

Proposal for Restructuring the SUNY New Paltz General Education Program and University Curriculum

Submitted to the faculty for consideration and comment, December, 2015

Authors: The GE Board

“It is, indeed, advisable that the teacher should understand, and even be able to criticize, the general principles upon which the whole educational system is formed and administered. He is not like a private soldier in an army, expected merely to obey, or like a cog in a wheel, expected merely to respond to and transmit external energy; he must be an intelligent medium of action.”

John Dewey, 1895

“We know you can never do it properly—once and for all. Passion is never enough; neither is skill. But try.”

Toni Morrison, 1993

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I. Summary

New Paltz's curriculum is dynamic. An ever-changing curriculum is the natural result of a university model of education, for faculty are the curriculum. Full-time faculty are active scholars in their fields and foster deep engagement with pedagogy. The content and methods they teach within their fields and the style in which they teach reflect changing bodies of knowledge. Any structure imposed on a university curriculum thus needs to be responsive to the evolving nature of what is taught and how it is taught. Said structures also need to recognize faculty specialization, support faculty development in teaching, support part time and contingent faculty who fit uneasily and messily into the university model of education, and encourage discussion amongst all the individual faculty who as a whole constitute New Paltz's curriculum. Previous GE models established static and quickly outdated requirements into which our living curriculum did not fit neatly. These models also had complex requirements with unclear objectives and unproductive assessment practices. Because of overburdened full-time faculty and unsupported part-time faculty, static, arbitrary, and complex requirements ensured teachers in GE also had little support or external motivation to improve their courses in the direction of best pedagogical practices or to develop new curricular content. This proposal redesigns the model for General Education and the University Curriculum to put it into the hands of the teaching faculty and promote continual development in student learning objectives, assessment, and pedagogical development. With this model, GE and the curriculum will be responsive to new SUNY central requirements, to issues that arise with assessments and student learning, and to faculty initiatives in best pedagogical practices.

Here, we propose different models for GE category requirements that could adhere to SUNY BoT requirements and New Paltz's unique mission. Yet, we will not be asking faculty to decide which disciplines have value and which do not. Invariably, this only devolves into turf wars and divisiveness. Instead, we have simple GE category choice models that use the SUNY-wide GER to avoid privileging some fields over others. The choice you are given involves a simple decision on how broad you wish New Paltz's requirements to be. All three of the GE choices provided reduce GE requirements from our current levels. On pages 24-27, you can see a description of the choices involved. Not included in those choices are Diversity classes. We adhered to the faculty vote in favor of requiring Diversity as a university requirement rather than a GE requirement, as you can see in the explanation on page 18. We also propose a pilot program for a First Year Seminar model which would fulfill one of the GE categories. This pilot program would be optional for students and utilizes faculty volunteers to create new or modify existing courses. Later, if the program is deemed successful and additional resources (hires) are provided, these seminars could be expanded to become a general requirement. On the other end of the degree program, we have retained the capstone requirement for majors, also in deference of the full faculty vote.

We sought through this proposal to increase the quality of General Education on our campus regardless of the distribution of requirements chosen by the faculty. It has become very clear to us that few students, or faculty for that matter, are aware of what GE is, why GE requirements

exist, and what connections might exist between them. Indeed, GE Board experience from conducting assessment has shown some faculty are unaware they teach GE courses. GE assessment has given us more bother than value. Faculty do not communicate with others who teach within their categories, and so little unity exists in goals or student learning outcomes. We are suggesting changes to how General Education is discussed on campus, how it is presented to students, how we cultivate its strengths and resolve its issues, and how faculty development is encouraged.

Beyond General Education (in the first year or two of student study), we also are promoting changes that would improve the quality of student learning in their majors and further the development of competencies in the GE. Our previous model did not consider ways to improve student learning progressively across the curriculum. Rather than requiring something like a writing intensive class that is not tied coherently to GE or Major curriculums, we instead propose the progressive teaching of writing and three other competencies at the introductory level and at the intermediate and advanced levels on pages 32-37. The faculty's creation of capstone classes joins nicely with this progressive teaching of competencies in fixing this problem. Here we consider the role of GE, capstones, and all requirements in between to promote our undergraduates' learning across the curriculum in a few central competencies. Finally, we consider ways the university can promote the development of various best-practice teaching initiatives like applied learning or multi-disciplinary and team teaching.

II. Background Information

A. Process

At the April 24, 2015 full faculty meeting, the faculty voted in support of a motion that originated in the academic senate. Specifically, we voted *“to table all remaining General Education motions and ask the Curriculum Committee and the GE Board to take up the issue within the next academic year. GE motions passed Fall 14 will not be implemented until Fall 16.”*

This proposal, drafted by the GE Board in consultation with the Curriculum Committee, is one step in this process. We ask that you read and consider this information and share your insight with the Curriculum Committee. You will receive information about how to submit such feedback at a later date. Based on these responses, the Curriculum Committee will modify the proposal and vote on whether to recommend it to the Academic Senate for approval as a program revision. Assuming this occurs, the proposal will be considered by the Academic Senate and, if acted upon favorably, it will then travel to the full faculty for consideration. We have separated the roles of drafting the ideas from the soliciting of feedback from the faculty, revising to create a final proposal, and submitting it to governance in order to ensure that faculty feedback will be fully and fairly considered.

B. History of General Education and GE revision at New Paltz

The first GE program was developed at New Paltz in the 1970's and it was replaced in the 80's as GE2. Following approximately 10 years of GE2, the campus initiated a process to revise the GE. This was interrupted by new guidelines from SUNY Central that required immediate action and resulted in the GE2A requirements. A several year process followed that resulted in a Spring 2001 resolution of principles ([here](#)), followed by a final proposal—GE3—voted on by faculty in Spring 2002 ([here](#)). In 2010 SUNY changed the system-wide requirements for GE. In particular, they decreased the number of requirements for individual campuses. These changes, along with an increasing awareness of some of the shortcomings of GE 3 and a desire to update the curriculum, motivated the campus to embark on another revision to its General Education program.

In early 2011 the Liberal Education Ad Hoc committee began its work to “review, analyze, and discuss recent developments in undergraduate and General Education; meet with faculty and departments to solicit campus input; and share information across campus about principles, assumptions, and key factors that are the foundation of a strong undergraduate education program including General Education.” In April 2012 the faculty reviewed and voted in support of their recommendations ([here](#)). In Fall 2012 the new Liberal Education Committee was formed and tasked with the process of implementing—to the greatest extent possible—the Liberal Education Ad Hoc committee recommendations.

In Spring 2014 the Lib Ed Committee presented their proposal to the faculty ([here](#)) . As the proposal worked its way through faculty governance, a series of responses were issued and amendments proposed (Appendix A). Resolution was not reached by the end of the semester. Debate continued into Fall 2014, at which point a list of different sub-resolutions was generated and we proceeded to vote on some of these (Appendix B). Finally, at the end of Spring 2015 semester, the academic senate and then the full faculty decided that we should discontinue working through those accumulated ideas in piecemeal fashion and refer the matter to the GE Board and curriculum committee to again attempt a more holistic proposal.

The changes presented in this proposal reflect our attempt to take into account input from the faculty as expressed in the first and second Liberal Ed proposals, different divisions' responses to those proposals, the votes registered subsequent to the consideration of the second lib ed proposal, faculty comments expressed at formal and informal meetings, the results of a survey administered by the second lib ed committee, the results of 10+ years of assessment of General Education, and a survey administered by the GE Board in Fall 2015 (results summarized in Appendix C). In addition, the ideas expressed here have been informed by study of the "problem" of General Education nation-wide and close consideration of the SUNY GE guidelines ([here](#)).

This proposal is a result of this study. Herein, we seek to address problems with the curriculum and assessment practices at New Paltz. In particular, we have found the following issues guided our work.

- High credit majors currently struggle with GE; in fact, Engineering students do not fully take part.
- Little to no information is readily available to students and faculty on what GE is or what it means in a context beyond completing random choices from courses their degree-works report tells them they need.
- For students, communicating the relevance of GE has relied entirely on interactions during orientation and advising sessions, when students are typically not readily amenable to absorbing the information.
- Many faculty are only reminded of their courses' place in GE and corresponding outcomes when they are among the random selection for a spring course-based assessment.
- New faculty are not informed of the GE curriculum and their courses' part in it. Some have noted they taught GE classes unawares in their first years here.
- Assessment is widely perceived to not produce meaningful data and is viewed as a burden, one which more heavily weighs on adjunct faculty.
- Faculty and students have complained that some GE courses are not rigorous enough and that the opportunity to make interdisciplinary connections is often lost.
- Skills and competencies taught in GE may or may not be developed in future classes as students proceed through their education.

- Finally, newly imposed initiatives like Seamless Transfer and Applied Learning need to be considered as developments that substantively affect students' curriculum. The latter especially provides opportunities to enhance student learning only if their value is fully embraced by the faculty.

This proposal was generated by a group of faculty and staff with experience teaching and dealing with the administration of the curriculum. We had broad representation on the GE Board from a variety of divisions on campus. Our board also had members with diverse experiences of their own with General Education programs. To embody the spirit of and intention behind faculty governance, we sought in all of our discussions to consider our role as representatives of bigger constituencies on campus and sought to work in the best interest of students and the New Paltz faculty and staff as a whole. No proposal can be 100% successful in service to all of the above-listed masters—but we believe that this one encompasses the best aspects of all of the sources of information and faculty and staff resources in a way that works for our campus at this time, given a variety of fiscal, spatial and other constraints.

