

Commission on the University Experience

University of Northern Colorado

Progress Report

April 15th, 2005

In November 2004, President Norton charged the Commission on the University Experience to bring forward to the university community recommendations on:

- (1) a core curriculum,*
- (2) staffing procedures for implementation, and*
- (3) operating guidelines for a coherent, intentional, innovative and interdisciplinary academic program to enhance connectivity to majors and transferability between the institutions.*

In developing a response to the charge, the Commission (CUE) needed to consider the constraints imposed by gtPathways, the statewide transferable core. The gtPathways requirements have changed significantly in the last few months and the requirements currently under discussion have not received final approval. In addition, UNC's performance contract with the State of Colorado stipulates that the gtPathways core must be instituted in fall 2006. This deadline does not allow adequate time for the development, consideration and implementation of substantial changes to our general education program. It is the view of the CUE that such changes should take place incrementally over a longer period of time. To accommodate gtPathways and to protect the integrity and viability of general education at UNC, the CUE felt it was necessary to develop short-term recommendations for meeting the requirements for fall 2006. These recommendations are presented below.

At the same time, the CUE considered what general education at UNC might look like in the long term, both in structure and in function. Initially, several models were examined, particularly in the context of integration with the state core. These models ranged from a true core, where all students take the same set of courses, to a distributed model, similar to our current program. The CUE also discussed a variety of program components, such as a common freshman experience, learning communities, service learning, writing across the curriculum, an academic theme, a capstone course, foreign language, etc.

The discussion of function focused on the competencies we would like students to develop as part of general education. gtPathways was designed to address competencies; courses are approved for the core if they satisfy the content criteria and provide the competencies stipulated for a given category. A review of the gtPathways competencies revealed some omissions that the CUE feels should be addressed. For example, oral communication competency is not included and information literacy receives minor attention. Further, it is not clear if courses providing competencies in multicultural, interdisciplinary and international studies can be included in the gtPathways core. The Commission believes that study in these three areas should continue to be part of general education at UNC, whether imbedded in the curriculum or included as course requirements. In our final report, due in October 2005, we intend to address these concerns and other considerations such as assessment and program support and management.

Mission Statement

The Commission approved the following as a working mission statement. It expresses our vision for general education and serves as a guide for discussions of program structure and function.

“The mission of the university’s general education program is to give students a foundation in the liberal arts, enabling them to become responsible, well-educated citizens capable of contributing effectively to a rapidly changing, technologically advanced, global society. The program’s curriculum is designed to introduce students to undergraduate studies, to foster their competencies in reading, writing, critical thinking, mathematics, and the use of technology, to improve their awareness of the multicultural character of contemporary society, and to give them a sense of connections among the various academic disciplines. Students who complete the program will be prepared to think for themselves, to marshal relevant information, to reason about complex issues, to reflect upon questions of principle, to express themselves effectively, to recognize the importance of the past, to appreciate cultures and values different from their own, to make choices with a sense of their ethical implications, to work towards a better future, and to function with skill and knowledge in an ever-changing world.”

Alignment with CCHE Requirements

The CUE’s response to the charge must consider the gtPathways requirements established by the CCHE. The CUE has proceeded with the assumption that gtPathways will require a minimum of 31 credits of lower division coursework comprising courses approved for the statewide guaranteed transfer program. The entire general education program cannot exceed 40 credit hours, leaving potentially 9 undesignated hours. The categories and minimum credit requirements for the gtPathways core are:

1. Communication (2 courses)	6 credits
2. Mathematics (1 course)	3 credits
3. Arts and Humanities/Social and Behavioral Sciences (5 courses)	15 credits
4. Natural and Physical Sciences (2 courses)	<u>7 credits</u>
	31 credits

One history course is required in the third category. Students will select an additional four courses from the third category, with a minimum of two courses taken from the Arts and Humanities sub-category and a minimum of two courses (can include the required history course) to be taken from the Social and Behavioral Science sub-category. Thus, the student would take 6 credits minimum in Arts and Humanities and 9 credits in Social and Behavioral Sciences, or vice versa, for a total of 15 credits. In the Natural and Physical Sciences category only one of the two required courses must be a lab course. The status of Foreign Languages is still being discussed at the state level.

