present themselves during the implementation of the program?

This change is monumental—affecting nearly every aspect of the UW Oshkosh academic community. This effort has focused on enhancing student learning while creating a feasible, cohesive program. Together, we will maintain these aims even as shifts become necessary. Challenges will most certainly emerge during implementation, and for that reason, the USP includes an assessment plan. As student learning assessment and/or logistical realities indicate the need for change, revisions will be proposed and considered through the curricular

governance process. The need for alterations is anticipated. As an academic community choosing to enact a significant change, we will need to be flexible, collaborative, and trusting.

Does this proposal for the reform of general education change the degree requirements?

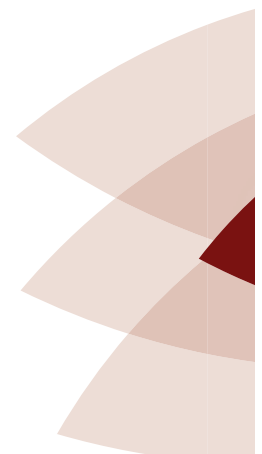
This proposal addresses university-wide general education rather than college-based degree requirements (BA, BS, etc.). While many of us may inadvertently confuse general education and degree requirements, these two sets of required credits for students do, in fact, differ. (On this topic, see pages 24 to 25 of the 2011-2013 *Undergraduate Bulletin*). The current proposal for the University Studies Program addresses only general education requirements at UW Oshkosh.

How will this University Studies Program affect transfer students?

UW Oshkosh has a large and growing number of students who transfer in and out of our institution. In dialogue with representatives from the two-year campuses and transfer specialists on our own campus, the reform team has sought to address their specific learning needs while respecting existing UW System agreements. Proposal information specific to transfer students is delineated on pages 10 to 11.

Once the University Studies Program is implemented, what if the campus community wishes to alter it?

The passage of this proposal will create something that has not previously existed at UW Oshkosh—a **program**—that will need ongoing coordination, assessment, and revision. Importantly, the curricular changes that will be launched by the acceptance of this proposal are a **starting point** for a living, breathing program of general education on this campus. Just as we continually alter our major and minor programs based on student learning needs, developments in our disciplines, logistics related to demand and personnel, information provided through program assessment, accreditation requirements (in some disciplines and colleges), so we, as a campus community must be prepared to continually reflect upon, update, and improve this University Studies Program for general education. We will do so through established faculty governance procedures that guide our revision of all other curricular matters on campus. Assessment of the program will be the responsibility of all instructors who teach in the USP and through this constant process, change will be inevitable.





Appendix A: UW Oshkosh Essential Learning Outcomes

Charged in 2007, the **Liberal Education Reform Team** (LERT) adapted the AAC&U definition of **Liberal Education** for our campus: **Liberal Education** is a philosophy of education that empowers individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and a strong sense of values, ethics, and civic engagement. These broad goals have endured even as the courses and requirements that comprise a **Liberal Education** have changed over the years. Characterized by challenging encounters with important and relevant issues today and throughout history, a **Liberal Education** prepares graduates both for socially valued work and for civic leadership in their society. It usually includes a general education curriculum that provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and ways of knowing, along with more in-depth study in at least one field or area of concentration.

Original source: Advocacy "What is a liberal education?" www.aacu.org/leap.

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Through study in fine and performing arts, humanities, mathematics and science, and social science focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

Skills, Both Intellectual and Practical

- Identification and objective evaluation of theories and assumptions
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Technology and information literacy
- Teamwork, leadership, and problem solving practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

Responsibility, as Individuals and Communities

- Knowledge of **Sustainability and Its Applications**
- **Civic Knowledge and Engagement**—local and global
- **Intercultural Knowledge and Competence**
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning developed through real-world challenges and active involvement with diverse communities

Learning: Integrated, Synthesized, and Advanced

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.

Source: Learning Outcomes are adapted from AAC&U report, *College Learning for a New Global Century*.