III. Revisioning General Education Courses

A. Purpose of General Education in the 21st century

General Education requirements at a university introduce students to different fields of study and methods of determining knowledge. General Education seeks to ensure students gain exposure to different pure knowledge fields before embarking on their own specialized course of study. These requirements are meant to be shared in common by all students, and provide the foundation for the liberal education provided at a university like ours. According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, a liberal education “empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. This approach emphasizes broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth achievement in a specific field of interest. It helps students develop a sense of social responsibility; strong intellectual and practical skills that span all major fields of study, such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills; and the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.” The General Education requirements therefore serve to foster resilience, free thought, and good citizenship as they train students in rigorous knowledge practices.

Decisions on which fields of knowledge to include in General Education are made by weighing intellectual history and university tradition alongside immediate desires in educational outcomes. Math and Writing have been requirements of university curricula since the medieval era and show no signs of disappearing as a GE requirement at any institution. Both are seen as essential for further coursework and for life beyond the university. Foreign Language is another communication ability that is often included in General Education requirements. Study of a language improves students’ understanding of their own language as they develop the ability to communicate in and understand other cultures.

Beyond those math and communication requirements, traditionally universities have required subject fields or disciplines. While some universities are starting to move away from General Education categories based in the disciplines in favor of a thematic approach, the SUNY Board of Trustees determined to stick with the traditional subject fields. Students thus develop a basic introduction to what the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and arts do and the methods through which they do it.

Beyond wanting their students to know how knowledge is determined in various fields, universities also want their graduates to be educated about their place in the world. To ensure our students become informed citizens of the U.S., the West, and the World, the SUNY BoT has also added those as regional content categories in the GE. In determining our own requirements within the SUNY BoT categories, SUNY New Paltz must consider which of the goals of General Education it prioritizes as a unique institution. (See Appendix D for a listing of the SUNY Learning Outcomes for each of the ten categories.)

The majority of the requirements are in the traditional fields of the liberal arts. These fields of study are recognized as critical to building students' critical thinking and writing abilities. The liberal arts have long been a strength of New Paltz. The renowned art program also contributes to these requirements by teaching our students creative thinking and aesthetic literacy. The natural sciences are the third pillar of General Education at New Paltz and train our graduates in inquiry and systematic testing. The liberal arts, fine arts, and natural sciences provide our students with the foundation from which they can succeed in life and in their careers. The knowledge and skills learned through these foundational courses are useful to students as they continue to pursue knowledge and develop their skills in the majors. GE and major requirements when combined represent one education. Thus, the New Paltz education is not disparate components, but instead a progressive development of knowledge, of abilities, and of self.

New Paltz is a four year university with a strong liberal arts and sciences and fine arts tradition. As such, General Education may seek to emphasize the value of these fields of study by requiring students to dedicate a significant portion of their undergraduate credits to General Education coursework. However, the disciplines offered to our students are broad and represent a range from the applied fields to the pure knowledge fields. Though 75% of our students major in one of the divisions offering the three pillars of General Education curricula at New Paltz, some students may be entirely dependent on GE as their exposure to the pure knowledge fields. Some of those applied fields have extensive credit requirements and, consequently, this leads some to believe that the General Education course requirements should be limited so that the same requirements are applicable to, and attainable by, all students.

Regardless of which direction the faculty decides to go with the extent of GE requirements, both General Education and upper-level specialized study at the university are differentiated from students' secondary education experiences. This differentiation comes from the expectation that the university has specialists and producers of knowledge and creative work doing the teaching. They model the practices of their discipline and they seek to engage their students through their love for their field. Whereas secondary education is structured around having professionally trained teachers educate youth in a variety of topics, university education is premised on the idea that academic specialists are best capable of introducing students to the methods and content of various disciplines. Therefore, General Education is the broadest exposure to academic specializations. Upon this base, students go on to build their more specialized knowledge in their degree fields. Given GE's importance as the foundation of university education, the faculty, staff, and students of New Paltz deserve a program with meaning and rigor in intent and practice.

B. Changing how the GE curriculum is presented

Despite GE's clear importance in the curriculum, we as an institution have not given it the attention it deserves. We propose a thorough change in the way that students and faculty are informed about General Education to address central concerns among the faculty about GE's unclear purpose and design. We propose ways to clearly explain General Education to students

through university communications, advising, and course syllabi and content. We also propose new institutional structures and means of support for faculty so they have ample opportunity to be informed of, reflect on, and continually renew their General Education offerings so that each individual course fulfills the mission of its designated category. This section lays out an introduction to the type of communications students will receive about GE requirements and purpose, the requirements for syllabus and course content for GE classes, and faculty development and course accountability initiatives.

1. Student-centered communications on GE and its categories.

Successfully communicating to students the meaning and purpose behind their GE requirements depends on the willing participation of a variety of people within the university. The admissions and advising offices, communications through the website, posters and signage around campus, and even alumni outreach can all be employed to better advertise the value of a General Education at the university level and the rationale behind particular requirements. Currently, the university maintains a very sparse website as part of the undergraduate catalog and advising website explaining GE (<http://www.newpaltz.edu/advising/ge.html>). This sole central resource for students to understand their General Education simply describes GE as a set of requirements. It does not clearly articulate why GE requirements exist or why they are set up the way they are. Instead, students learn about the purpose and structure of GE only during a quick oral presentation made by advising staff during orientation. Their ability to absorb and retain that information at that time is questionable. Many faculty and advisors have found that as a result of the minimal information they receive about GE, students do not understand or value the curriculum.

To try to better inform students about the nature of the university curriculum and the General Education component of their degree, we propose systematic changes to messaging including language based on the text below. This proposal suggests we:

- adopt student-centered rhetoric that describes the purpose and value of General Education as a whole and each particular category individually.
- deploy this rhetoric consistently through all the various groups working with students through admissions, orientation, and advising.
- require that course descriptions and the schedule of classes include clear and positive framing of the course's position within GE.
- use syllabi and course time to overtly introduce students to what purpose that course serves within GE. Faculty, presumably, can best describe the value of their fields.
- ensure these messages are also conveyed in broader discussions on any of the components of GE on campus and with alumni.

We hope that through consistent messaging, students would recognize the value of the first two years of their education on campus. Given our ongoing budget woes, it is also worth noting that universities with substantive General Education programs (whose purpose is clearly and consistently conveyed to students) can better develop alumni loyalty that facilitates fundraising

for their program. Our goal is to encourage and instill a lifelong valuing of the breadth of the educations our students received in their first years at the university.

The student-centered rhetoric we suggest is provided here below. Though we have created the initial draft for messaging about these categories, we hope faculty feedback will allow us to refine the descriptions. The GE explanations would also be continually reviewed and updated by the faculty teaching in those categories, through the governance structure described below. This way, any problems arising with evolving curriculum or insufficient messaging to students can be resolved by the people putting these changes into practice. Faculty involved in the teaching of courses in a category and directly conveying messages on the category's meaning and purpose would be able to mold the descriptions as needed without having to go through a whole GE revision process.

In the student descriptions below, we provide a much more holistic view of GE requirements than the SUNY BoT's learning objectives provide. We will not be changing the learning objectives however, as this has created problems in our current iteration of GE. We ensure the course descriptions and content would be held to those course's student learning outcomes. We also use the same terms adopted by the SUNY Board of Trustees (with one noted exception). The SUNY Board of Trustees did not give us the most inspirational of rhetoric on the value of each of the categories they set. The section in the text box below presents how we would convey the meaning behind GE more clearly to students; actually ensuring GE has meaning in practice through encouraging a dynamic and rigorous General Education curriculum is a topic for the section that follows.

Introduction to General Education within the University

University education begins as you construct a foundation in a broad base of skills, familiarity with diverse fields of inquiry, and exposure to diverse regions and cultures. From that foundation, you then advance to developing specialized knowledge. Within majors and upper-level coursework, you will build focused, in-depth knowledge of one field or area of study by learning from and working with experts in those fields from the ranks of the full-time faculty. Before this specialization takes place, however, General Education coursework in your first years at university gives you a broader familiarity with the diverse approaches to and areas of knowledge. The faculty train students to practice in their particular areas of knowledge in the majors, but they also serve the broader university goal of exposing students with different interests and abilities to the ways of thinking and content areas in their field of expertise. Your coursework, even at the introductory level, thus reflects current scholarship and sound disciplinary methods because your professors contribute to knowledge in those disciplines. As you take classes across disciplines, you will also learn methods and skills. General Education requirements reflect the basic foundational skills and areas of understanding expected of an educated person. Through development of math and writing skills, you will have the literacy, communication, and numeracy skills to function in your coursework and your life. Through

exposure to an array of scholarly disciplines, you will become familiar with the different methods of thinking about, understanding, and arguing about the world. Through courses that expose you to different regions, you will come to understand your place in this world through a comparative understanding of the diversity of world cultures, our inheritances from the western tradition, and our particular place in the United States. The requirements for training in these skills and competencies, disciplines, and regions collectively represent tradition, of a thousand years of university education and a hundred years of SUNY New Paltz, and innovation, in that the content reflects the latest in scholarship and creative production in all fields. By taking these requirements, you will become a critical and creative thinker capable of identifying and critiquing arguments and assessing, categorizing, and employing accumulated information of differing types.

