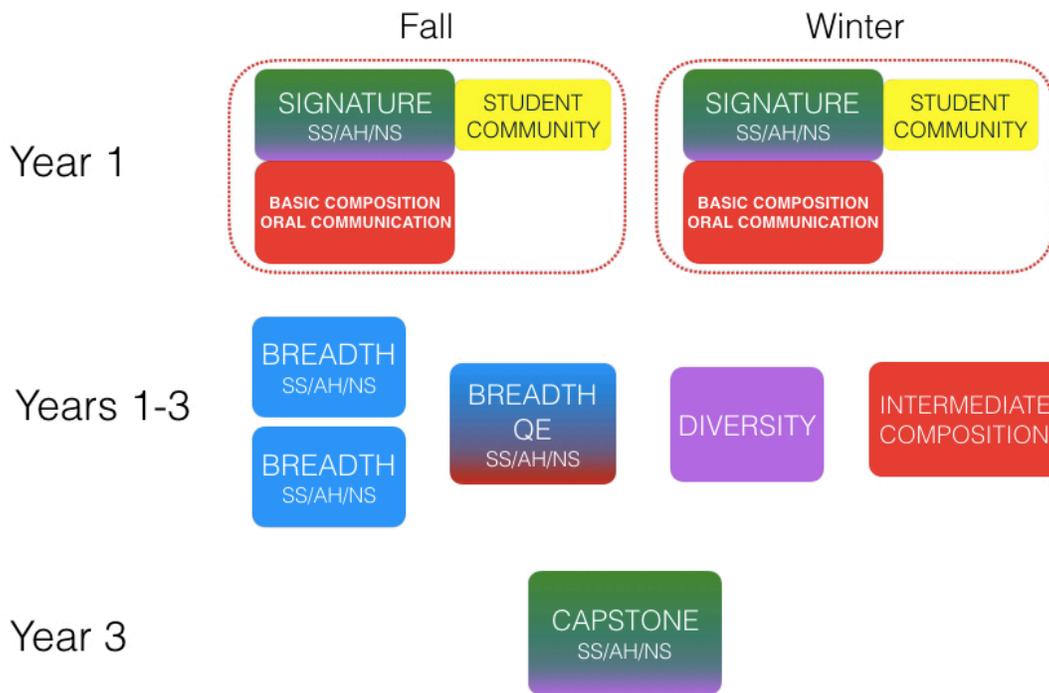


Overview of a Proposal for a Revised General Education Curriculum
The General Education Reform Committee
May 4, 2016

This is a brief overview of the proposed structure of a new **University Core Curriculum**. We feel that this structure provides a sound framework for discussing the curriculum with the broader university community. These discussions will help to strengthen the overall proposal and engender the type of campus-wide involvement that will be necessary for the success of our undergraduate curriculum.

Details on the process we have followed as a committee and the data we have collected and examined have been documented on our web site: <http://wayne.edu/engaging-gened/>.

Below is a schematic that provides an overview of the proposal:



Total Credits = 33

Each of the boxes represents a unique credit bearing course; all required courses are shown. Year 1 focuses around a paired set of “Year 1 Core” courses designed to generate excitement, build key academic and practical skills, and build a sense of community. The program culminates with a Year 3 Capstone course that builds on previous learning by connecting students with the community. Breadth and Foundational Competency courses are taken between years 1 and 3. Details on all elements are provided below.

Year 1 Core:

We want to place a particular emphasis on year one, both to help improve retention and to attract students to our campus. The year 1 core consists of three explicitly linked elements: a “Signature” course, a writing or oral communication course that is explicitly

paired with the Signature course, and a peer-mentored Community section. All freshmen will take these courses. These core courses are intended to help excite students about the promise of a university education, build key skills essential for student success, and to increase a student’s feelings of “belongingness” to the university community.



Signature courses will represent the beginning of the Wayne State undergraduate experience. These courses will be designed to be exciting and engaging, as well as attractive to prospective students. They will offer broad insights to contemporary issues, with a particular focus on issues that reflect the distinctiveness of Wayne State University. These could include issues such as culture, sustainability, health, ethics, and urban development and renewal. These courses will be required to address *Critical Thinking* as a key learning outcome (represented by green color in boxes). Further, since issues of diversity were consistently raised as being central to what is “Distinctively Wayne State”, these course must also address one of the stated Diversity learning outcomes (represented by purple color in boxes), which include *Intercultural Knowledge and Competence*, *Global Learning*, and *Ethical Reasoning* (all outcomes are posted on our web site: http://wayne.edu/engaging-gened/documents/goals_and_outcomes.pdf). These courses will be explicitly paired with a *Foundational Skills* course and a peer-mentored *Student Community* that will help to build core academic skills and to develop social networks which will enhance college success.

Foundational courses are intended to help build fundamental skills that are essential for college success. They will address one of the *core foundational competencies* that were clearly identified by the university community: composition or oral communication. These courses will be similar to those offered now with the exception of an explicit pairing with a signature course, which allows these skills to be developed in the context of “big questions”.

Student communities are peer-mentored sections of signature courses that will serve multiple purposes, with the ultimate goals of enhancing student engagement, success, and retention by implementing high-impact practices within a student’s first year in college. These communities will be instrumental in socializing students into the university community by providing activities that will increase their connections between fellow students, academic advising staff, and their instructors. They will also provide activities to help students build key skills and habits that will allow them to successively navigate the university and manage their busy lives. These activities would range from time management, study and test taking skills to engaging in community activities and experiencing local attractions.