Appendix B: QUEST Parameters

Quest I and the First-Year Experience (FYE) Component

The proposal for **Quest I** is to “embed” a First-Year Experience (FYE) within a disciplinary University Studies course. This “embedded” model, used across the country, means this University Studies **Quest I** course can be taught within any discipline.

In order to identify as **Quest I**, courses will include the following characteristics, in addition to their disciplinary content.

Liberal Education and Essential Learning Outcomes

The embedded FYE course will introduce students to the ideas associated with a **Liberal Education**. It will emphasize how the goals of a **Liberal Education** will inform students’ learning experiences at the university with the aim of providing the foundations and skills for lifelong learning. The **Quest I** course will also provide an explicit introduction to the campus **Essential Learning Outcomes** and the University Studies Program, engaging students’ intellectual curiosity while providing a supportive transition to university life.

Signature Questions:

As the first class in a student’s college career, **Quest I** with its embedded FYE will expose students to the campus’ three **Signature Questions** and will itself address one of those questions in greater depth. Approximately 25 percent (or more) of the **Quest I** content will focus upon and/or integrate that **Signature Question**.

- If the **Quest I** course focuses upon the **Intercultural Knowledge Signature Question**, that class will be designated as either an Ethnic Studies or Non-Western Culture course (whichever is appropriate), supporting another USP goal of developing students’ global learning and their responsibility as citizens of an increasingly diverse world.
- Each semester, **Quest I** courses will be offered in all three **Signature Question** areas (with approximately one-third of the courses dedicated to each of the three **Signature Questions**).

Transition to Oshkosh

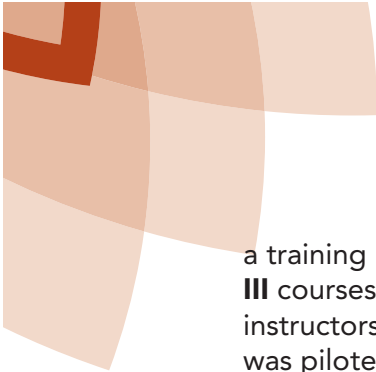
The embedded FYE course will place special emphasis upon acculturating students to the university, to the expectations of a college-level education, and to the resources and opportunities that exist at UW Oshkosh.

Class Size and Co-Enrollment

The embedded FYE course will be capped at 25 to enhance the connection between the student and the instructor. This course will be paired with a writing or speaking course, also capped at 25 students. As a result of their concurrent enrollment in both courses (embedded FYE and writing or speaking course) in their first semester at UW Oshkosh, students will form a learning community that will further aid in their transition to the university.

Peer Mentor

All embedded FYE courses will be assigned a peer mentor. The peer mentor will enhance the students’ connection to the class, to the university, and to each other. Peer mentors will serve as intellectual role models and academic resources for first-year students, attending some class sessions and accompanying students to co-curricular activities. Student mentors will undergo



a training program, and mentors will receive a small stipend for their service. (Some **Quest III** courses may also adopt peer mentorship in their civic engagement project, as desired by instructors.) The USP Director will facilitate the expansion of the mentorship program, which was piloted in fall 2011 FYE sections.

Co-Curricular Activities

The embedded FYE course will delineate expectations for student attendance at a variety of co-curricular activities (events on and/or off campus) to reinforce students' engagement in the community. In the fall 2011 FYE pilot, these options included a campus play, an international film, an art exhibit, a music performance, and an athletic event. Lists of options for each semester will be generated among the USP teaching community, to assist course planning. This component of **Quest I** is proposed to generate student awareness of and engagement in campus and community life (crucial contributors to retention and academic success, particularly for first-generation students who comprise more than 50 percent of our population).

