Report of the General Education Curriculum Committee on its Motions for the Improvement of General Education and FYE Courses at UM-Flint

Background

In March of 2016, during its review of the 2014-2015 General Education Assessment Implementation Report, the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECC) initiated discussions on how to assess more effectively the General Education Program, including its foundational course, the First Year Experience. This, in addition to consideration of LEAP and HLC priorities for closing the loop on assessment, led the committee to conclude that the creation of ad hoc committees to assist the GECC in conducting a thoughtful, in-depth review of General Education and the First Year Experience would be necessary. During the month of April, 2016, the GECC worked on creating proposals for both committees, the language of which highlighted the inclusive and transparent approach in the review process that these committees would complete. Once ready, these proposals were approved by the GECC, announced at the May 18th, 2016, university-wide governing faculty meeting, and then circulated the next day to the governing faculty by the Provost’s Office. In the May 19th e-mail, GECC Chair Cathy Miller invited interested faculty to contact her, as chair of the ad hoc committees, to volunteer to serve on them, asking that they specify which committee they preferred.

Ad hoc committee work would commence in the summer, and carry on into the following academic year. The initial response from interested faculty resulted in ad hoc committees formed with the following membership and unit representation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FYE Review</th>
<th>General Education Program Review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darryl Baird (CAS)</td>
<td>Stephanie Dean (CAS)</td>
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<td>Janet Haley (CAS)</td>
<td>Laura Friesen (LIB)</td>
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<td>Christopher Heidenreich (CAS)</td>
<td>Dan Lair (CAS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jamile Lawand (CAS), also GECC member</td>
<td>Jamile Lawand (CAS), also GECC member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jie Li (SOM), also GECC member</td>
<td>Ming Li (CAS), also GECC member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen Turner (CAS)</td>
<td>Quamrul Mazumder (CAS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chris Waters (CAS)</td>
<td>Shan Parker (SHPS/CHS), also GECC member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janelle Wiess (CAS)</td>
<td>Stephen Turner (CAS)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stevens Wandmacher (CAS)</td>
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In addition to ad hoc committee chair Cathy Miller (SOM) serving on both committees, Gilia Smith participated as ex officio representation from the Provost’s Office.

Understanding that there might be scheduling conflict over the summer, the ad hoc committee chair expressed flexibility to accommodate this, so that work could commence on the review

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1 In September, 2016, Laura Friesen (LIB), Hillary Heinze (CAS) and Peggy Kahn (CAS) joined the FYE ad hoc Committee.
process. Members who wanted to work on the committee, but couldn’t attend a summer meeting, were kept in contact via e-mail, and those who no longer were interested in working on the committee could have their name removed from the e-mail list. Similarly, if interested faculty wished to join once the regular academic year had started, their names were added to the ad hoc committee membership. The General Education Program Review ad hoc Committee had its first meeting on May 31st, 2016, and the FYE Review ad hoc Committee on June 2nd, 2016.

While work continued on both ad hoc committees during the 2016-2017 academic year, GECC and ad hoc Committees Chair Cathy Miller met in the Fall with the Provost and the Academic Affairs Advisory Committee and Faculty Council chairs to discuss the General Education Program at UM-Flint, its goals, principles, and objectives. It also became evident that, in order to conduct the review without having additional new FYE and General Education courses being introduced during the review process, a temporary moratorium would be needed. To this end, once the deadline for 2017-2018 Catalog changes had passed, a moratorium was placed so that no new FYE or General Education designation requests would be accepted during the General Education Program and FYE review process.²

Throughout the 2016-2017 academic year, GECC received regular updates from Chair Cathy Miller on the progress of the ad hoc committees’ work. In the final GECC meeting on May 11th, 2017, committee members discussed the latest update on their progress and next steps for receipt and review of the ad hoc committees’ reports, including the timeframe for lifting the moratorium on General Education designation and FYE requests.

On September 26th, 2017, the FYE Review ad hoc Committee submitted to GECC an initial draft of its report, which the GECC began reviewing at its next meeting in October. Subsequently, GECC scheduled to meet with available ad hoc committee members to discuss their findings at the second October GECC meeting. This meeting, however, was cancelled due to the intermittent power outage on campus that day, and was re-scheduled for the next GECC meeting on Monday, November 13th, 2017. Soon after, GECC received the draft report from the General Education Program Review ad hoc Committee on November 17th, 2017, and initiated its review at its next meeting on November 27th, 2017.