(1) Foundation courses: Basic foundations of education, since the formation of western Universities in medieval Europe, involve being able to function with words and numbers. This continues through today, as our General Education program requires a class in Math (MATH), another in Basic Communication (BCOM), and ___ ¹in Foreign Languages (FLN). Oral and written communication is vital in today's society. As a university graduate, you will be expected to be capable of skilled organization and presentation of thoughts verbally or in writing. The Basic Communication course begins to refine your abilities in those areas, though you will continue to develop your writing and oral argument skills in later coursework in your major. The Math course seeks to ensure you will be able to understand numbers and the perspectives they provide on time and space. In this required class, you will develop your knowledge beyond what you learned in high school and develop an appreciation of how mathematical approaches can be applied in a variety of settings. In an era of increased international competition and collaboration, foreign language study is pivotal to university education. When learning a language, you will develop your ability to read, write, speak, and listen to others while also developing your understanding of the culture or cultures whose language that is. The foreign language requirement thus helps you develop higher-order capacities of interpretation and understanding, recognize and value global traditions, and gain awareness and cultural understanding. The basic training in grammar and syntax involved in language learning also furthers the communications goals of General Education. Note: Students come to the university with radically different foreign language, literacy, and numeracy abilities. Testing and placement allow you to take classes that are appropriate to ensure you develop your existing skills.

(2) Exposure to the Disciplines: The General Education curriculum also includes classes in four academic disciplines, which reflect very different ways of knowing. Through a broad exposure to the different methods and areas of knowledge they represent, you will become familiar with how knowledge is determined and how arguments on truth emerge in all fields of knowledge. These ways of knowing are called disciplines because they employ rigorous methods in developing knowledge. Their rigorous methods are discoverable, teachable, and practice-able. In your General Education courses in these four areas, you will thus learn to answer "In what ways do we know?" You will come to understand how scientists, artists, and

¹ What goes in this blank space will depend on the vote of the faculty.

humanists determine their answers on everything having to do with the world, the universe, and ourselves. The four course categories in the disciplines are Art, Humanities, Natural Science, and Social Science.

i. Art: A discipline exploring creation, production, and innovation through material and conceptual aspects of visual culture.

Artistic inquiry is an important part of society and an integral part of a well-rounded life. Artistic inquiry is pursued through engaging in creative processes guided by curiosity, scholarship, and imagination. While this course will introduce you to creative and critical thinking skills and techniques, it also seeks to teach you how to think, speak, and write about artistic experiences. The arts provide access to complex forms of research and problem solving, metaphoric expression of personal and cultural knowledge, and opportunities to encounter diverse ways people interpret and express their understandings of the world and possibilities for change. Through a class in this discipline, you will develop an understanding of aesthetic dimensions of artistic knowledge, the social, cultural, and historical contexts from which they emerge.

ii. Humanities: A discipline exploring what it means to be human.

Whether considering the experience of a human individual or taking a broader view of human cultures, the humanities explore the expressions of self in language, text, image, or culture today or over time. In your humanities course, you will thus analyze works of literature, drama, art, and rituals to determine what they reflect about human experience in one place and time. Using such human expressions, you will seek to document, describe, and interpret the mentalities and behaviors of contemporary or historical people and their cultures. Through analysis of individuals, identities, human relationships, communities, and the rules through which we govern ourselves the humanities seek to cultivate an understanding of who we are, who we have been, and who we could be. We are all complex, and the humanities seek to acknowledge that complexity while nevertheless developing the tools to understand what we make meaningful and how we express meaning. This course will require you to reflect on what it means to be human.

iii. Natural Science: A discipline to explore our natural world.

Natural Sciences rely on the scientific method to generate insight into processes in living organisms and in the physical environment from the smallest of microorganisms to the biggest of objects and events in the universe. To explain how the world around us works, you will make inquiries, observe physical and biological phenomena, and develop and test conclusions about those phenomena. Your learning and practicing of the scientific method and your discovery of knowledge of the natural world will develop your ability to engage productively throughout your life with others in discussions central to our lives. By understanding how people explain the natural world through scientific principles, you will then be able to engage in important debates on human interaction with the physical world.

iv. Social Science: Disciplines exploring your social self

The social sciences develop methods of answering questions of a social nature. Forms of social, political, and economic organization are studied to better understand this social aspect of ourselves. Because human beings are social, the social sciences allow you to understand influences on human behavior, values and beliefs, and social practices. This field of inquiry studies those behaviors and practices of society in general as well as the variations occurring across space, time, and particular conditions. This is a broad field of inquiry that can include systematic study of group thought and behavior, quantitative evaluations of social organization, and qualitative studies of political formations, cultures, and economies to allow you to understand how social forces influence human action.

(3) Regions: By exploring histories and cultures based on regions, you will consider questions of who you are and how you may differ from others. These classes explore collective identities and diverse cultures and they ensure you emerge being better able to act as citizens and travelers throughout your life. These requirements are meant to produce informed, engaged, and critical residents of the U.S., who are also aware of the inheritances of the western tradition and informed, global citizens of the world. Within these categories, you will reflect on your social responsibility in your country and the world, and the histories, literature, and social organization of these different regions. Because these categories of the General Education requirements focus on societies, cultures, and individuals in different places, they are often taught from within the social sciences and humanities. But rather than focusing on the methods of inquiry into what it means to be human and live together in this world, these region-based courses focus more on knowledge content and how humans have existed and lived and continue to live together in this world. These requirements assume that a stepped understanding of American history and practices, Western history and practices, and World history and practices allows you to place yourself and others as you understand identities or critique stereotypes.

i. United States Studies

(Please note that this category was named by the SUNY BoT as American History. While we tried to stay true to faculty requests to keep categories and learning outcomes the same as the SUNY BoT ones, we found this one would just be too confusing for students and faculty. Referring to “America” when what they mean is the “United States of America” becomes problematic as students then increase their familiarity with other parts of the Americas like Latin America/Central America/South America and Mexico and Canada. Beyond History, this category also covers Government and Society. We do not believe the SUNY BoT learning outcomes have the same problem as the name—those would remain the same and still be required on syllabi and as central parts of the GE course).

The regional requirements envision creating more informed citizens of the world. The “United States Studies” requirement thus seeks to provide you with an understanding of the historical construction of and contemporary institutions in the United States’ political and social systems and its economy and culture. By studying what is common to residents of the US and the diversity of this country’s constituent groups, you will become a more informed citizen and more reflective member of society. In high school in New York State, students learn the outline of U.S. history and government so they can fill out the ‘right’ questions on tests and exams. The

university-level study of American history and government, in contrast, has the central goal of ensuring that rather than assuming a right answer, you will develop the ability to ask rigorous and genuine questions, challenge others' arguments, and develop complex answers as a critical and participatory citizen. At New Paltz, you will engage in active critical learning about the United States rather than passive absorption of information.

ii. Western Civilization

Because the Regional requirements aim to have you reflect on your place in the world, you will be exploring the West as a source of many of the constructed communities of which you are a part. Our contemporary political, social, moral, and religious communities are heavily influenced by the historical influences on ideas and institutions from the "western tradition." In seeking to understand the history and culture of Europe and its colonies, you will therefore become more aware and critical of our heritage. Your Western Civilization class will involve critical study of the unique features and traditions of this world region. Courses may cover the arts, ideas, cultures, governments, or religions of Europe and its overseas holdings. While you will develop your knowledge in one broad area of western civilization (its distinct history, institutions, economy, society, and culture), you will also critically consider the West in the context of the world—how it developed in comparison to other regions and how it affected the development of other regions.

iii. Other World Civilizations

While studying the U.S. and the West may better inform your citizenship and participation in a variety of the communities you are a part of today, studying other world cultures ensures you become a more informed global citizen. Studying the world enables critical reflection on Western and US practices because it shows how they were uniquely constructed in comparison to the cultural and political constructions of other regions of the world. Non-west does not just imply a study of difference, however, for as a result of taking one of these courses you will also be able to make links between other cultures and your own and develop ideas on what is universal and what is particular in human nature and societies. World courses may study the histories, cultures, and practices of any non-US, non-European area of the world or take a broad approach in looking at one theme and its development and iterations across the world.