Assessment

The embedded FYE course will introduce and adopt the **ePortfolio** as a mechanism for student assessment. Students will be introduced to the **ePortfolio** as a tool that will be available for use throughout their college careers. A specialist in Learning Technologies will be hired to support this component of the USP and will be available to assist **Quest I** instructors with this element of instruction. In addition to the initial introduction to the **ePortfolio**, **Quest I** instructors will select at least one learning artifact (paper, speech, reflection journal from the co-curricular activities, etc.) for students to upload to the **ePortfolio**. Instructors will be free to determine the assessment tools for individual elements of the embedded FYE course, though rubrics developed for the assessment of learning outcomes in **Quest I** will be made available for use by the USP teaching community as desired. As an example of a learning artifact for **Quest I**, students in the fall 2011 FYE pilot program attended a range of co-curricular activities with one another and their peer mentors. At the end of the semester, these students wrote brief reflective essays based on these events.

Outcomes

1. Students will be able to describe the value of a **Liberal Education**.
2. Students will become familiar with the expectations of a college-level education, the UW Oshkosh **Essential Learning Outcomes**, and the University Studies Program.
3. Students will begin their acculturation to life at this university, developing familiarity with the academic resources and community engagement opportunities at UW Oshkosh.
4. Students will engage in learning communities to enhance their connections to the class, the university, and one another.
5. Students will participate in campus and community life through co-curricular activities.
6. Students will begin to take personal responsibility for their intellectual development by archiving learning artifacts in the **ePortfolio**.

Quest II and the Ethical Reasoning Component

The proposal for **Quest II** is that it be a disciplinary course integrating content related to one of the three **Signature Questions**. Like their counterparts in **Quest I**, **Quest II** courses will contribute to students' intellectual curiosity and support their transition to university life through a learning community.

Liberal Education and Essential Learning Outcomes:

In addition to furthering the aims of a **Liberal Education** (like all courses in the USP), the **Quest II** course will also begin to address the responsibility of "Ethical Reasoning" (with the "Ethical Action" component of that **Essential Learning Outcome** addressed more specifically in **Quest III**). As the **Quest II** course introduces broad disciplinary questions as well as content that emanates from focused study of the selected **Signature Question**, students will gain awareness of central ethical issues experienced by practitioners in that discipline. In **Quest II** classes, ethical reasoning can be broadly construed—from the deliberation of issues and claims to engagement with the driving or pressing questions within each academic field. The **Quest II** course will expose students to the process of reasoning within the stated focus of the course. In its description of ethical reasoning, the AAC&U recommends that students "recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings."

Signature Questions:

- The **Quest II** course will be expected to include "significant engagement" with the **Signature Question** linked to it. "Significant engagement" is defined as an apparent focus and/or integration of the content into a minimum of 30 to 50 percent of the course. (The minimum **SQ** content in **Quest I** remains 25 percent; this percentage is lower than **Quest II** and **III** because **Quest I** courses must also incorporate the First-Year Experience elements.)

Evidence of significant engagement with the **Signature Question** content includes relevant student learning outcomes and graded assignments and is intended to be apparent in the course syllabus.

All **QUEST** instructors (**I**, **II**, and **III**) will be supported by collaborative professional development to assist with the curricular modification necessary to integrate **Signature Question** content into their courses (if such content is not already present in the proposed course).

- Students will select a **Quest II** course with a different **Signature Question** from that which they addressed in **Quest I**.
- Each semester, **Quest II** courses will be offered in all three **Signature Questions** (with approximately one-third of the courses dedicated to each of the three **Signature Questions**).
- If the **Quest II** course focuses upon the **Intercultural Knowledge Signature Question**, that class will be designated as either an Ethnic Studies or Non-Western Culture course (whichever is appropriate), supporting another USP goal of developing students' global learning and their responsibility as citizens of an increasingly diverse world.