At its first 2018 meeting on January 22nd, GECC identified the following plan of action to roll out the ad hoc committee reports for broader faculty discussion: 1) provide an executive summary of each report; 2) create an online survey for general faculty feedback on the General Education Program and FYE’s at UM-Flint; 3) set up face-to-face forums to hear from faculty on the shared ad hoc committee reports. Since the FYE Review ad hoc Committee report had been received first, GECC determined it would be the starting point for this dissemination and feedback process. It approved the executive summary “Summary of Findings in the First Year Experience Course Offerings” at the February 13th, 2018, GECC meeting, and GECC Chair Cathy Miller circulated it with the final FYE Review Report in her February 14th, 2018, e-mail invitation to faculty to attend one of two open forums to discuss the First Year Experience Review. In order to capture the most available faculty, these forums were set for the following

² This moratorium affected only the 2018-2019 Catalog, in which no new FYE courses or General Education designations were added.
dates and times:³ Monday, February 19th, 1:00-2:30 pm, and Tuesday, February 20th, 3:00-4:30 pm. Afterward, on February 22nd, an online survey of the First Year Experience at UM-Flint was circulated to the faculty, remaining open until midnight of March 9th, 2018.⁴ In the e-mail inviting faculty to participate, GECC Chair Cathy Miller informed faculty of the remaining review steps: to ensure as an inclusive and comprehensive process as possible, the GECC would be considering the FYE Review ad hoc Committee’s report, the comments shared in both recent FYE forums, and the data collected in the current FYE survey to create recommendations for potential FYE improvements. The committee’s final recommendations would be shared with AAAC, Faculty Council and the governing faculty in April, 2018.

At its next meeting on March 13th, 2018, the GECC discussed data from the two FYE forums held in February. It also reviewed the executive summary for the General Education Program Review ad hoc Committee report, discussed questions for the online General Education survey, and identified dates for the forums on General Education. GECC Chair Cathy Miller circulated the approved executive summary “Overview of Findings in the General Education Review”, along with the final General Education Program Review ad hoc Committee report, in her March 15th, 2018, e-mail invitation to faculty to attend one of two open forums to discuss the General Education Program Review. In order to capture the most available faculty, these forums were set for the following dates and times: Wednesday, March 21st, 12:30-2:00 pm, and Thursday, March 22nd, 3:30-5:00 pm. Chair Miller also reminded faculty that the report was just one piece of evidence that the GECC would use to formulate its recommendations for governing faculty consideration—forum comments and responses to an upcoming General Education survey would also be used to inform GECC recommendations. This online survey of the General Education Program at UM-Flint was circulated to the faculty on March 20th, and remained open until midnight of March 30th, 2018.

GECC held its next meeting on March 27th, 2018, focusing on the FYE forum and survey data, in conjunction with the FYE Review Report, to articulate its recommendations for FYE improvements. Discussion of these recommendations continued at the April 10th GECC meeting, which also included discussion of the General Education forum and survey data and General Education Program Review Report. Both sets of recommendations were finalized at the GECC April 24th, 2018, meeting, with subsequent submission to Faculty Council for circulation prior to the May 10th university-wide governing faculty meeting. These recommendations were framed in the form of motions by the GECC, and presented by GECC Chair Cathy Miller to the UM-Flint governing faculty on May 10th, 2018.

GECC Motions

As stated by GECC Chair Cathy Miller in her February 22nd and March 22nd e-mails to the governing faculty, GECC used several pieces of evidence to inform its formulation of recommendations: both the FYE Review Report and the General Education Program Review Report.