Recommendations for Meeting the Requirements for Fall 2006

The development of these recommendations was based on the following criteria. The program should

- (1) Reflect the mission of general education (as rewritten).*
- (2) Not overlap with the core curriculum mandated by the state.*
- (3) Be able to be implemented in fall 2006.*

(4) Be compatible with current resources.

We suggest the following 40-hour program for fall 2006. We emphasize that this is a proposal, since the final structure of gtPathways has not been determined. In addition, any proposal must be fully reviewed by the faculty and students and approved through normal governance procedures before adoption.

Program Structure

A. The 31 hour gtPathways core (to include all courses that UNC has submitted for state approval by the end of 2005). Appendix A to this report includes the courses either approved or submitted for approval for inclusion in gtPathways. There will be one more opportunity for submissions before the deadline for the 2006-2007 catalog, so this list will become somewhat longer. The Commission will also develop internal criteria for the gtPathways categories.

B. An annual theme to be incorporated on a voluntary basis in general education classes. The annual theme will provide an interdisciplinary link for general education. It would apply to all general education courses, but in a voluntary manner; that is, each faculty member who teaches a general education course would be responsible for deciding to what extent and in what ways the course he or she teaches will articulate the theme. The theme would be proposed by the General Education Council and approved by the General Education Faculty (see below). This component could aid students in making connections across disciplines and give them perspective on how different disciplines approach examination of a common issue. University-wide engagement in the theme could be promoted through presentations given by external speakers, campus forums, and other events.

C. Expansion of the Learning Communities program making it accessible to more students. Learning Communities would consist of a three course link. One of the courses would be a skills course, i.e., mathematics, composition, or speech communication. The second course must be a general education course; the third course is not required to be a general education course, though this is desirable. The third course could be used to connect general education with a major. This format is consistent with current Learning Community offerings. The Learning Communities program serves approximately 800 - 900 students in fall semester and 600 in the spring. Student interest in Learning Communities is high, and the communities have been effective in improving student retention. The ID 108 course that is currently part of the Learning Community links could be retained.

D. Multicultural and international studies requirements

Since the multicultural and international components of our program provide students with valuable content and competencies, they should be retained. To satisfy the requirements students must complete one course in multicultural studies (3 hours minimum) and one course in international studies (again, 3 hours minimum). These courses can be courses in the gtPathways core that have been identified as being multicultural or international (see Appendix A). In this case, one course could then satisfy both the gtPathways requirement and the multicultural or international studies requirement. Otherwise, selections are made from a set of courses approved by the General Education Council. In this set international studies courses will include foreign

language courses and courses of the type currently found in Category 7a. Multicultural courses will include courses of the type currently found in Category 7b. Appendix B lists the courses in the current Category 7.

E. Electives

In the current program the number of designated hours is 35, with 5 credits allocated for general education electives. In our proposal the number of elective credit hours ranges from 3 to 9, depending on how a student chooses to satisfy the multicultural and international requirements. This flexibility is desirable since students may exceed the 31 hours in completing the requirements in A and D above. For example, some foreign language, mathematics and science courses are 4 or more credit hours. Including electives will allow some freedom of choice for students to explore areas of interest, and will give degree programs flexibility to meet the 120 credit limit.

Three of these elective hours could be satisfied by taking a “First-Year Preceptorial”. This course could be piloted on a small scale in fall 2006. Its goal would be to help freshmen develop reading, writing, research, and critical thinking skills and it would also address some of the content/competencies currently found in Category 7. All sections of the course would read and discuss a common set of writings that explore societal issues, creating a shared experience for incoming students and a sense of community. The course would be supported by a web site with links to resource materials.

Staffing Procedures

A consideration in the design of the proposed program was compatibility with available resources. It is difficult to predict what the impact on instructional resources will be. Certainly there will be a redistribution of instructional FTE to cover a smaller number of courses with more sections. Each program area will need to examine the effects that the core requirements and other program changes will have on its offerings. The coverage of the history requirement is an issue, but it may be addressed, in part, by submitting courses for approval (in fall 2005) that meet the state content and criteria requirements, but that don’t have the HIST prefix. Where additional support will be needed is in the administration of the expanded Learning Communities program.

