

LIBERAL EDUCATION

A draft proposal

Comprehensive Proposal



New Paltz

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Why “Liberal Education” rather than GE4?

- In the last 10 years, the College has seen notable increases in the academic quality of admitted students, significant faculty turnover, and declining reliance on adjunct instruction, creating a markedly changed institutional context for general education
- Increased flexibility in SUNY trustees general education requirements and assessment enacted in 2009-10
- A need to align campus goals and mission with a new SUNY system strategic plan

Liberal Education: Desired Student Outcomes

- Our liberal education program seeks to promote self-aware, reflective, and thoughtful citizens. We want to create the possibility of graduates liberated by their New Paltz experience to understand and fulfill their own human potential.
- A liberal education prepares students for an increasingly complex world, focusing on critical thinking and analytical skills applied across a broad array of disciplines.

Goals of Liberal Education Reform

- GE, and the curriculum overall, must transition from something to get through to *something to achieve*
 - Encourage learning with intent
 - Scaffold learning experiences, beginning with a first-year seminar and culminating in a capstone experience
 - Foster stronger connections between courses and all the individuals involved in SUNY New Paltz's learning environment (staff, faculty, and students)

Comprehensive Proposal: Student Requirements

Composition

1 course (4 credits)

Math

1 course (3-4 credits)

Natural Science (NSCI)

1 course (3-4 credits)

Foreign Language (FLNG)

2 courses in same language (6-8)

4-5 more courses in different GE categories below,
one of which must meet the Diversity requirement

4-5 courses (12-16 credits)

ARTS

HUM

SSCI

USST

WEST

WORLD

Total GE Credits

30-32 credits

First Year Seminar

3 credits

Total Required Credits

33-35 credits

* GE3-Required Credits for Graduation: 39-42 credits

Comprehensive Proposal: Student Requirements

- Additional Graduation Requirements:
 - 2 STEM-enhanced courses (within major or otherwise)
 - 2 communication-enhanced courses (within major or otherwise)
 - Capstone course or equivalent experience (within major)

Communication-Enhanced Courses

- Emphasize *both* oral and written communication
- At the intermediate or advanced level to promote the scaffolding of these skills (developed in the 4-credit Composition class)
- Would replace the current WI requirement
- At the discretion of departments, classes would be capped at 20 like current writing-intensive courses

STEM-Enhanced Courses

- Includes significant content or exploration of STEM topics
- Provides *regular opportunities* for students to deepen their understanding of STEM processes as well as skills in application

What about Comp 1 and 2?

- The 4 credit Composition course (Eng120) would NOT be either Comp 1 or Comp 2. It would be revamped to include the most critical foundation-level content.
- Learning outcomes for Comp 1 & 2 that are not met in the new Composition course would be met either:
 - In FYS
 - In the scaffolded courses emphasizing writing
- Intent: Give students instruction and practice with writing in multiple courses throughout their time at New Paltz.
- Eng110: Intro to Composition (3 credits):
 - An option for students who need extra preparation before Eng120
 - Transfer credit for Comp 1
 - Does not meet graduation requirement, but counts toward 120 credits

FYS Nuts and Bolts

- 20 students/section: 55 sections/year, split equally between fall and spring
- Collaboratively taught:
 - 1 faculty member per section
 - Multiple sections meet jointly every other week
 - Faculty members “switch” sections for the day at least twice/semester
- 2-3 common “texts” (learning objects) around 1 common theme, but individual professors supplement with additional texts of their choice
- Co-curricular components related to core texts:
 - General campus lectures
 - Monthly faculty seminars

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Optional LE Focus Tracks

- Have several themed topics, each with a list of GE courses relating to that focus
 - Example tracks: Leadership, Multiculturalism and Global Affairs, Sustainability
- If students take X courses within a given track, they get an acknowledgment of that on their transcript
 - Show students that their GE courses are related to both each other and the students' interests
 - A way for departments to encourage students to take their GE courses

Department & Faculty Responsibilities

- Identify or develop a capstone course or other capstone experience
- Consider how current course offerings either fit or could be amended to be STEM- and Communication-enhanced courses; submit course paperwork
- Reexamine DIVR courses for dual inclusion into another GE category
- Consider teaching the FYS and participating in the Liberal Education professional development seminar

Liberal Education Faculty Development Seminar

- Avenue: a 2-week, full-time program held during the summer or winter intersession
 - Participation is voluntary
 - Stipends (~\$2000) will be provided
- Goals:
 - Enhance the quality of teaching
 - Increase faculty engagement with liberal education principles
 - Facilitate pedagogical dialogues across campus

Liberal Education Faculty Development Seminar

- Content:
 - Oral and written communication skills
 - Experiential learning
 - STEM-enhanced courses
 - Active & creative learning
 - Critical thinking & problem-solving
 - Presenting opportunities for ethical reflection
- Objectives:
 - Gain an understanding of liberal education from readings, discussions with colleagues, and presentations by experts
 - Develop a tool-chest of in-class exercises and assignments
 - Revise a syllabus from an existing course

Other Resources Needed

- 55 faculty/year to teach FYS (ultimately Deans' responsibility)
- Compensation for participating in the Liberal Education development seminar and developing first-time FYS courses
- More FLNG course offerings (note that overall need for GE courses would decrease)
- More MATH course offerings
- Liberal Education Board (would replace Writing Board)
- FYS coordinator (chosen by LE Board)

Liberal Education Board

- Oversee certification of both STEM- and communication-enhanced courses
- Select the theme and readings for the FYS
- Driving force behind developing a culture of liberal education across campus
- First group elected to this board will be given priority placement in the first Liberal Education faculty development seminar

Alignment with the original proposals voted on by the faculty

Original Proposal, May 2012	This proposal
First Year Seminar	✓
Global Knowledge	2 semester requirement rather than requiring all students to meet intermediate-level proficiency
Ethical Reasoning	Achieved in principle; no mandated learning outcomes
Oral and Written Communication	✓
Civic Knowledge and Engagement	Not mandated
STEM	✓
Capstone	✓

The next steps

- Liberal Education Committee webpage: <http://www.newpaltz.edu/lec>
 - Draft proposal, FAQ, and appendices are posted
 - Use the comments link (or contact your representatives)
- Visiting department/school meetings to answer questions and solicit feedback
- LEC will consider this feedback as we revise the draft proposal
- March 7 faculty meeting slated for discussion on the proposal; vote on/before the May meeting