³ The dates accommodated potentially both the M/W and T/R teaching schedules, and the times covered either non-standard (1:45-2:30) time or overlapped two standardized time slots so that a faculty member might be able to attend a portion of the forum.
⁴ This deadline took into account the week of Spring Break.
Report submitted by the respective ad hoc review committees, comments from the four forums held in February and March of 2018 to discuss the reports, and the responses to the online General Education and FYE surveys. The GECC motions documents each began with a preface explaining the process that GECC envisioned occurring for the improvement of the General Education Program and FYE courses, respectively, for which the motions, although independent of each other, were designed optimally to work together. This general plan was followed by the motions presented for consideration by the governing faculty (7 motions for the General Education Program, and 8 for FYE courses), each having an accompanying explanation/rationale. The motions were the following:

**General Education Motions**

1. Appoint a faculty member to be the director of the Gen Ed Program.

2. Agree that each unit curriculum committee review and consider the revised Gen Ed designation definitions before the Governing Faculty vote on acceptance.

3. Reduce the current 12 Gen Ed learning outcomes (GELOs) to 10 GELOs. The two GELOs to remove are numbers 8 and 9.

4. Agree that each unit curriculum committee review and consider the Gen Ed learning outcomes as revised by the ad hoc committee before the Governing Faculty vote on acceptance.

5. Recommend the director and GECC work to incentivize programs and schools to encourage students to broaden their course selections across multiple departments and schools.

6. Recommend GECC and the director work on an assessment plan for:
   - Assessing learning outcomes and revising GELOs
   - Assessing Gen Ed courses in effectiveness and compliance with Gen Ed program goals
   - Assessing overall effectiveness of the General Education program

7. Recommend Gen Ed courses be revised and go through a resubmission process to align the course to the new learning outcomes and goals. GECC will oversee the resubmission process. The process will take place once a director is identified.

**FYE Motions**

1. Appoint a faculty member to be coordinator of the FYE courses and who reports to the proposed General Education director.
2. Reduce the number of required Gen Ed learning outcomes from 5 to 3.

3. Identify 3 Gen Ed learning outcomes required for FYE courses. Faculty choose 2 of the 3 outcomes from these 3 required outcomes (see item 4). Then they choose the 3rd outcome from the other General Education learning outcomes.

4. Recommend the following 3 Gen Ed learning outcomes as the required outcomes from which to choose 2:
   - GELO 5: Produce competent written work
   - GELO 10: Use multiple perspectives and methodologies to analyze real or hypothetical problems
   - GELO 12: Apply knowledge to complex issues such as social justice, globalization, economic growth and distribution, environmental sustainability, public health, etc., in increasingly broad spheres of influence

5. Identify 1 common FYE learning outcome unique to all FYE courses (not currently one of the Gen Ed learning outcomes (GELOs)).

6. Keep class sizes small (between 15-25 students).

7. Recommend FYE faculty and the coordinator work on an assessment plan for:
   - Assessing Gen Ed and FYE learning outcomes
   - Assessing FYE courses in effectiveness and compliance with FYE goals
   - Assessing overall effectiveness of FYE courses in the General Education Program

8. Recommend all FYE courses be revised and go through a resubmission process to align the course to the new learning outcomes and goals developed by the coordinator and FYE faculty. GECC will oversee the resubmission process. The process will take place once a coordinator is identified.

At the May 10th, 2018, university-wide governing faculty meeting, a motion was passed by the faculty to endorse the above General Education Curriculum Committee motions regarding General Education and the First Year Experience, and for the GECC to send them to the units’ Curriculum Committees for consideration and approval. At its first meeting on September 13th, 2018, the GECC discussed this mandate under “Matters Arising”, and determined next steps: at the September 27th GECC meeting, it prepared a communication to send to unit Curriculum Committee Chairs, along with the motions, for their unit faculty’s consideration and approval. This communication, which corresponded to step #2 of the process explained in the motions’ preface, was sent to each unit’s Curriculum Committee Chair on September 30th, 2018, with a request that their unit’s governing faculty be able to vote on the motions before January 1st, 2019. The GECC received responses from the respective unit Curriculum Committee Chairs with the voting results on the following dates: November 26th, 2018 (SEHS), December 3rd, 2018 (CHS), December 13th, 2018 (SON), December 14th, 2018 (SOM), and March 25th, 2019 (CAS). The
chart below reflects the unit voting results, where the check mark (✓) indicates which motions were approved by each unit’s governing faculty.