Operating Guidelines

A major consideration is how the new program will be governed, since the administration of the program will presumably be moving to Academic Affairs. In our view, the crucial principle is that whoever administers the General Education program, control of its curriculum must remain in faculty hands.

We may have additional recommendations about governance in our final report, but for now, we recommend that the General Education Council, the “representative faculty council . . . established both to represent and to act on behalf of the faculty in the governance of the University’s general education program,” retain its governance responsibilities in regard to both the current and future programs (which include responsibility for assessment) and that whoever is charged with the overall administration and direction of UNC’s general education program in

the new administrative structure be made the person to whom the GEC is directly responsible. We further recommend the creation of a General Education Faculty consisting of all UNC faculty members who are either currently teaching General Education courses or planning to teach such courses within the next three years, and that this faculty be given the institutional support necessary to enable it to deliver a truly outstanding general education curriculum.

Constitutional amendments will clearly be necessary to redefine the General Education Content and Skills Committees and to update the procedure for the appointment of the members of those committees to bring it into line with the new governmental structure.

APPENDIX A - Courses submitted/approved for gtPathways. The (a) after a course indicates approval. The designation as either international or multicultural indicates that this course could satisfy the requirements in D above.

Communication: 2 courses (6 credits)

Introductory Writing Course

ENG 122 (a) - College Composition

Intermediate Composition

ENG 123 (a) – College Research Paper

BA 205 - Business Communications

ENG 227 – Technical Writing

SCI 291 – Scientific Writing

Mathematics: 1 course (3 credits)

MATH 181 (a) – Fundamentals of Mathematics I

MATH 182 (a) – Fundamentals of Mathematics II

MATH 120 – Mathematics and Liberal Arts

MATH 124 – College Algebra

MATH 125 – Plane Trigonometry

MATH 127 – Elementary Functions

MATH 131 – Calculus I

MATH 132 – Calculus II

STAT 150 – Introduction to Statistical Analysis

STAT 250 – Statistics for Health Sciences

Arts and Humanities: 2-3 courses (6-9 credits)

Select no more than 2 courses from any 1 category

Arts

ART 181 – History of Art I

ART 182 – History of Art II

ART 190 – Art Appreciation

HUM 120 – Introduction to Film

HUM 130 (multicultural) – Introduction to Cultural Studies

MIND 297 – Creativity in the Arts

MUS 140 – Introduction to Music

MUS 150 (multicultural) – History of Rock and Roll

MUS 204 – Music Fundamentals and Experiences

MUS 241 – Perceiving the Arts

MUS 243 – History of Music I

MUS 244 – History of Music II

MUS 247 (international) – Music Cultures of the World

THEA 130 – Introduction to Theatre

THEA 159 – Acting Theories and Practice

THEA 225 – Theatre in Film

Literature and Humanities

ENG 131 (a) – Introduction to Literature

ENG 211 (a) – Survey of American Literature

ENG 213 (a) – Survey of British Literature I

ENG 214 (a) – British Literature II

ENG 236 (multicultural) – Ethnic American Literature

ENG 262 (a) – Masterpieces of World Literature

MAS 110 (multicultural) – Contemporary Chicano Literature

MIND 180 – Great Ideas of the Western Tradition

MIND 181 – Great Traditions of Asia

MIND 182 (multicultural) – Confluence of Cultures

Ways of Thinking

MIND 290 - Search for Meaning

PHIL 100 (a) – Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 110 (a) – Figures in Western Philosophy

Social and Behavioral Sciences — 2-3 courses (6 - 9 credits)

Select no more than 2 courses from any 1 category; 1 must be history

History

AFS 201 (multicultural) – African-American History I
AFS 202 (multicultural) - African-American History II
HIST 100 – Survey of American History from its Beginnings to 1877
HIST 101 (a) – Survey of American History from 1877 to the Present
HIST 120 (a) – Western Civilization from Ancient Greece to 1689
HIST 121 (a) – Western Civilization from 1689 to the Present