(4) Competencies: All of the disciplines, and any major you choose, build on two things 1) the accumulation of knowledge and 2) the ability to make, judge, and distinguish between arguments. Critical thinking and information management are essential to developing knowledge in any field and engaging in civic life. You also will be developing your ability to communicate in writing and orally throughout your undergraduate curriculum. All four of these abilities are central not just to your educational goals at the university: they form the basis of what any employer looks for in a university-educated person; they inform a lifelong pursuit of knowledge; and they add to anyone's social capital and ability to become a participatory citizen and member of other communities.

i. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is based in the acknowledgement that argument is central to inquiry. Argument is the presentation of reason to persuade others for or against ideas or actions. Every field of

study relies on argument, therefore to understand and critique any field of knowledge, you must be able to identify and question arguments. At the university, critical thinking is understood to be a rigorous habit of mind that is developed through training. There are methods and techniques to critical thinking that can be learned. To think critically means to follow a clear process through which you identify, analyze and evaluate any argument or inquiry. It is the aim of the university curriculum to ensure you cultivate and expand this important ability throughout your undergraduate career. All of the disciplines were founded on the principle of questioning and testing knowledge. Since this act is built so firmly into any way of knowing or scholarly discipline, students will develop critical thinking throughout their coursework. At the General Education, or introductory, level, the breadth of exposure to disciplines also ensures you will build an awareness of the methods of presentation, the forms of arguments, the standards of testing and proof, and the rhetoric various fields employ in their arguments. Of course, at this 'general' level, you are simply gaining broad exposure to the variety of ways in which arguments can be developed and presented, and the variety of ways in which arguments can fall short of the standards of scholarly knowledge. At the major level you not only will develop intimate familiarity with the means of critically evaluating the arguments in your field, you will also begin to step beyond evaluating the arguments of others to producing well-developed, well-supported arguments and critical thought on your own. Immanuel Kant in his famous work "What is Enlightenment?" distills the importance of critical thinking. He argued that by daring to cultivate critical thinking, we "become more and more capable of acting in freedom. At last free thought acts even on the fundamentals of government and the state finds it agreeable to treat man, who is now more than a machine, in accord with his dignity." At New Paltz, we hope you will embrace this process and "Dare to Know."

ii. Information Management

Critical thinking and information management are inextricably linked. Evidence is required to understand, critique and construct arguments. Through General Education courses you will be introduced to college level research and begin investigating how scholarly communication shapes meaning and creates knowledge. This form of communication can be envisioned as a constellation of ongoing arguments. As you move toward advanced level courses in your major field you will begin to enter the scholarly conversation within your chosen discipline as an active participant. Knowledge is constructed and moves forward in the disciplines utilizing specific theoretical and historical understandings, shared rules of discourse, research methodologies, and publishing channels. Disciplinary understanding will help you navigate the complex and often confusing information environment. What constitutes acceptable evidence? Who are the authorities in the field and why are they considered as such? Whose voices are not reflected in the record? What are the problems being addressed in this field? What is a problem I am interested in exploring? What is a manageable research question? Your ability to solve problems and create knowledge by critically navigating the information environment, analyzing and synthesizing that information, and using that information ethically will shape your success well beyond college in your personal, professional and civic activities.

Advances in technology and publishing have made it necessary for students to develop digital literacy alongside information literacy. Not so long ago, recorded knowledge, including scholarly conversations, were captured exclusively in print. With the advent of the internet and

the world wide web, information is published sometimes in print, sometimes digitally, and often both. One must be able to navigate the technological landscape in order to access and utilize recorded knowledge. The internet has made it possible to distribute information freely without the barriers of the traditional publishing industry. This has shifted much of the responsibility for evaluating information to the individual. Easy access to free information can also lead to misunderstandings related to the value of intellectual and creative labor and muddy the waters around attributing the work of others and copyright. These are just a few examples of the technological and information management skills required for undergraduate research that will contribute to your success beyond your college years.

iii. Written Communication

Throughout your coursework, you will be cultivating your ability to express and develop ideas through writing. Written communication can serve various purposes and audiences, yet it always relies on a few central considerations. Writing has to express ideas clearly through its grammar, style, and organization. Beyond your basic ability to write clearly, you will then develop more advanced communication abilities. Through your written work, you will learn how to address specific audiences, how to choose the forms best suited to your argument's goals, and how to use writing to work through and develop knowledge in various subjects. Your written communication courses will introduce you to writing in different genres and styles. You will learn about the writing process and strategies to continually review and improve the messages you put out in print. Finally, you will present through your writing a clear map of your reasoning and provide the illustrations and evidence to convince your readers of your arguments. Your courses will work on these abilities through written communication brainstorming exercises, rigorous rewriting processes, citation conventions and other mechanics, and analyzing a variety of forms and audience needs. Through written communication you will cultivate your own learning processes even as you develop your ability to communicate your ideas to the outside world.

iv. Oral Communication

In your personal and professional relationships, as a citizen and neighbor, you must be able to express yourself through conversation and formal speech. Oral communication includes a wide range of activities, ranging from one-on-one discussions to team-based work to debates to formal presentations. Throughout your coursework you will participate in many forms of oral communication, sometimes working directly on presentation skills. You will learn basic speech delivery elements, along with the important organization and argument skills needed to be an effective communicator. Your oral communication will begin in GE courses and continue with a more specific focus as you get into your major, where the contexts and expectations of your field of study will shape the kinds of presentations and discussions you do. Whatever your field of study, the capacity to communicate your ideas clearly and persuasively to others through speech is a vital skill to develop.

Graduation Requirements

Beyond your General Education coursework, SUNY New Paltz also has general requirements you might fill at any point in your degree.

Diversity. As a graduate of New Paltz, you will be expected to have learned about the histories of and issues faced by underrepresented groups within the United States. You may take a lower-level Diversity class in one of the GE categories, you could take a Diversity class as an elective, or your major may choose to include more advanced, upper-level classes that cover this content area. In your diversity class, you will describe the historical, social, cultural, or political perspectives of at least one cultural, ethnic, racial, or historically underrepresented group towards itself and its place in U.S. society. Gender, race, ethnic background, disability, and other sets of cultural identities have been used to elevate some groups and hinder others in the United States. Through your Diversity requirement, you will learn to identify national and global forces that have influenced or shaped the perspectives of others towards the underrepresented group(s) being studied. Through this course, you will hear from the voices of members of that group through their words, their art, or their actions. As a student in a Diversity class at New Paltz, your job will be to practice objectivity as you analyze and synthesize the material you discover. Diversity is a defining issue of our time and is something that New Paltz has a long history of addressing in its curriculum. Taking part in this conversation through your Diversity graduation requirement will make you reflect on pressing needs in our society and consider your social responsibility as a university graduate.²

2. Syllabus and content requirements for GE courses

An important part of what we have learned about best pedagogical practices is that we have to be explicit in conveying to students why particular educational strategies have been chosen. In this light, we make the following recommendations for courses to be included within the GE curriculum.

First, all GE courses must explicitly list the following on the syllabus provided to students: 1) GE category student learning outcomes; and 2) A brief description of the place of this particular course within the larger GE category (see appendix E for example).

Second, all GE courses must dedicate some class instructional time to presenting an overview of the intellectual traditions associated with the category their class is representing. We suggest all GE courses contain the equivalent of one day of instruction dedicated to a discussion of the course's place within the category, the category's place within GE and the intellectual tradition,

² In this proposal, the New Paltz GE category of Diversity (DIVR) is removed from the GE and made a graduation requirement. This action is consistent with a near-unanimous vote of the full faculty on this issue in Fall 2014 (see Appendix F). This would mean that all students, native or transfer, would be required to take a course at New Paltz with the DIVR designation. This designation could occur on courses with another GE category attribute, major or minor requirements, or be attached to a course that otherwise serves as a general elective. Making DIVR a graduation requirement ensures that all students will engage in this conversation on this campus.

and the links between that course and other content categories. This could be divided between different class sessions at the discretion of the instructor.

Because we have adopted a “menu” GE, where students choose one (or more) courses as a representative of an entire GE category, rather than a core curriculum structure, it is important for students to understand how a particular course fits within a broader category. Thus, the category needs to be defined and described first. We propose that this aspect of GE courses will be a point of discussion by the GE category faculty (see section C, below) and that materials will be developed and refined by the faculty as experience and assessment dictate.

Direct conversations with students about the role of a course in their broader education is a useful tool to encourage engagement. We encourage faculty to consider whether and how they do so to plant the seeds for student understanding of a ‘big picture’ when thinking of their disparate course requirements. One suggestion those GE category faculty may want to consider is the use of electronic portfolios and student participation in compiling a body of work or testing results from their GE courses to cultivate active learning about the curriculum and its effects on the individual student. Compiling material within a portfolio in the separate categories of GE could further the messaging discussed above by requiring students to match concrete products from their coursework to the learning objectives of the categories. It would also encourage student agency, for by taking ownership of presenting their own development across the curriculum they could gain a perspective that allows pride and recognition of what they have achieved, how far they have come, and what it was all for anyway. GE faculty could further encourage this student engagement with their learning portfolios by assigning specific portfolio components for the learning outcomes—indeed making eportfolio use optional would reduce participation and engagement with the process. This could be a topic for faculty GE groups to research and discuss. More discussion on the potential of eportfolios as a tool follows in the empowering faculty and learning across the curriculum sections, so we address it in the funding and administrative support section as well.

3. Empowering the faculty of General Education

Students are not the only ones who would benefit from more overt discussions of the meaning and purpose behind GE and any individual course’s contribution to it. In revising the General Education curriculum, we have the opportunity to change the way that instructors view their individual participation. Historically, most instructors identify first and foremost as members of an academic department. Departments regularly meet and discuss student and curricular issues and work collectively towards enhancing the experience for students and faculty. This work typically results in engaged groups with a shared vision that is then enacted collaboratively. The General Education program does not have the same structure. Frequently, the role a particular course plays in the General Education curriculum and the departments’ programs are not clearly established. There is no group that is designed to address the General Education issues specifically. The GE Board runs and reviews course-based GE assessment and the Curriculum

Committee reviews initial proposals. Neither group is granted the mission or the ability to review the GE curriculum in meaningful ways beyond those two focused tasks.