Voting Results

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Motions</th>
<th>CAS</th>
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<th>SOM</th>
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GECC Deliberations

The GECC reviewed unit voting results as they were made available. The first responses in November and December, 2018, were promising in that the majority of the motions had been approved by the unit governing faculties: CHS and SON approved all the General Education and FYE motions, while SEHS only voted no on the FYE motion to keep class sizes small—as did SOM, which also rejected the FYE motion to have an FYE coordinator. The CAS voting results, however, changed this trend: it only approved three General Education motions and two FYE motions. These were received on March 25th, 2019, and the GECC discussed them at its March 28th, 2019, meeting.

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5 The approved General Education motions were for a faculty member to be a director of the General Education Program, and to consider for approval both the revised General Education designation definitions and revised
As stated earlier, while the motions were optimally designed to work together, they are also independent for the most part. Therefore, some of the approved motions could be implemented. The five schools and colleges show unanimity on General Education motions 1, 2, and 4, and FYE motion 2. Due to the recent (April 5th, 2019) e-mail from Interim Provost Alcock calling for nominations for Search Advisory Committees, the General Education and FYE motions proposing the appointment of a faculty member to be director/coordinator of the General Education Program/FYE courses, respectively, appear to have become an issue that GECC will need to revisit in the future, if it is determined that either or both needs persist. For now, it is likely the GECC will be working with the future Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies instead of the director or coordinator proposed in the respective General Education/FYE motion.

Thus, based on voting results, the GECC identified the following actions to be undertaken:

1. GECC sends revised General Education designation definitions to the units’ Curriculum Committees for their units’ consideration and approval.
2. GECC sends revised General Education learning outcomes to the units’ Curriculum Committees for their units’ consideration and approval.
3. GECC changes the FYE proposal form on Curriculog to require 3, instead of the original 5, General Education learning outcomes identified for FYE’s.

In addition to the above, the GECC will work on the following items as part of its regular committee activity and responsibilities in the review of the General Education Program and in ensuring alignment of individual courses with General Education learning outcomes:

1. GECC will work with the new Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies on an assessment plan for the General Education Program and First Year Experience that assesses: General Education learning outcomes, General Education and FYE courses’ effectiveness and compliance with their respective General Education Program and FYE goals, and overall effectiveness of the General Education Program and the First Year Experience courses.
2. If the revised General Education designation definitions and learning outcomes are approved, GECC will review existing General Education and FYE courses to ensure alignment. The committee wants to be clear that this will not constitute a re-approval or resubmission process for the existing courses (as they will not be submitted through Curriculog), but rather a quick and simple review conducted by the GECC itself.

General Education learning outcomes. The approved FYE motions were for the reduction in number of required General Education learning outcomes from 5 to 3, and to keep class sizes small.
Concluding Remarks

As this report describes, the GECC has spent the past three years seeking to assess UM-Flint’s General Education Program and its foundational course, the First Year Experience, from a university-wide perspective that includes voices and views from each of the five schools and colleges. The committee also addressed critical LEAP and HLC priorities for closing the loop on assessment. With these considerations in mind, the GECC identified the need for *ad hoc* review committees to assist it in conducting a thoughtful, in-depth review. In addition to this review process, the committee facilitated dialogue for discussion of the *ad hoc* committee reports in the previously mentioned open forums. It also circulated an online survey of the First Year Experience and a survey of the General Education Program among the faculty. These GECC actions provided important data, faculty input, and opportunities for discussion; they assisted the committee in preparing its recommendations to the unit governing faculties for improving the General Education Program and First Year Experience courses at UM-Flint. Supporting improvement is key to the GECC’s charge and, while not all the GECC motions received approval, there is still much that the committee will undertake through its charge and responsibilities. The General Education Curriculum Committee deeply appreciates the time and commitment that colleagues across campus have contributed to this process.

Respectfully submitted,

The General Education Curriculum Committee:

Jennifer Blackwood (CHS)
Tyrice Denson (SGC)
Megan Keiser (SON)
Keith Kelley (SOM)
Jamile Lawand (CAS), Chair
Weiqi Li (SOM)
William McKibbin (CAS)
Toko Oshio (SEHS)
Michelle Sahli (CHS)
Gilia Smith (*ex officio*)
Amanda Taylor (CAS)
Chad Waldron (SEHS)
Kristi Wilson (SON)