Writing sequence:

The writing sequence will retain a similar structure as it has now, with the exception of the explicit pairing of the “Basic Composition” (BC) level course with the Signature

course. The Intermediate Composition (IC) course will remain as it is now. The Writing Intensive course (writing in the majors) will be considered a function of the major.

Exceptions:

- Students who place out of BC as determined by using current standards can take an unpaired Signature course. They will still be required take the IC course.
- Students needing developmental work will take ENG 1010 (as they do now) paired with a Signature course during Fall semester. They will then take a paired BC course winter semester. They will complete their foundational competency requirement by taking an unpaired Oral Communication course in year 2.

Oral communication:

The oral communication course will remain as it is currently structured with the exception of the explicit pairing with the Signature course. The topics utilized for the students' speeches in this class will be tied to the content of the signature course. This would follow the structure of the "Speaking" sections that are part of the current oral communication course.

Quantitative requirement

We propose that specific math requirements be determined by the majors. The major requirement will satisfy the University Core requirement. We also propose an *alternative* pathway for students who's major does not require a specific math course. We feel that including such a course is important because the ability to reason in a quantitative fashion is an essential life skill that is necessary for individuals to understand and engage with a broad spectrum of societal issues.

To this end, we propose the creation of *Quantitative experience (QE)* courses to satisfy the core quantitative requirement for students whose major does not require a specific mathematics or statistics course. These courses are intended to develop in students a way of thinking that is based on the quantitative analysis of information that can be used to make connections and draw meaningful conclusions. This would include developing the ability to interpret quantitative representations of information (such as graphs and tables), and the ability to use quantitative information to communicate in a purposeful way. Key learning outcomes would include *Quantitative Reasoning* and *Critical Thinking*. We anticipate that this requirement could be satisfied by a variety of programs. QE courses are not required to have a mathematics prerequisite.

Year 3 capstone course

This course is a Signature course in the same manner as those in year 1; it should address big, contemporary issues that reflect the uniqueness of our university. The distinctiveness of these courses is in emphasizing an explicit pairing of course subject matter with some form of community engagement. Students should be engaged in a Signature topic from theory that can be learned in the classroom and connected to actual *practice* information outside of it. These courses should build on a student's previous learning in our program and also help to connect them with the broader community. We feel that there is a great deal of educational value to be gained by creating "teams" of students from different majors/backgrounds to address issues relevant to our community. An active relationship between our students and the

surrounding community will thus be a core element of the “Distinctively Wayne State” experience.

This course will be required of ALL graduates of Wayne State University. Those transferring into the university with an MTA (or equivalent) will still be required to take the capstone course.

Breadth requirements

We are proposing three general ‘categories’ of breadth courses. These groupings represent consolidations of current breadth categories, and align with the current Michigan Transfer Agreement:

1. Natural sciences (7 credits): Two courses from different departments, one course must have a lab as part of course.
 - Combines current physical and life sciences categories
2. Humanities and the Arts (6 credits): two courses from different departments.
 - Combines current VPA and P&L categories
3. Social Studies (6 credits): two courses from different departments.
 - Combines current SS, ASI, and HS categories

Satisfying breadth requirements:

- 6 credit hours of breadth requirements can be taken as "Signature courses" in the first year.
- 3 credit hours of breadth requirements can be taken as a "Core Capstone".
- 3 credit hours of breadth requirements must be from courses designated "Quantitative Experience" for those students whose major does not require a specific math requirement.

Note in the schematic of the proposal that each Signature course and the QE course include the designations SS/HUM/NS. In our proposal, each Signature course and QE course will have one of these designations. A student successfully completing this course will have satisfied that part of the breadth requirement.

Diversity requirement

A clear message our committee received from the university community (faculty, students, staff, alumni, and employers) was that diversity is central to the nature of WSU, i.e., “Distinctively Wayne State”. Thus we have placed the values and goals of diversity as a central component of the University Core program. We propose to integrate Diversity into the curriculum in a number of ways. First, as stated above, the Signature courses will be required to address one of the Diversity learning outcomes: *Intercultural Knowledge and Competence*, *Global Learning*, or *Ethical Reasoning* (outcomes are posted on our web site: http://wayne.edu/engaging-generated/documents/goals_and_outcomes.pdf). Second, we feel that the Student Communities and the Capstone courses will increase a student’s meaningful interaction with their peers and the community, thus leveraging the incredible diversity of our university. Finally, we are proposing the creation of specific “Diversity” courses, with students required to take one course in this designation. These courses will provide opportunities for students to explore diversity at the domestic level and consider the ways in which it intersects with real world challenges at the local, national and/or global level.

Total credits:

Signature courses: 9 credits (Two first year Signature courses and third year Capstone course)

Student Communities: 2 credits

Foundational courses: 9 credits (Basic Composition, Intermediate Composition, Oral Communication)

Diversity course: 3 credits

Breadth: 7 – 10 credits minimum: (19 credits total: 9 contained in Signature courses, 3 contained in Quantitative Experience course for students whose major does not require a specific math course)

33 credits