We propose a mechanism for supporting faculty in the development, administration and assessment of high quality General Education courses. This proposal is based in the idea that the faculty teaching these courses are best positioned to make choices about their quality and to collectively provide support for ensuring that those courses represent a true exploration of intellectual breadth. For all GE categories besides Foreign Language and Basic Communication, courses are housed in a variety of different academic departments and units within the college. This structure is not conducive to maintaining sustained faculty support and attention. Providing the opportunity and the structure through which the faculty teaching GE courses can come together to discuss their experiences and develop a shared sense of what New Paltz values within each category is an important aspect of developing a strong General Education program that is responsive to change over time. In order to have esprit de corps, we must first acknowledge and support the “corps.”

For each category, we propose the formation of a group that will be known as the “faculty” of a particular GE category (e.g. the GE-Natural Sciences Faculty, the GE-Humanities faculty, etc.). Each faculty roster will be comprised of the list of instructors teaching courses within a particular category within the past three years. From each faculty group, a leader will be elected to serve a three-year term. (While Diversity will remain a graduation requirement rather than a GE one, the DIVR faculty should participate in this manner to ensure that their particular needs are given a venue.) These eleven leaders will comprise the teaching faculty membership of the (new) GE Board; the full GE Board will also include representatives from the professional faculty and the library. Its chair will be elected from its membership. {This requires a change to the by-laws. The final proposal will include a specific recommendation to the Organization Committee with the language necessary to implement these changes.}

The faculty groups will meet regularly to discuss instruction in their particular category. Collectively and in community, they will:

- Work on the university’s definition and messaging for their category.
- Review the scope of their category and consider the role of various disciplines in it.
- Develop and share curricular materials related to exposing students to the big picture contributions of their category.
- Consider outreach to part-time faculty, bringing them into these discussions when possible and sharing results of these discussions with them.
- Work with the TLC in order to provide professional development opportunities specific to their needs.
- Develop appropriate mechanisms for assessment of student learning and engage in suggesting, implementing and evaluating changes based on regular assessment.

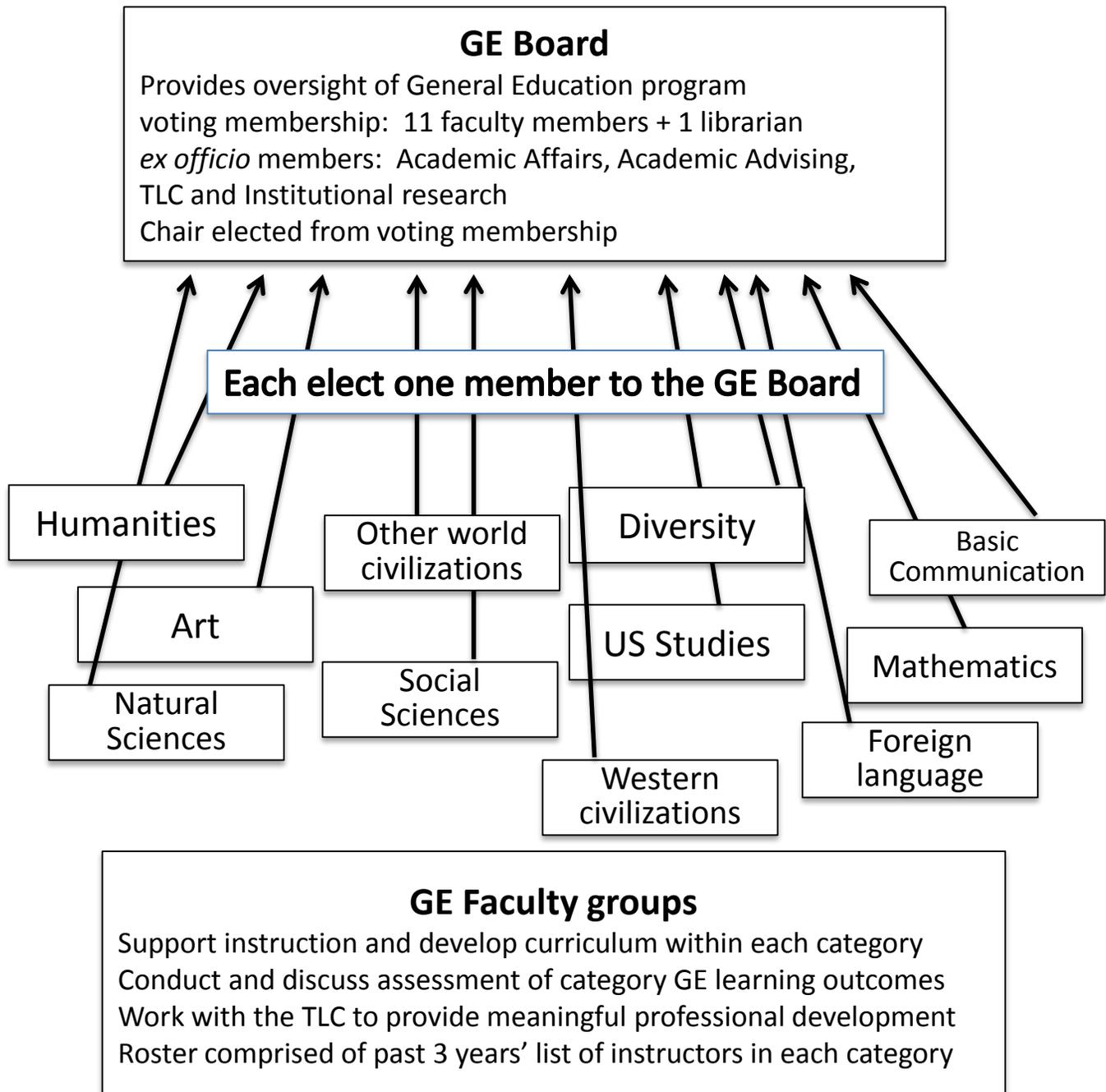
The frequency of meetings would be determined by the faculty groups themselves, and individual faculty certainly would be able to decide their level of dedication towards working within their faculty group. We also believe that the time investment involved is not sufficient

enough of a deterrent to structuring faculty teaching/service in this way because this will replace the current time faculty spend on course-based assessment, it will be recognized as a service commitment, and, we believe, it would lead to substantive improvements in faculty buy-in in our curriculum and student learning from our GE. Since many GE instructors are contingent faculty (either adjunct instructors, or lecturers), one challenge for these groups will be to figure out a way to provide meaningful involvement for all instructors in these activities. We suggest that this topic be addressed by the faculty in concert with Academic Affairs. Several solutions are possible, ranging from providing a small stipend, to specifying that such participation can be used as a way to document growth as a teacher for consideration in personnel and discretionary salary awards.

Our university must assess the General Education program and the success of its learning outcomes among our students for accreditation. While the expectation will remain that the student learning outcomes for the GE content categories be regularly assessed, we believe the assessment practices on campus need a thorough transformation. With this proposal, the mechanism for GE assessment will be determined by the faculty groups in each category. Assessment will thus be able to reflect what is appropriate and useful to each field and content area. Following discussion among the informed, invested, and involved faculty members, the groups will prepare a plan for conducting this assessment. This may involve a methodology that: 1) continues current practice (course-based assessment conducted by a random sample of instructors. This is what the GE Board currently does and this is what the GE Board does not recommend); 2) employs an appropriate pre-/post- assessment system; or 3) is based on a student-curated portfolio submission system with samples selected for review. These efforts will necessitate support and coordination from the TLC and/or Provost's office staff. However, the payoff will be a faculty-driven, meaningful assessment process that is useful in fine-tuning GE offerings to better suit the needs of students seeking General Education. (Note: these courses can, and likely should, be assessed at the department level as well, in order to ensure that department-defined learning outcomes are being met by a particular course. This proposal seeks to clearly separate the General Education learning outcome assessment from assessment of department-specific goals for a particular course. For example, Intro to Psychology is required of all Psychology majors, so the Psychology department certainly has learning outcomes in mind for its majors. However, it is also a GE SSCI course. Assessing how students achieve the Social Science GE learning outcomes is a different question than asking how well the course prepares students for the next psychology class—it is this question that the GE faculties will be working to address through ongoing assessment.)

Under this restructuring, the GE Board will oversee the GE program as a whole. They will review and discuss assessment results from the individual content area faculty groups and make recommendations for revision of the GE program based on these analyses. They will work with the Associate Provost, collate assessment reports to meet Middle States' expectations and to spur curricular improvement initiatives, and aid faculty groups in developing and then supporting the new assessment structure. These activities will be reported to the Curriculum Committee. (The GE board currently is, and will remain, a standing subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee.)

Proposed structure for GE faculties and GE Board



In short, these changes will go a long way towards achieving our goal of fostering active engagement of faculty, reflective practice in teaching and support for pedagogical development. The faculty teaching the General Education courses will be much more involved in examining their work through a General Education-specific lens and we believe that this focus will result in real gains for the students.