Class Size and Co-Enrollment

Quest II will be paired with whichever writing or speaking course the student did not take in the first semester. As in **Quest I**, students' concurrent enrollment in **Quest II** and the writing or speaking course in their second semester will form a new learning community. Each **Quest II** course will be capped at 50 students, because it will be paired with two sections of the speaking or writing course (each capped at 25 students) to form the learning community. For **Quest II** lab science courses, a learning community will be formed through co-enrollment of the lab section with the speaking or writing course (note that the lecture section for a **Quest II** science course may maintain enrollments of greater than 50 students).

Assessment

The **Quest II** course will assess student learning in terms of ethical reasoning and the understanding of content related to the discipline and the **Signature Question**. Instructors will be free to determine the assessment tools for individual elements of the course, but learning artifacts (papers, speeches, lab reports, etc.) would be appropriate for inclusion in students' **ePortfolios**. Rubrics that are developed related to the student learning outcomes of **Quest II** will be made available for use by the USP teaching community as desired. Case studies are commonly used to teach and to assess students' ability to recognize ethical issues.

Outcomes

1. Students will be engaged in a learning community through their co-enrollment in a writing or speaking course and a paired disciplinary **Quest II** course.
2. Students will develop an awareness of ethical issues and the process of reasoning about them in a specific discipline and/or arena of intellectual inquiry. This introduction to ethical reasoning will serve as a foundation for further learning related to ethical reasoning and action in other USP courses and in courses in students' majors and minors, as applicable.
3. Students will continue to cultivate personal responsibility for their intellectual development by archiving learning artifacts in the **ePortfolio**.

Quest III and the Community Engagement Component

The proposal for **Quest III** is that it be a disciplinary course integrating content related to one of the three **Signature Questions (SQs)** and including a community engagement project. This third course in the **QUEST** sequence will be taken in either the first or second semester of the sophomore year. The **Quest III** course will not be paired with another course and enrollment will be capped at 50 students. This project is expected to encompass 14 to 20 hours of **campus or community** experiential learning related to the **Signature Question** of the course. In order to identify as **Quest III**, courses will include the following characteristics, in addition to their disciplinary content.

Liberal Education and Essential Learning Outcomes

Through the community engagement project, the course will stress to students that a **Liberal Education** addresses real-world challenges through active engagement with the communities in which they live. The **Quest III** project is also connected to the "Ethical Action" component of the Essential Learning Outcome "Ethical Reasoning and Action," which the AAC&U describes as "anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges." The purpose of the community engagement project is thus to connect all

students to the community, on or off campus, early in their college career to enhance their civic knowledge and provide them with an introductory experience in civic engagement.

Signature Questions

- The **Quest III** course will be expected to include “significant engagement” with the **Signature Question** linked to it. “Significant engagement” is defined as an apparent focus and/or integration of the content into a minimum of 30 to 50 percent of the course. (The minimum **SQ** content in **Quest I** remains 25 percent; this percentage is lower than **Quest II** and **III** because **Quest I** courses must also incorporate the First-Year Experience elements.)

Evidence of significant engagement with the **Signature Question** content includes relevant student learning outcomes and graded assignments and is intended to be apparent in the course syllabus.

All **QUEST** instructors (**I**, **II**, and **III**) will be supported by collaborative professional development to assist with the curricular modification necessary to integrate **Signature Question** content into their courses (if such content is not already present in the proposed course).

- The community engagement project will be connected to the **Signature Question**.
- Students will select a **Quest III** course with whichever **Signature Question** they did not take in their first academic year.
- If the **Quest III** course focuses upon the **Intercultural Knowledge Signature Question**, that class will be designated as either an Ethnic Studies or Non-Western Culture course (whichever is appropriate), supporting another USP goal of developing students’ global learning and their responsibility as citizens of an increasingly diverse world.

Overview of the Community Engagement Project: Community Partnerships

Community-based (or service) learning is a high-impact practice, demonstrated to affect student retention and academic success. Though students may have more substantive civic engagement experiences in their major coursework (e.g. internships), this project will introduce students to civic action, community partners, and real-world challenges.

