



MEMORANDUM

From: Anne Alexander, Interim Provost

Date: October 5, 2020

Subject: Next Generation University Studies Program (NGGE23)

I am excited to ask you to begin a discussion about the next generation of general education for UW students. Our current University Studies Program (USP) 2015 general education program had its beginnings in a similar exercise that began over a decade ago. Given accelerating disruption in workplaces and society, it is time to think again about the way we prepare all UW students for full participation as citizens in an increasingly complex world. Thank you for your willingness to be part of the leadership team that will spearhead these conversations. You are tasked with an important and complicated institutional project that will impact students for years to come.

Principles for Committee:

1. The spirit of our general education program is that we believe every graduate of the University of Wyoming should have mastered a set of general and high-level essential skills, techniques, and habits of the mind, no matter their major. You should always **keep students at the center of your work and ask what is best for all UW students**; please think on a student-centered and institutional, rather than departmental or college, advocacy scale.
2. You should start by **exploring and developing student learning outcomes appropriate to general education and to UW**, and develop mechanisms that will assist programs, departments, and colleges to reinforce these throughout degree with discipline specific coursework.
3. **Learning outcomes will drive the curriculum, not vice versa.**
4. As you develop course- or course-sequence related recommendations based on these learning outcomes, keep in mind these parameters and constraints:
 - a. It is best practice for the number of student credit hours in general education to remain around **30 non-remedial credit hours** – otherwise, we will impede

progress to graduation. Please ensure that you take into account time to degree and not impose undue barriers.

- b. **Community college and transfer student implications** must be considered so that students who join UW after completing coursework or degrees elsewhere will not be at a disadvantage. The Wyoming community colleges will be represented by Dr. Ben Moritz, Deputy Director/Chief Academic and Student Services Officer Wyoming Community College Commission, State of Wyoming
 - c. Explore and understand the **diversity of student populations that UW serves**, and the variations in scaffolding these populations may need.
5. I encourage you to be flexible and broad thinkers on **modalities** of delivery, how **microcredentialing** might be used to meet learning outcomes, and how we might **integrate course sequences** to reach and reinforce learning outcomes.
 6. Remember, complexity does not imply a robust or rigorous curriculum. Use **design thinking** to reinforce this principle.
 7. Consider building **experiential components, essential skills, and career services skills** into the Next Gen USP. Please consider the findings from the UW “Careers Everywhere Report.”
 8. Build, communicate, and advocate for the holistic “**WHY**” of the essential skills and learning outcomes you develop. The learning outcomes are key to students’ success in life. This narrative should be compelling, sustainable, and consistent after the revisions are implemented.
 9. **Students must have agency and be partners** in their general education program. UW students will be represented on the committee by ASUW designees.
 10. The USP 2015 instituted a required First Year Seminar (FYS) for all freshmen students. Please investigate the cost-benefit of the FYS program. What is the role of the FYS moving forward?
 11. President Seidel has identified the themes of more digital, more entrepreneurial, more interdisciplinary and more inclusive to embed across all UW programs. What is the role of these themes in the USP Next Gen Program?

Organizational and Logistical Matters

I ask that you do the bulk of your work in smaller working groups or subcommittees, and that each subcommittee or working group embed specialists in the development of learning outcomes, assessment, and curriculum mapping.

In the initial phases of your work, I suggest that you spend time learning about peer institutions’ recent revisions to general education; if you would like to visit peer institutions or

attend conferences that will be helpful, my office will have a small travel budget for your use. You should also ensure that you consult with our community college colleagues.

I am including a proposed timeline for your work, below. You may wish to propose a different timeline or actions within the timeline. Please work iteratively with my office to build a workable but ambitious timeline. Please provide a summary report at the conclusion of each semester's activities.

First Steps:

This first stage of work through Fall of 2020 should focus on three primary components:

1. **Tool kit.** What do you need to help you be successful? Please keep a running dialogue going with my office so that we may ensure that you are able to collaborate with relevant UW and Wyoming colleagues, travel to peer institutions, attend conferences or workshops, invite experts in general education to UW, and have research materials (books, journals, etc.) that you need. Please share your initial tool-kit needs with my office by the end of Fall 2020, and continue to update it as necessary.

2. **Learning outcomes.** What outcomes should we expect of all baccalaureate graduates, regardless of their major fields of study? The outcomes may be accomplished through:
 - general education course requirements
 - experiential learning
 - courses taken for the major(s)
 - electives
 - co-curricular learning

My intention is for the task force to identify a proposed set of outcomes before turning to the discussion of general education course requirements.

3. **Assessment.** How amenable are the outcomes to assessment? What are your qualitative and quantitative estimates of the degree to which each learning outcome identified is amenable to direct and/or indirect assessment during students' baccalaureate careers at UW? Assessment is an integral part of UW's teaching mission; however, I encourage you to not omit learning outcomes that are important to our students' success simply because they are difficult to assess during students' undergraduate careers.

Proposed Timeline:

Spring and Summer 2021 –

- Committee will brainstorm initial toolkit needed for re-envisioning
- Faculty interested and nominated, other representatives nominated, committee/taskforce/working group charged
- Initial committee/taskforce/working group brainstorming on what else should be in their toolkit

Fall 2021

- Group holds listening sessions, focus groups, other feedback gathering activities
- Group does research (travel included)
- Group begins drafting initial ideas around next gen ged ed (NGGE23) learning outcomes
- Group meets with Provost at least 2-3 times to keep her updated
- Group begins mapping and needs analysis for transition from USP 2015 outcomes to NGGE23 outcomes.
 - Guidelines for identification of courses with learning outcome equivalencies, can students change to NGGE23 from USP 2015 or vice versa, faculty/department and program support needs for transition.
 - These should be embedded in upcoming budget forecasts

Spring and Summer 2022

- Group holds listening sessions, focus groups, other feedback gathering activities
- Group does research (travel included)
- Group distributes their initial vision of NGGE23 after Provost reviews
- Group begins drafting policies, procedures, and assessment guidance for (NGGE23)
- Group continues mapping and needs analysis for transition from USP 2015 outcomes to NGGE23 outcomes.
 - Guidelines for identification of courses with learning outcome equivalencies, can students change to NGGE23 from USP 2015 or vice versa, faculty/department and program support needs for transition.
 - These should be embedded in upcoming budget forecasts, just in case you forgot.
- Group meets with Provost at least 2-3 times to keep her updated

Fall 2022

- Group holds listening sessions, focus groups, other feedback gathering activities
- Group refines vision of NGGE23
- Group meets with Provost at least 2-3 times to keep her updated
- Shared governance bodies review and provide feedback, iterate with group on revisions
- Group continues working transition mapping, assessment and policies/procedures for NGGE23
- Faculty begin drafting course proposals and/or program ideas for NGGE23

- Assistance was built into the budget, remember? Now, we need for them to have time, workshops, and professional development.

Spring 2023

- Shared governance bodies finish reviews and iterations with group
- Faculty Senate approves NGGE23
- Trustees approve NGGE23
- Faculty submit course proposals and/or program ideas
- Group transitions to assist USP committee in evaluation of proposals

Fall 2023

NGGE23 launch