General Education Reform at UNK

A discussion hosted by Faculty Senate, General Studies Council, and the Center for Teaching Excellence
Motivation for Reform

- Does our current General Studies Program meet the needs of our students?
  - Student Engagement Data (NSSE)
  - General Studies APR
  - Assessment Surveys of Students and Faculty

- Can we design a better curriculum?
National Survey of Student Engagement “NSSE”

Assesses the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Scope

- 1,000,000+ students
- 1,100+ colleges, universities
- 50 states, Puerto Rico, Canada
- 70+ consortia
NSSE’s Survey Instrument

Student Behaviors

UNK Actions & Requirements

Student Background

Student Learning
Objective

● In a typical week, how many homework problem sets do you complete?
  [none] [1-2] [3-4] [5-6] [6+]

● About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?
NSSE (objective)

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, etc.)

Hours per week:

- [0]
- [1-5]
- [6-10]
- [11-15]
- [16-20]
- [21-25]
- [26-30]
- [30+]
Subjective

During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities?
NSSE (subjective)

- Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships

[very much] [quite a bit]
[some] [very little]
NSSE (subjective)

• How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?

[Excellent] [Good] [Fair] [Poor]
GS Objectives

Does GS deliver what it promises?
Four GS Objectives

#1 Locate, Gather Information

#2 Critical Thinking

#3 Communication Skills

#4 Understand Groups, Cultures
NSSE

#1 Locate, Gather Information

Learn effectively on your own

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Year</th>
<th>Mean Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph showing mean scores for different years and categories:
- UNK
- Masters
- All

Seniors
Writing clearly and effectively

NSSE

#2 Communication Skills

![Graph showing the mean scores for writing clearly and effectively from 2002 to 2004 for different categories: UNK, Masters, and All. The scores range from 2.75 to 3.15.](image)
**NSSE**

#2 Communication Skills

**Speaking clearly and effectively**

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<th>Mean Scores</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNK</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Response Year**

- UNK
- Masters
- All

Seniors
Thinking critically and analytically

Mean Scores

Response Year

UNK
Masters
All

Seniors
NSSE
#3  Critical Thinking

Quantitative problems

Mean Scores

2002 2003 2004
Response Year

UNK  Masters  All

Seniors
NSSE
#3 Critical Thinking

Solve complex real-world problems

Mean Scores

Response Year

2002 2003 2004

Mean Scores

2.45 2.5 2.55 2.6 2.65 2.7 2.75

UNK Masters All

Seniors
NSSE

#4 Understand Groups, Cultures

Foreign language coursework

Mean Scores

2002 2003 2004
Response Year

UNK
Masters
All

Seniors
NSSE

#4 Understand Groups, Cultures

Understand other races, ethnic backgrounds

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- **UNK**
- **Masters**
- **All**
Challenge of exams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>UNK Mean Score</th>
<th>Masters Mean Score</th>
<th>All Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
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NSSE
All Four GS Objectives

Acquiring a broad general education

Mean Scores

2002 2003 2004
Response Year

Mean Scores

3.35
3.3
3.25
3.2
3.15
3.1
3.05
3.0
2.95

UNK
Masters
All

Seniors
GS Objectives

Does GS deliver what it promises?

UNK below National Means
UNK surveys about GS

Clarity of Purpose of GS Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Year</th>
<th>Mean Scores</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Students N=631</td>
<td>Faculty N=102</td>
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UNK surveys about GS

Disciplinary Links GS ↔ Major

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<td>Faculty</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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Student N=631
Faculty N=102
UNK surveys about GS

2005 Faculty

- Clarity of purpose of General Studies
  (mean = 3.13 out of 5)
- 27 additional questions, responses average around
  3 out of 5

2005 Students

- 75% of students: GS courses were NOT related to their major
UNK surveys about GS

No strong enthusiasm about GS Program
2006 Student Survey

Major changes to the GS Program?