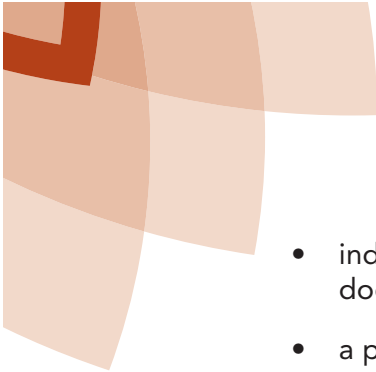
Types of Community Partnerships

Quest III students can partner with businesses; non-profit organizations; civic associations; public schools, colleges, and universities; health and human service organizations; government organizations, or UW Oshkosh campus organizations. As the **Quest III** program is developed, options for types of projects will be collaboratively constructed, connections with campus and community groups (and mechanisms for interaction between them) will be established, and logistical support will be provided.

Project Organization

To ensure maximum flexibility for instructors in **Quest III**, the project can be organized in a variety of ways, including:

- one project for the entire class with either one community partner or multiple partners;
- multiple projects with small groups of students, with one or multiple community partner(s);

- 
- individual student projects determined by students, with instructor pre-approval and documentation;
 - a participant-observational research project with some direct action.

During the course design, the instructor can decide the organization of the project. The form of the project as well as the community partner can be determined either by the instructor or student, depending on the instructor's preference. The project might be supervised or unsupervised, depending on the preference of the instructor. For example, the instructor and the students might participate together in a whole class project organized in advance by the instructor or the instructor might provide a list of appropriate options for students' individual projects, requiring documentation of service and a structured learning outcome (e.g. paper or speech).

Project Support

To assist with civic engagement projects, instructors will be provided with the support of a Community Engagement Coordinator. In addition, ongoing professional development for **Quest III** instructors is envisioned so project ideas, parameters, and challenges may be collaboratively addressed and supported.

Assessment

In order to facilitate assessment, the community engagement project should have a clear connection to course content. The instructor will assess learning through students' ability to connect the course content with the action and practice involved in the community engagement experience.

This assessment can happen in multiple ways; for example, student blogs, media presentations, journal writing, speeches, or research papers. A central component of such assessment could be students' reflection on their community engagement experience. Learning artifacts from these projects would be appropriate for inclusion in the students' **ePortfolios**.

Outcomes

1. Students will develop further connections to the university and/or the local community through a community-engagement project.
2. Students will engage in action with immediate benefits and develop the ability to discern the applicability of academic knowledge in real-world settings.
3. Students will be able to reflect on the relationship between their educational experiences and their actions within communities.
4. Through interaction, students will develop empathy for community members.
5. Students will expand their personal responsibility for their intellectual development by archiving learning artifacts in the **ePortfolio**.

Appendix C: Higher Learning Commission Recommendations

1997 Recommendations

- Greater coherence in the general education curriculum is sorely needed.
- General education needs to have “a coherent, integrated focus,” as “it lacks clear definition and does not clearly address the need to stimulate and examine values or to promote intellectual inquiry.”
- A systematic plan for assessing general education must be devised to coincide with a revised general education program.
- The number of general education courses needs to be reduced.

2007 Recommendations

- Reconsider the policy that all natural science and social science courses count for general education.
- Reduce the number of courses that count for general education.
- Reconfigure the general education program so that there is a practical way to assess whether the goals of the program are being met.
- Put into place a review process for individual general education courses to assure that they continue to meet the goals of the general education program.
- Put assessment strategies in place that will allow for not only collecting but also disseminating to the university information on whether the goals and objectives of the general education program are being met.
- Consider ways to integrate the “sustainability initiative” into the design and assessment of general education.
- Make information regarding the general education program available to faculty and students (currently the only, and limited, information is in the *Bulletin*).

The Higher Learning Commission expects UW Oshkosh to develop a general education program that addresses these concerns and to engage in two cycles of assessment, analysis and program revision prior to the 2017 reaccreditation visit.

