General Education Program Models

GENERAL EDUCATION FORUM

WINTER 2014

Our Goal for this Forum

We have identified three different approaches to the General Education Program

- THREE *very different* approaches as structural models that can be developed into NMU Gen Ed program… for comment.
- These are NOT finalized structures and we do not expect any to be put forward completely unchanged.
- Goal will be to select one approach and then develop it this semester

We need input from the campus community for which approach to develop

- Campus Community support is required for success of the program!
- Which of these approaches is most appealing to NMU?

Approaches inherent in all models

All models *must* and *do* include clear and assessable Learning Outcomes in order to satisfy accreditation

All models are linked to current best practices (HLC, AACU/LEAP)

All models include some mechanism to ensure some level of disciplinary breadth

Number of courses in all models should be 10 to match current credit counts

University Requirements are unchanged and remain in effect for all models

- University requirements are independent of General Education program
- Our assumption is that students completing Gen Ed will be able to meet all University Requirements if they choose to do so.

All models are deemed acceptable by all members of the GEC

Process of Learning Outcome assessment will be similar regardless of the model

- Clear rubric for each Learning Outcome
- Departments/course develops materials and submits to GEC on a regular cycle for review

Things to Know

NMU'S UNIVERSITY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS INCLUDE:

Lab Science Course

World Cultures Course

HP 200 and HP elective

The following are NOT official University Graduation Requirements:

- EN111, EN211
- 300-level course

MICHIGAN TRANSFER AGREEMENT WILL INCLUDE:

2 courses in English Composition and Communications (1 comp, 1 comm)

1 course in Quantitative Reasoning (MA algebra or higher)

2 courses in Social Sciences

2 courses in Humanities and Fine Arts

2 courses in Natural Sciences including one with lab

Model A – Outcomes Driven

Learning Outcomes

- **Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking and Problem Solving (2 courses)**
- **Ethical Reasoning and Consequences of Decision Making (2 courses)**
- **Intercultural Competence/Diverse World (2 courses)**
- **Effective Communication (2 courses)**
- **Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis (2 courses)**
- **Integrative Learning (2 courses)**

Courses may be at any level.

Courses in the program may satisfy up to TWO Learning Outcomes.

Students must complete TWO courses that satisfy each Learning Outcome. Students must complete a minimum of 10 courses.

Students may not use more than two courses with the same prefix.

Students may double count courses with courses required by majors and minors.

Two courses implies minimum of 6 credits.

Overview

This model requires students to select courses that represent six Learning Outcomes with requirements for the number of courses in each area. Each course in the program would meet 1-2 Learning Outcomes. Learning Outcomes would be assessed by LEAP-type rubrics. There are no specific requirements for disciplines in this model; however, educational breadth is maintained by a limit on the number of courses that can be selected from each discipline (i.e. prefix). There are no upper level course requirements in this model; courses can be at any level. The major benefits to this model are the complete focus on Learning Outcomes while maximizing student and department choice.

Rationale

This model is all about Learning Outcomes, which are the focus of best practices (LEAP) and accreditation (HLC). The selected Learning Outcomes are not tied to disciplines and this model recognizes that these core understandings can be achieved in many different types of courses. The model recognizes it is important for students to undertake learning in a variety of fields, but it does not proscribe how this diversity of learning experiences should be structured. This model does not favor any discipline (or department) over others and reflects a complete change from our existing Liberal Studies program. This model maximizes the choice available to students and also maximizes flexibility of learning outcomes choice available to departments/courses. This model is relatively simple making advising straightforward.

This model does not have explicit links to the Michigan Transfer Agreement; however, some similar courses would be required through the maintenance of our existing University Requirements. This lack of linkage reflects the concept that NMU is not required to match the MTA and perhaps should remain independent of this agreement. This model does not require students to take any specific courses (e.g. math, composition, science, art) risking some knowledge gaps, but allowing students to choose areas of interest. The model assumes that taking two courses in each of the Learning Outcomes is sufficient for competency in each area. This model does not require an upper level course and relies on the major to ensure in-depth learning in a specific content area.