54% of students “agree” or “strongly agree”

13% “disagree” or “strongly disagree”
We’re in good company

- AACU survey (2000) of 567 four-year institutions
  - 54% responded
  - 64% said GS renewal a high priority
  - 56% had revised their GS since 1994
Identified Strengths

- Single program
- Broad curriculum – expertise
- Comprehensive rationale
  - Structure
  - Purpose
  - Assessment
- Transfers
- Change process clear
- “A dialogue” – Roundtable
APR

“Propositions”

- Course Outcomes intentional / transparent
- Emphasize student learning
- GS & major cognizant of one other
- Distinctive
- Coherence: portal > disciplinary core > capstone
- Professional development
- Assessment “built in” – drives creation of new program
Effective Educational Practices

- First-Year Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences ("Core")
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments
- Undergraduate Research
- Global Learning
- Service Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects
Impact of Educationally Purposeful Activities on First Academic Year GPA by Pre-College Achievement Level

First-year GPA

Educationally Purposeful Activities (standardized)

ACT 20
ACT 24
ACT 28
Essential Learning Outcomes

Students should prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by acquiring:
The Essential Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
- Intellectual and Practical Skills
- Personal and Social Responsibility
- Integrative Learning
The Essential Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
  - Through study in
    - sciences / mathematics
    - social sciences
    - humanities
    - histories
    - languages
    - arts

- Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring
The Essential Learning Outcomes

Intellectual and Practical Skills, including

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance.
The Essential Learning Outcomes

- **Personal and Social Responsibility, including**
  - Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
  - Intercultural knowledge and competence
  - Ethical reasoning and action
  - Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

- **Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges**
The Essential Learning Outcomes

- Integrative Learning, including
  Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems
Renewal driven by…

- Assessment data
- Two APRs
- Faculty and Student Surveys
- Changed philosophy of general education
- Changing nature of higher education
- Accreditation
A Process for Change

General Studies Roundtables
Phase I Roundtable

- Create mission statement, goals and expected student outcomes of an ideal general education program

- The General Studies program at UNK will facilitate the development of students’ skills that transfer across all disciplines. Students will understand the accomplishments of civilizations and world cultures, engage in logical and creative thought in different disciplines, and experience personal growth that enhances their ability to be lifelong learners, and ethical and responsible citizens.
Current General Studies Program

- “Cafeteria” Style Program
  - Faculty and Department Driven
    - Too many courses as introduction to majors
    - Lacks integration of various disciplines
  - Difficult to assess programmatically

- Does not correspond well with Phase I mission and student outcomes
Phase II Roundtable

Charge:

- Design an ideal program that meets the needs of our students (foremost) and that will prepare them for life-long learning and active participation in society
Phase II Program DRAFT

Pedagogical Principles

- Extensive use of:
  - Primary texts
  - Writing
  - Critical thinking and analysis
  - Discussion
  - Cultural and Global Diversity

- No repetition of high school course work
- Higher expectations for incoming competency
- Integration throughout collegiate career
Phase II Program DRAFT

Portal Course: 3 cr. hrs.
Core Curriculum: 12 cr. hrs. (Skills)
Foundations of Literate Society / Historical Sources: 3 cr. hrs.
Foundations/Modes of Inquiry: 12 cr. hrs.
Disciplinary Focus: 13 cr. hrs.
Capstone Course: 2 cr. hr.

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Total: 45 cr. hrs.
Phase II Program DRAFT

- **Core Curriculum:** 12 cr. hrs.
  - Writing – 3 cr. hrs.
  - Wellness – 3 cr. hrs
  - Math for the Educated Person – 3 cr. hrs.
  - Communications – 3 cr. hrs.

- **Foundations of Literate Society / Historical Sources:** 3 cr. hrs.
Phase II Program DRAFT

Portal Course: 3 cr. hrs.

Foundations/Modes of Inquiry: 12 cr. hrs.
  - Natural Sciences – 3 hrs.
  - Social Sciences – 3 hrs.
  - Arts – 3 hrs.
  - Humanities – 3 hrs.

Disciplinary Focus / Follow-Up to the Modes: 13 cr. hrs.
  - Natural Sciences – 4 hrs. (lab course)
  - Social Sciences – 3 hrs.
  - Arts – 3 hrs.
  - Humanities – 3 hrs.

Capstone Course: 2 cr. hr.
General Education Reform at UNK

Comments and Questions?