New HLC Draft Criteria Related to General Education

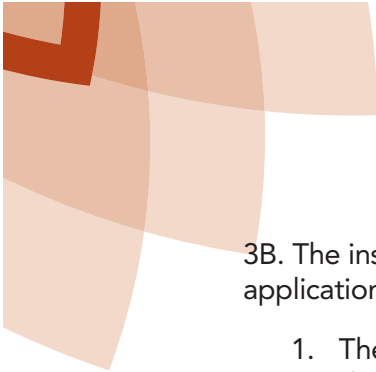
(relevant excerpts)

Criterion Three: Teaching and Learning—Quality, Resources, and Support

Core Component

3A. The institution’s degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
2. The institution’s program quality and learning goals are consistent.



3B. The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the work in which students live and work.

3D. The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Required HLC Assumed Practices

B. Teaching and Learning—Quality, Resources, and Support

1. The institution maintains a minimum requirement for general education for all of its undergraduate programs whether through a traditional practice of distributed curricula (30 credits for bachelor's degrees) or through integrated, embedded, inter-disciplinary or other accepted models that demonstrate a minimum requirement equivalent to the distributed model. Any variation is explained and justified.

Criterion Four: Effective Teaching and Learning

Core Components

4A. The institution's goals for student learning are clearly stated and processes of assessment are in effect for all offerings.

1. The institution demonstrates a commitment to and capacity for educational improvement through assessment of student learning.
2. The learning goals that the institution assesses are the same as the goals that the institution claims for its programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. Assessment processes and methodologies are informed by scholarship and good practice.
5. When the institution reports findings on student achievement of learning it does so fully and accurately.

Visit www.ncahlc.org/Information-for-Institutions/proposed-revisions-to-the-criteria-for-accreditation.html for the full document.

Appendix D: High-Impact Practices

High-Impact Educational Practices



First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a “core” curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with “big questions” that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link “liberal arts” and “professional courses”; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice “across the curriculum” has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore “difficult differences” such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

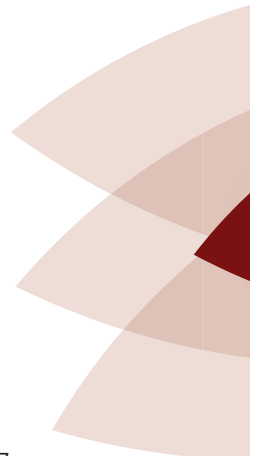
In these programs, field-based “experiential learning” with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects

Whether they're called “senior capstones” or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of “best work,” or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.



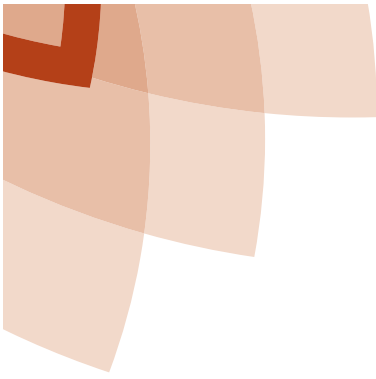


Table 1
Relationships between Selected High-Impact Activities, Deep Learning, and Self-Reported Gains

	Deep Learning	Gains General	Gains Personal	Gains Practical
First-Year				
Learning Communities	+++	++	++	++
Service Learning	+++	++	+++	++
Senior				
Study Abroad	++	+	++	
Student-Faculty Research	+++	++	++	++
Service Learning	++	+++	+++	++
Senior Culminating Experience	++	++	+++	++

+ p < .001, ++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .10, +++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .30

Table 2
Relationships between Selected High-Impact Activities and Clusters of Effective Educational Practices

	Level of Academic Challenge	Active and Collaborative Learning	Student-Faculty Interaction	Supportive Campus Environment
First-Year				
Learning Communities	++	+++	+++	++
Service Learning	++	+++	+++	++
Senior				
Study Abroad	++	++	++	+
Student-Faculty Research	+++	+++	+++	++
Service Learning	++	+++	+++	++
Senior Culminating Experience	++	++	+++	++

+ p < .001, ++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .10, +++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .30

Source: *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter* by George D. Kuh, (Washington, DC: AAC&U, 2008). For information and more resources and research from LEAP, see www.aacu.org/leap.