Model B – Outcomes & Experiences

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
3 courses (9 credits min)

Effective Communication
2 courses (6 credits min)

Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis
2 courses (6 credits min)

Intercultural Competence/Diverse World
I courses (3 credits min)

Ethical Reasoning and Consequences of Decision Making
I courses (3 credits min)

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Human Experience
(3 courses)

Social & Cultural Studies
(3 courses)

STEM
(3 courses)

Student must meet both Learning Outcome and Learning Experience requirements.

Each Gen Ed course will address at least one and not more than two Learning Outcomes.

Each Gen Ed course will address one Learning Experience (except upper level).

No restrictions on double counting within program, into major, or by discipline/prefix.

Lower level courses will need to meet simple, but clear, criteria for inclusion in a Learning Experience category.

Upper level course can be from any discipline and would not need to have an identified Learning Experience area.

Upper level course must be at the 300-400 level and students would need to have reached the junior level to take it.

Lower Level Courses (100-200 only): 9 courses

Upper Level Course (300-400 only): 1 course

Integrative Learning
I course (3 credits min)
must have Jr/Sr standing

Overview

This model requires students to select courses that represent three Learning Experiences as well as six Learning Outcomes with requirements for the number of courses in each area. Each course in the program would meet one Learning Experience and 1-2 Learning Outcomes. Learning Outcomes would be assessed by LEAP-type rubrics while membership in a Learning Experience would be determined by simple criteria based on content area of the course. This model includes a requirement for an upper level, integrative (interdisciplinary) course. The major benefits to this model are a focus on Learning Outcomes while ensuring educational breadth and maximizing student and department flexibility.

Rationale

This model is focused on specific learning outcomes drawn from LEAP and identified as important by the campus and best practices, but it also emphasized broad disciplinary representation. All students would engage with each of these learning outcomes; however, they might do this in vastly different course contexts. It requires disciplinary breadth through the Learning Experience requirements, ensuring that all students receive some training in these three major learning areas. It does not require any specific discipline's courses and allows students substantial flexibility in selecting courses which we believe is desired by students. This model also allows departments maximum flexibility in the Learning Outcomes that they wish to address with their courses with no required links between a discipline and a specific Learning Outcome. The model includes an upper level, integrative course to encourage interdisciplinary thinking; these courses are not linked to any discipline and may allow development of creative new options.

This model, coupled with existing University Requirements, aligns well with the Michigan Transfer Agreement such that our students would achieve a similar mix of courses, though less restricted by discipline, to what transfers with the MTA stamp could bring in to NMU. This model requires the students to double count within the program and allows them to double count between the program and the majors if needed; however excessive double counting is prevented by rules placed on the courses (only one Learning Experience and no more than two Learning Outcomes per course). There are no limits on the number of courses a student could apply from a single department.

One potential issue with this model is that it is somewhat complicated (because it essentially has two requirements lists to choose courses from) which makes advising more challenging; we think that the degree evaluation system (CAPP) will make this manageable. This model will require the development of criteria to determine how courses will be sorted into Learning Experiences (we do not recommend doing this by course prefix in this model, but rather by course content).

Model C: Blended Skills & Content

Skills

Effective Communication (2 courses)
LO: Critical & Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
LO: Effective Communication

Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis (1 course)
LO: Quantitative Reasoning
LO: Critical & Creative Thinking and Problem Solving

Intercultural Competence/Diverse World (1 course)
LO: Critical & Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
LO: Intercultural Competence/ Diverse World

Content

The Human Experience

Human Expression (1 course)
LO: Critical & Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
LO: Artistic Evaluation
Criteria: Similar to Division II & VI disciplines

Human History and Civilization (2 courses)
LO: Critical & Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
Criteria: Similar to Division II & IV disciplines

Social Responsibility (1 course)
LO: Critical & Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
LO: Ethical Reasoning & Conseq Decision Making

Scientific Inquiry (2 courses)
LO: Critical & Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
LO: Scientific Inquiry/Method
Criteria: Similar Division III disciplines

Students select from each area; areas are divided into skills and content areas. *Skills* courses are defined by Learning Outcomes (LO) only while *Content* area courses meet both Learning Outcomes and Content Criteria (similar to current LS Divisions).