C. Student requirements for GE category courses

With this background explaining the place of General Education within our curriculum and plans for improving the coherence and assessment of GE courses, we are faced with the choice of how best to enact these ideals through the distribution of GE requirements. The GE Board feels that more than one solution would work on our campus. We ask faculty to consider these options and provide feedback at this point. As you review the options presented here, you may wish to consider some of the central concerns our committee had when discussing GE revisions. The needs of high credit majors, the needs of transfer students and the impact of 'seamless transfer', the implications of new rules for student aid (TAP), and the impact on faculty of changing requirements are all considered in varying ways here.

One of the sticking points in designing a new GE is the extent to which we choose to honor the "general" in General Education by including all students regardless of the size of their major. Under GE3, students in the Division of Engineering are not able to follow the same GE requirements as the rest of the campus (DIVR and FLNG are not required) because these major programs have a heavy credit requirement mandated by their accrediting bodies. They cannot decrease the size of their majors. Currently, engineering students (102 major credits) represent 2.1% of our graduates (with enrollment expected to increase as mechanical engineering comes on line), 6.3% are BFA or Art Ed students with 81-85 required credits, 3.5% are adolescence education majors with 78-100 required credits, 6.6% are science majors requiring >68 credits. Thus, nearly 20% of our students graduate with degrees with a substantial credit investment. One way of elevating the importance of liberal education is to make sure that it is uniformly available to all members of the student body, regardless of major. On the other hand, substantially decreasing the size of the General Education requirements would leave us with a program that would not effectively deliver the breadth we consider necessary. Especially for students in applied fields, these requirements may be the only time they will get to experience academic exposure to the traditional knowledge disciplines, for secondary education does not provide this. A recent [Chronicle of Higher Education](#) opinion piece evokes the sad state of affairs that might result. Therefore, we have been mindful to keep the number of credits required within the GE program at a level that means that all students can either equally participate or approach equal participation, while ensuring that a broad grounding in liberal education is maintained in the requirements. Further, we were guided by the notion that the student requirements represent the minimum expectations, and that, as appropriate and possible, students should be encouraged to continue their liberal studies beyond the GE requirements in order to make the most of their college education. We describe the ways in which each of the three choices below would impact the students of high credit majors in Appendix F.

Another central concern is the imposition of “seamless transfer” by SUNY (Policy Memorandum [here](#)). This initiative has several components, including: 1) a mandate that courses that satisfy particular GE categories at one institution are accepted as satisfying the SUNY GE requirement at all SUNY campuses; 2) a requirement for articulating “transfer path courses” that will allow students to know which courses in the first two years of study are likely to be necessary for upper level coursework at other institutions; and 3) a policy that students that complete a GE program through earning an Associate’s degree shall not be required to take additional GE courses that may impede their progress to graduation.

As a result of this, our campus has been engaged in a multi-year process of ensuring that our transfer path courses are marked appropriately (among several other administrative details). The seamless transfer stipulation that we no longer require transfer students with an Associate’s degree to take additional New Paltz General Education requirements is a major policy change and is currently in effect. However, this does not mean that we are required to apply the SUNY minimal GE requirements to all of our students. If seamless transfer influences your view of what we should or should not do with GE, the choices below should accommodate that. Some might be concerned that having a different GE than the SUNY minimum might create even more of a divide between our transfer students and our four-year students than already exists, since ‘native’ New Paltz students would have a broader exposure to the disciplines and more required courses under their belts. Others might feel that while the needs of transfer students and how they transition to New Paltz are very real concerns, another concern should be to require a robust and broad GE as a means of offering something of value to those students who choose to attend our university for those extra years. Similarly, many of our students come in with AP credits for their GE requirements. While some may feel this is a problem that would be compounded by choosing a reduced GE, we believe the university should review the awarding of GE credits as equivalent to AP credits. Nevertheless, your concerns regarding AP equivalents should be met by the range of options we present for faculty consideration.

A newly arisen concern on our campus that we have had to consider in our GE discussions is how New York state has changed the rules on deciding students’ eligibility for the financial aid known as TAP. Fifty percent of our students receive TAP; therefore, implications of TAP changes have been thoroughly considered by the GE board. We present an explanation of the TAP changes and its relevance to this discussion (Appendix G). In short, to retain their funding, students now have to be registered for twelve credits of required classes each semester. Minor programs and second majors do not count as ‘required.’ The sticking point for GE discussions is the weight of the 120 credit graduation requirement versus the weight of the GE requirement. One consideration many faculty have raised is that because of TAP issues, we may not want to substantially lower GE requirements at this time as they give students more concrete requirements for their TAP eligibility and some extra GE requirements could also double-dip for the minors and second majors. Others believe if we lower GE requirements, we would provide students with more elective credits and give them more room to count freely chosen courses in their 12 credits required by the state. Regardless of one’s stance on this issue, we feel the TAP

constraints can be seen as a moving target and should not necessarily be a deciding factor in GE size. Faculty will see in the choices below varied responses to the TAP problem as well.

Finally, a central concern raised during previous discussions of reforming GE was how it would impact faculty. Lowering GE requirements could mean some departments have a substantially reduced mission on campus; some even fear that this could impact the jobs of faculty in those departments. Others believe a university's curriculum should not be determined because of past practice, that a reduction in faculty numbers in those departments is not certain, and in any case student needs should come first. The choices below thus also allow you to reflect on which end of the spectrum you might be on this topic.

Our discussions did not just revolve around restrictions, however, and we hope you will also weigh ideals as you consider the decision below. We therefore present with each of these choices the philosophy behind them.

DECISION POINT: We present here three viable models for category requirements for GE courses. These models all achieve the goals stated above, but achieve these goals in slightly different ways. Each model will result in changes to current practice, and our belief is that all three would result in an increase in the quality of the General Education program at New Paltz, when coupled with the other aspects of this proposal. We chose to present three options rather than one to request clear feedback from the faculty before a final plan is submitted through faculty governance. While there has been discussion of GE choices for quite some time, it has often been nebulous because of unknowns on other components of curricular reform or it got derailed by territorial critiques of particular epistemologies or content areas. We decided on the three options to present based on prior faculty feedback and are confident that each is responsive to the interests of different groups on campus. The Curriculum Committee will seek to see which option garners the most faculty support when the choices are laid out clearly in this way. Our goal is to try to be sure of faculty support before the new GE requirements officially go through faculty governance.

Option 1: SUNY Minimum. *A maximum of 9 credits can be applied to both GE and major requirements. A minimum grade of C- is required to exhibit mastery of each category.*

1- MATH*

1- Basic Communication**

At *least* 5 of: FLNG, NSCI, ART, SSCI, HUM, USST, WEST, WRLD

A minimum of 30 credits is required.

This option emphasizes flexibility and student choice. Students would construct a collection of courses that reflect their personal educational goals while still requiring some degree of breadth of exposure to different methods of inquiry and areas of study. By limiting the number of courses that are simultaneously applicable to the major and GE, all students would be required to

explore college-level work in at least 4 content categories beyond their major program requirements. In addition, students could take more than one course in a particular content area and have it count towards their GE requirements, thus allowing some students to experience a depth component within the GE courses. In some cases, exposure to a single course in a particular area may not be sufficient; this model would give the students the option to complete their exposure to a given discipline or content area. Both transfer and 'native' students would meet the same requirements, thus adhering in spirit to the SUNY 'seamless transfer' policy and providing a uniform GE experience for all students regardless of the amount of time they spend at New Paltz. This would also make for easier transfer advising and record keeping, since we would have fewer waivers to work out for the transfers not coming in with Associates degrees. Students would be choosing courses based on their particular interest, and this may result in a more naturally engaged student population in a particular class, which may make for a better learning environment for students and instructors. By requiring that students complete each course with a satisfactory grade, we are enforcing the idea that the breadth component can be met only by mastery of the material covered in the course, not simply exposure. In addition, since the requirement is based in completing a number of credits (and a certain amount of breadth), departments could choose to offer GE courses of varying credit amounts. Basic Communication/composition could be a 1 or 2 semester offering, with placement determined on an individual basis (see the note below the choices).

Option 2: SUNY 10 of 10, for a total of at least 30 credits. *A maximum of 3 courses can be applied to both GE and major requirements. A minimum grade of C- is required to exhibit mastery of each category. Commitment to offering 3 credit options in all categories needed.*

- 1- MATH*
- 1- Basic Communication**
- 1- Foreign Language
- 1- NSCI
- 1- ART
- 1- SSCI
- 1- HUM
- 1- USST
- 1- WEST
- 1- WRLD

This choice advocates for exposing students to **all** the ways of knowing and content regions described by the ten SUNY board of trustees categories through college-level coursework. Rather than express a judgement about which categories are more or less important, this model requires student exposure to one course in each. Students would thus not be able to avoid categories in areas unfamiliar to them that would be good for their personal development. This choice reflects the importance of all the fields and disciplinary strengths of New Paltz. This proposal is also conceptually easy for students to understand and reflects in a straightforward way the ideal of a General Education being about a broad exposure to the range of epistemologies, competencies, and content areas studied in academia.

By limiting the amount of “double-dipping” between major and GE requirements, we can ensure that students would explore at least 7 categories outside of their major requirements. In order to enable students in high-credit majors to participate in this GE without the need for program-specific waivers, 3-credit options must be available in all categories (see appendix F for more detail). This option reduces the number of GE classes students have to take from what we have now, which satisfies some of the concerns in our current GE for large credit majors and transfer students. It is a plan which could be accommodated within any major, including the Engineering and Art programs (see Appendix F).