Appendix E: General Education Reform Process

This monumental reform has involved the extensive participation of faculty and staff members from across the UW Oshkosh campus community. From 2007 to 2011, LERT's work culminated in the passage by the Faculty Senate of our campus **Essential Learning Outcomes** and a general education reform "framework."

The new committee charged with the reform of general education in 2011 put into place many public mechanisms to ensure transparency in the process of moving the framework into a concrete and detailed proposal. To generate awareness, collect input, and solicit suggestions for revision in the 2011-2012 academic year, these mechanisms have included:

- an extensive general education reform website including relevant resources, national models, and a discussion board accompanying the regularly-updated versions of the proposal;
- weekly emails (Tuesday email blasts, currently archived on the website);
- open sessions at the *Provost's Teaching and Learning Summit* (October 2011);
- student general education and relevant transfer experience feedback gathered during *Provost's Teaching and Learning Summit*;
- continued input through biweekly meetings with members of the summer working teams, who comprise the larger reform committee;
- leadership team attendance at biweekly Faculty Senate meetings in 2011-2012 for reporting and input;
- meetings with all interested departments/programs and colleges (more than 50), including the Senate of Academic Staff and the Oshkosh Student Association;
- meetings with all chairs and divisions of the College of Letters and Science;
- ongoing email comments and suggestions from many individuals, compiled and discussed by the committee charged with the reform of general education;
- meetings with representatives of the Center for New Learning, Polk Library, and offices of the Registrar, Advising, and Admissions;
- collaborative conversations with students, faculty and staff from area two-year and technical colleges;
- a second website with a complete University Studies Program Proposal, including components, implementation notes, a comparison chart of current general education requirements and the proposed program, past Higher Learning Commission recommendations, and new HLC draft criteria related to general education;
- distribution of printed copies of the draft proposal to all units on campus;
- administration of two campus-wide online surveys to 1) faculty and staff and 2) students and posting of all survey results, with comments, on the USP Proposal website;
- two campus-wide Open Forums for discussion and feedback;
- coverage in the *Advanced Titan*, *WRST*, *Titan TV*, the campus *Engage* magazine (forthcoming) and the *Oshkosh Northwestern* (forthcoming).



Appendix F: 2011-2012 General Education Reform Team

Special thanks to the faculty and staff who comprised the **Liberal Education Reform Team** (LERT) in its various iterations from 2007 to 2011. Their diligent service led to the construction and adoption of the **Essential Learning Outcomes** and the Faculty Senate-approved General Education Reform Framework.

Sincere gratitude is also extended to members of the current general education reform team (listed below). In addition to these designated committees, hundreds of members of the UW Oshkosh community have provided input to this reform process through dialogues, department meetings, online discussions, workshops, CETL book clubs, sessions during *Provost's Teaching and Learning Summits*, emails, and conversations.

The team is grateful to Aimee Niendorf and Heidi Reinke for their vital contributions in the preparation of the USP proposal booklet, website, and surveys.

General Education Reform Team:

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- Karl Boehler, English
- Christy Brazee, Communication
- Lori Carrell*, Communication
- Julia Chybowski, Music
- Becki Cleveland, College of Nursing
- Jennifer Considine, Communication
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- Linda Eroh, Mathematics
- Jim Feldman, Environmental Studies
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- David Siemers, Political Science
- Tracy Slagter*, Political Science
- Paul Van Auken*, Sociology/Environmental Studies
- Carleen Vande Zande, Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor
- Angela Westphal, Communication

* Denotes member of General Education Reform Leadership Team.