The model does not allow for double counting within the program, however courses can be double counted back into the major.

No more than two courses can come from the same prefix within the "Content" portion of the program.

No upper division courses are required. Courses may be at any level.

Easy transfer of courses from community colleges according to the MTA.

Each course is intended to be at least 3 credits.

A little more description of content…

The Human Experience

Human Expression (1 course)

LO: Critical & Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
LO: Artistic Evaluation
Criteria: Similar to Division II & VI disciplines

Demonstrates ability to analyze and evaluate artistic, literary and rhetorical expression in a variety of contexts

Human History and Civilization (2 courses)

LO: Critical & Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
Criteria: Similar to Division II & IV disciplines

Demonstrates ability to synthesize major social issues and analyze them within the context of knowledge about human behavior, history, philosophy and ethics

Social Responsibility (1 course)

LO: Critical & Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
LO: Ethical Reasoning & Conseq Decision Making

Demonstrates civic knowledge and the ability to engage locally and globally

Scientific Inquiry (2 courses)

LO: Critical & Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
LO: Scientific Inquiry/Method
Criteria: Similar Division III disciplines

Demonstrates knowledge and use of scientific processes to investigate and report knowledge about natural or social phenomena

Category descriptions

Overview

This “blended” model provides a mix of recommended skills and specific disciplinary content with continued emphasis on Learning Outcomes. Blended models like this have been used by other universities in an effort to move toward outcomes-based programs while providing specific directives for content. Students are required to take a certain number of courses in each of the categories. The major benefits of this model are the requirement for specific disciplinary breadth while ensuring assessable, well-supported Learning Objectives are obtained.

Rationale

The blended model allows NMU to require disciplinary representation in the educational experience of students, ensuring that they will receive training in specific areas such as the Arts & Humanities, Science, and Social Sciences while also attaining certain critical skills (communication and quantitative analysis). Disciplinary breadth is further ensured by allowing no more than two courses with the same prefix to be used within the Content section of the program. This model requires all courses in General Education to explicitly address *Critical Thinking/Creative Thinking/Problem Solving* while other Learning Outcomes are distributed through the program. Courses in particular areas must meet the Learning Outcomes linked to their area, decreasing departmental choice. Student choice of disciplines is somewhat constrained. This program does not include an upper-level requirement and it does not include the *Integrative* Learning Outcome. It does require two additional Learning Outcomes rubrics for *Artistic Evaluation* and *Scientific Inquiry/Method*. It also requires the application of disciplinary criteria for the Content sections and our expectation is that these would be similar to those required for entry into the current Liberal Studies Divisions.

This model matches closely to the Michigan Transfer Agreement and is relatively close to our existing Liberal Studies program. It allows double counting to the major courses, but does not allow any double counting within the General Education program. The program is relatively simple and we believe that advising would be straightforward.

Your Input

Today

Talk with GEC members

- Kim Barron (Inst Accred/Assess)
- Dwight Brady (CAPS)
- Mike Burgmeier (AIS)
- David Donovan (Physics)
- Jill Leonard (chair; Biology)
- Carolyn Lowe (Educ)
- Andrew Poe (Math/CS)
- Kim Rotundo (Registrar)
- Kristen Smith (Nursing)
- Robert Winn (Assoc. Dean)

Survey through the GEC website

- (available January 21 – February 3)
- http://www.nmu.edu/gec/