Option 3: The liberally defined SUNY 10 of 10, involving achievement of a level of proficiency and practice for certain categories. *A maximum of 3 courses can be applied to both GE and major requirements. A minimum grade of C- is required to exhibit mastery of each category. Commitment to offering 3-credit options in all categories needed.*

- 1- MATH*
- 1 or 2- Basic Communication**
- 1 or 2- Foreign Language (Students fulfill the requirement by taking either: a) 2 consecutive classes; b) one class at the intermediate or 300-level; or c) CLEP exam.)
- 1 or 2- NSCI (4 credit minimum—a student must take a natural science with a lab, or two 3-credit courses)
- 1- ART
- 1- SSCI
- 1- HUM
- 1- USST
- 1- WEST
- 1- WRLD

This choice would follow the traditional ideal of liberal education and satisfy the desire to provide students with the breadth of exposure to ways of thinking that a university education can uniquely provide. This GE choice retains broad coverage of General Education categories in the ways of knowing and regional content courses. Like the others, this is a straightforward GE that works with the parameters provided by the Board of Trustees to ease assessment and avoid confusion for students, especially transfers. Like Option 2, it advocates exposing students to all the ways of knowing and content regions for the reasons stated under that choice. However, in this model, all students are expected to attain a minimal level of competency in some areas through coursework at New Paltz or college credit-bearing coursework elsewhere. While some students can fulfill this GE with the same number of courses as Option 2 would give them, those who do not place into the intermediate level of a language, require an introductory basic communication course, and take a science course without a lab could potentially have to take three more courses than the model in Option 2. This model acknowledges that, in some areas, student achievement is more important than a requirement for a specific number of courses. The levels of student achievement in Basic Communication, Foreign Language and Natural Sciences have been determined by asking the faculty responsible for delivering courses in

these categories (Composition Program, Languages, Literatures and Cultures department, and the School of SS&E plus Geography and Anthropology, respectively) to submit their recommendation and a brief rationale. These are available as Appendices H, I, and J.

***MATH:** Current campus practice allows students to place out of the Mathematics requirement based on work done in high school. The faculty votes from 2014/2015, the historic importance of mathematics in the traditional liberal arts, and the increasing need for quantitative literacy among today's college graduates all justify a change in this practice. Accordingly, these plans are all designed with the idea that students must complete at least one college-credit bearing math course in order to fulfill this requirement. Since this would be a change from current practice, whereby many students place out of math, a discussion of the fiscal implications is presented in Section V.

****Basic Communication:** In GE3, the Basic Communication (BCOM) learning outcomes have been met through 6 credits of coursework in Composition 1 and Composition 2 offered through the English department. All three of these proposals envision a different structure for the Basic Communication requirement. Options 1 and 3 envision a single 4-credit course that would be given the GE designation of BCOM. This course would have a pre-requisite that could be met by evaluation of student competency in this area by high school work, or by completion of a 3-credit Introductory Composition class. Option 2 envisions a single 3-credit course as meeting the Basic Communication requirement. However, additional composition courses would still be offered for students wanting or requiring additional courses of this type (education students, for example, need a minimum of two 3-credit composition courses in order to become certified teachers). In addition, the SUNY Information Management competency will be a part of classes that meet the Basic Communication learning outcome. This is to ensure that all students continue to receive introductory level training in library research skills.

Note on AP classes:

We recommend a systematic review of how AP, IB and CLEP experiences are awarded credit and GE equivalency. This review should result in a consistent application of credit/equivalency across departments and ensure that there is a satisfactory balance between students receiving credit for AP work and recognition of the benefits of fulfilling General Education requirements in a college (not college-like) setting. See Appendix K for numbers of first-year students receiving AP credit in Fall 2015.

Seamless Transfer and Progressive Waiver System:

We have already adopted a policy whereby transfer students entering New Paltz with a completed SUNY Associate's degree (A.A. or A.S.) are exempt from any additional GE requirements. Thus, if we choose option 1, 2 or 3, above, these transfer students will not be required to take additional GE courses here. Transfer students with an Associate's degree completed make up ~22% of the transfer student body. The other 78% will need to complete their GE requirements here in order to be awarded their degree. We recommend the following waivers for these non-Associate's degree bearing transfer students:

Option 1: No waiver is required. Students will transfer in courses that meet GE requirements, and then have to take additional courses here (if necessary) so that they meet the stated requirements.

Option 2 or 3: Students with <30 transfer credits must complete the requirement as stated. Students with 30-45 transfer credits must complete work in Math, Basic Communication and at least 7 other GE categories for a total of at least 30 credits. Students with 46-60 transfer credits must complete work in Math, Basic Communication and at least 6 other GE categories for a total of at least 30 credits. Students with 61+ transfer credits must complete work in Math, Basic Communication and at least 5 other GE categories for a total of at least 30 credits.

Timeline for implementation:

While the “new” GE board is a better structure for developing the quality of GE course offerings, we propose that the GE board under our current governance structure facilitate the first steps necessary in implementing this GE. These steps will be:

Fall 2016-Spring 2018: GE Board will formulate simple forms to facilitate review of current and new courses for inclusion within GE4. Current course-based assessment practice for GE3 courses would likely continue in the 2016-7 and 2017-8 academic years, as we transition to the new systems. GE faculties should begin to meet and discuss issues specific to their area. During this early stage especially, before the faculties get immersed in running assessment and other maintenance activities, the groups could begin creating a culture of sharing ideas and teaching experiences, creating study or teaching groups to cultivate professional development, and creating a cohesive sense of what we at the university already have to offer in teaching these categories and how we could cultivate our strengths. The TLC and Provost’s office should provide support for getting faculty together (perhaps including incentives for part-time faculty). Department chairs and deans of divisions should consider ways to 1) systematically reward participation, 2) encourage reflection on GE offerings to keep them consistent with outcomes and the ideals behind GE, and 3) introduce new faculty into this process.

Fall 2018: GE Faculties should be convened to elect GE Board members and to commence regular meetings. GE Faculties should begin the process of developing appropriate assessment protocols, with help from the TLC and Provost’s office staff. The (new) GE Board will begin regularly meeting to discuss the GE curriculum.

D. Implementing First Year Seminars

The purpose of a First Year Seminar (FYS) is to introduce students to General Education in a meaningful academic context. One recent study argues that seminars in their first year of college instruction enable students to adopt a “life-long learning orientation” and a capacity for

learning during and after college.³ Other existing studies demonstrate that first year seminars enhance academic performance, retention, and persistence to graduation.⁴ Finally, FYS can serve as an opportunity for curricular innovation and high-quality teaching experiences for faculty. If integrated into our own curriculum, FYS can greatly enhance our overall academic programs and help New Paltz achieve its educational objectives.

There are many different First Year Seminar models. At many SUNY schools, the First Year Seminar provides an introduction to the campus and to college-level expectations and habits. The previous liberal education committees put forth a proposal whereby FYS was a requirement for students outside of the GE, and was based around a common theme for all sections. While this proposal reflected extensive research on pedagogical benefits, feedback from faculty indicated a preference for teaching a subject of their own choice within their own discipline and expertise.

Proposal

We offer the following proposal as a way to introduce an FYS experience to our students that will simultaneously strengthen and invigorate the GE program. We do not suggest that this be a requirement for all students at this point. Implementation of a uniform requirement would have profound institutional effects and would likely result in a lower quality experience for faculty and students. Thus, for the first several years, we suggest that a steadily but rationally increasing number of FYS courses should be piloted and delivered with the option to 'scale-up' FYS courses in the future.

FYS within GE: Each FYS course will fulfill a specific GE requirement determined by the instructor. The content of each course will reflect a balance between our desire to introduce both the concept of General Education as well as the particular individual discipline of the particular instructor. The initial two to three weeks of the course will involve a universal introduction to the purpose of General Education that allow students to better understand and hopefully embrace what it means to be a broadly-educated person with intellectual capabilities across many fields of knowledge. This universal introduction will be adapted to the course content and discipline, but based on guidelines from the FYS chair and GE faculty groups, produced through consultation with the faculty teaching these seminars. These weeks will focus on teacher-scholars sharing with their students what their discipline involves and what role it plays in their education. Students will also be asked in these weeks to reflect on the discipline's personal applicability and opportunities for growth. The remainder of the course's curriculum will

³ Ryan D. Padgett, Jennifer R. Keup, and Ernest T. Pascarella. "The Impact of First-Year Seminars on College Students Lifelong Learning Orientations." *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*. 50 (2003).