Economic and Political Systems

ECON 101 – Understanding the Contemporary Economy
ECON 103 – Macroeconomics
ECON 105 (a) - Microeconomics
FR 116 (international) – Contemporary France
GER 116 (international) – Contemporary Germany
MIND 286 – Value Issues in Political Economy
PSCI 100 (a) – United States National Government
PSCI 105 (a) – Fundamentals of Politics

Geography

GEOG 100 (a) – World Geography
GEOG 110 (a) – Geography of the United States and Canada
GEOG 200 – Human Geography

Human Behavior and Social Systems

ANT 100 (a) – Introduction to Anthropology
ANT 110 (a) (international) – Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
ANT 120 (a) – World Archaeology
ANT 130 – Introduction to Physical Anthropology
GERO 205 – Introduction to Gerontology
NURS 200 – Women’s Health Care
PSY 120 (a) – Principles of Psychology
PSY 230 – Human Growth and Development
PSY 265 – Social Psychology
SOC 100 (a) – Principles of Sociology
SOC 221 – Sociology of Gender
SOC 237 (multicultural) – Sociology of Minorities
WS 101 (multicultural) – Women in Contemporary Society

Physical and Life Sciences (7 credits)

AST 100 (a) - General Astronomy
BIO 101 (a) – Biological Perspectives
BIO 110 (a) – Principles of Biology
BIO 265 – Life Science Concepts
CHEM 101 – Chemistry for Citizens
CHEM 111 – Principles of Chemistry I
CHEM 281 – Fundamentals of Biochemistry
GEOL 100 (a) – General Geology
MET 205 – General Meteorology
OCN 200 – General Oceanography
PHYS 220 (a) - Introductory Physics I
PHYS 240 (a) – General Physics I
SCI 265 – Physical Science Concepts

Foreign Language Courses (submitted in the Arts and Humanities category, even though not currently eligible for inclusion in gtPathways)

FR 101

FR 102

FR 201

FR 202

GER 101

GER 102

GER 201

GER 202

SPAN 101

SPAN 102

SPAN 201

SPAN 202

APPENDIX B – Category 7 Courses

Interdisciplinary Courses

ENST 100 – Introduction to Environmental Studies

ENST 225 – Energy and the Environment
GERO 205 – Introduction to Gerontology
HUM 331 – Images of Women in Literature and the Arts
MIND 295 – Global Systems
NURS 200 – Women’s Health Care
SOC 221 – Sociology of Gender

International Courses

ANT 110 – Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
ANT 314 – Sex Roles in a Cross-Cultural Perspective
BA 251 – International Business
FR 116 – Contemporary France
GEOG 335 – Geography of Middle America
GER 116 – Contemporary Germany
HISP 131 – Latin American Civilization and Culture
HIST 110 – African Civilization
HIST 112 – Asian Civilization I
HIST 113 – Asian Civilization II
HIST 118 – History of Mexico
HIST 283 – Russian Civilization
JAPN 116 – Contemporary Japan
MIND 289 – Coming of Age in the Twentieth Century
MIND 292 – Ideas in Conflict
MUS 247 – Music Cultures of the World
COMM 323 – Intercultural Communication

Multicultural Courses

ANT 317 – Contemporary Native American Issues
AFS 100 – Introduction to Africana Studies
AFS 101 – Crisis of Identity
CH 236 – Health and Life-styles among the Elderly
ENG 236 – Ethnic American Literature
HISP 102 – Hispanic Cultures in the United States
HIST 290 – American Immigration
HRS 290 – Introduction to Human Rehabilitative Services
MAS 100 – Introduction to Mexican American Studies
MAS 110 – Contemporary Chicano Literature
MCS 101 – Multiculturalism in the United States: Concepts and Issues
MIND 182 – Confluence of Cultures
MUS 150 – History of Rock and Roll
SOC 237 – Sociology of Minorities
WS 101 – Women in Contemporary Society