⁴ Paul Fidler and Philip Moore. "A comparison of effects of campus residence and freshman seminar attendance on freshman dropout rates." *Journal of The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition*, 8 (1996). Mary Starke, Marshall Harth, and Frank Sirianni. "Retention, bonding, and academic achievement: Success of a first-year seminar." *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 13 (2001).

be determined by the instructor and intended as an introduction to their particular academic discipline. Because of the seminar-format of the class, size should be restricted to 20-25 students with the exact number to be determined by the FYS chairs and faculty. In addition to meeting the particular learning outcomes of a GE content category, the First Year Seminars will:

- introduce students overtly to the content area of study (as all GE courses do—see section B2 above—but in a more expansive way)
- promote intellectual curiosity among students and further inquiry into a particular discipline
- provide students with the opportunity to receive feedback on the preparation of a substantial work in text, digital media and/or spoken format(s)
- provide students the opportunity to work in groups
- provide students the opportunity to engage in oral discourse

We believe that this curricular model will ensure our students develop foundational knowledge about a particular academic discipline while simultaneously enabling them to appreciate different kinds of knowledge within the broader tradition of liberal education. Since FYS courses would fulfill GEs, this system encourages students to learn about disciplines other than their intended major. These seminars should provide our students with greater breadth and depth in terms of curriculum and enhance their own intellectual development. Faculty's choice of seminar topic would reflect their specialized teaching knowledge as well as a topic and approach that would be uniquely suited to engaging first-year students in their discipline.

FYS Logistics: The FYS program will be overseen by two fully-tenured chairs, including one associate or full professor and a senior academic advisor. The FYS chairs will design the foundations of the two to three week introduction to GE curriculum—in consultation with faculty teaching seminars and the faculty GE groups. They would also train faculty interested in designing and proposing their own FYS courses in this material. The development of and training for this curriculum would count as part of the chairs' service to the university.

Faculty members interested in teaching a FYS would consult with their Department Chair and/or dean and then prepare a proposal that will be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee. Because FYS classes are already approved as GE classes by SUNY, this structure will not necessitate that every new FYS go to Albany for approval and inclusion in the permanent course catalogue. We have discussed this idea with SUNY Central and have received tentative approval of such a scheme. A short description of each class will be provided to first-year students during advising sessions and interested students will select a particular section.

Under this proposal, FYS courses would not be immediately available for all students. As a pilot program, we envision offering approximately 10 courses a semester for incoming first-year students. These courses would then be assessed for their feasibility, effectiveness, and interest among students and faculty.

Within our overall course catalog, all FYS courses would have an 'FYS' designation. Faculty

teaching those seminars would still get workload credit for course instruction as if they were teaching a normal course in their department. No cross-listing would be necessary.

These courses will be assessed as part of the GE program and separately to evaluate the attainment of the FYS learning outcomes described above—likely at the end of three years. A plan for assessing the FYS would fall under the purview of the (new) GE Board.

Timeline for implementation:

Fall 2016: The Curriculum Committee will establish the FYS chairs and solicit proposals from full-time faculty interesting in participating in the FYS. In addition to reviewing proposals and beginning to establish the introduction to GE curriculum, the FYS chairs will develop implementation strategies.

Spring 2017: FYS classes are listed on the course schedule with Fall 2017 offerings. The FYS chairs will continue development of the program and train initial faculty on introduction to GE curriculum. The Curriculum committee will solicit and review requests for a second round of courses that will run in Spring 2018. The (new) GE board will establish requirements for assessment.

Fall 2017 and Spring 2018: First sets of courses in FYS run.

Fall 2018: Use assessment and pertinent data to improve the FYS program. Continue to offer FYS sections. Explore desirability and administrative support for FYS program expansion.

IV. Progressive Development of competencies/skills across the curriculum

While the General Education knowledge categories described in the previous section are central to university education, so are the development of competencies or skills vital to both General Education and the ensuing years of a student's education. Within the SUNY guidelines, two competencies are required—critical thinking and information management.

In GE3, a number of competencies (effective expression, systematic inquiry, information literacy and ethical reflection) have been housed under the broad heading of critical thinking and addressed as aspects of courses satisfying General Education content categories. The idea of expanding General Education into skills and beyond knowledge areas was a new aspect of GE3, and was a requirement addressing the desire that “greater emphasis should be placed on developing the writing, speaking and critical thinking skills of incoming students; General Education is the logical place for this development to begin” ([Final GE III Proposal](#)).

After 12 years of GE3, some of the flaws of this structure are apparent. First, there is no mechanism in place to ensure that a particular student experiences coursework in which all of these competencies are embedded. Our graduation requirements are for the GE content categories, not for competencies. Second, under this structure, a student may take a number of classes that introduce them to a particular area, but there is no mechanism in place to ensure that expectations and instruction advance as the student masters basic skills. Third, while there is a value to experiencing coursework that utilizes these competencies in areas outside of a student's major or minor plan of study, there is no recognition that these skills are not always easily transferable between disciplines. Many students will need assistance in integrating and applying these skills in new contexts, most notably, within the major and minor coursework. Finally, a huge point of confusion was thrown into the mix when SUNY changed its competency requirements and mandated assessment of particular skills (critical thinking and information management). Because GE3 did not have specific learning outcomes that were identical to the new SUNY mandates, courses approved for Systematic Inquiry were now responsible for delivering instruction and assessing student work for SUNY critical thinking learning outcomes. In short, the framework of the GE3 competencies became confusing and some instructors teaching GE3 courses today may not fully understand the many different student learning outcomes their course is responsible for delivering. This proposal seeks means of resolving the above issues with GE3 while also developing the structure through which our curriculum can ensure progressive development of four central competencies at the introductory level within GE and at the intermediate and advanced levels within majors.

A. New Paltz General Education Competencies

We propose a structure that facilitates the progressive development of skills related to the competencies outlined below. This structure ensures that students will be introduced to all four

competencies through GE and that they will have learning opportunities at the intermediate and advanced levels in the major.

For all major and minor programs, faculty should discuss the best ways to address increasing student competencies in the following four skill areas and articulate these plans in their *curriculum maps*:

- written communication
- oral communication
- critical thinking
- information management

This approach would give programs control over where they focus on writing, speaking, critical thinking, and information management. It would also allow those competencies to be addressed in ways that fit each particular major while retaining rigor in the university-wide learning outcomes expected for all graduates. Through departmental assessment and five-year reviews, faculty are already asked to report on how they develop students' abilities. This structure would give the concrete evidence of how that is done. It will also better allow department chairs and mentors to introduce new faculty to the structure of the curriculum and the different levels at which any individual course, from intro and GE to capstones, educates students.

In addition to the skills articulated above, most programs include student learning outcomes that address at least some of the following: quantitative reasoning/literacy, ethical reasoning,, creative thinking, learning about the history and experiences of historically underrepresented groups, global literacy, initiatives to promote sustainable practices, inquiry and analysis, reading, teamwork, problem solving, civic engagement, intercultural knowledge, and foundations for lifelong learning. These are vital areas that will be addressed by individual courses and programs as is appropriate to those areas. They are not listed as required competencies in the same way as writing, speaking, critical thinking, and information management to avoid overly complicating the GE and major curricula.

An important part of the efforts towards progressive development of all four competencies will be to clearly inform students of these learning outcomes and the way that they are being met in their curriculum. Like with the General Education category requirements, this will be achieved by a focused and sustained effort to highlight these aspects in web, print and social media venues. In addition, syllabi for individual courses should have these learning outcomes listed and instructors should take the time to clearly inform students about the place of a particular course in their overall educational trajectory.

B. Progressive development

The four required competencies would be overtly addressed at three different levels:

- Introductory
- Intermediate
- Advanced

The **introductory** level would take place in GE courses:

Structurally, this would mean that all GE courses (with a few possible exceptions as needed) would have at least one competency associated with them. They could have more than one. SUNY learning outcomes associated with those competencies would appear on the course syllabi. Basic Communication Oral and Written GE courses (typically Composition) would serve as the introductory level for the writing and speaking competencies, but other courses could work on those competencies as well. As noted earlier in the proposal, the SUNY Information Management competency will be a part of classes that meet the Basic Communication learning outcome—this is to ensure that all students continue to receive introductory level training in library research skills. The Faculty GE groups would be active in considering the suitability of each discipline or content area for each category and they would come together through their representatives on the GE board to ensure rational, somewhat even distribution of the competencies across the GE curriculum.

The **intermediate** level would take place early in majors:

Each major would identify one or more required courses early in the program of study (often at the 200 or 300 level, but adjustments can be made to fit particular program needs) that would address these four competencies. One course could officially do most of the work, or it could be spread out among courses. These competencies would be noted with those courses on curriculum maps, and those maps should be shared with faculty (and possibly students) throughout each program.

Programs should make sure that competencies appear in required courses to reach all students. These intermediate level courses should directly address the competency in question in the syllabus and in the instruction for the course. Instructors should also be informed, and trained when necessary, about the relevant competency/competencies. Affiliated librarians will be assigned to courses with the information management designation at the intermediate level and will be available to collaborate on course integration and implementation.

The **advanced** level would take place in capstone experiences or late in the major:

Every major should have a **capstone experience**, provided that university support for it was available. This would be a university graduation requirement. Exceptions could be made for programs where this was not feasible. The capstone would be the basis for advanced level work on the four competencies. However, programs would have the option to spread the competencies over 400-level courses if that fit their curriculum best. In either case, the advanced level competency work would appear on curriculum maps and be noted on syllabi. Instructors should also be informed, and trained when necessary, about the relevant competency/competencies.

C. Assessment of Competencies Across the Curriculum

One of the struggles with GE3 centers on assessment. It is often seen as an onerous task, added on to courses, providing little usable data to work from. It also falls to a high percentage of adjunct faculty teaching GE courses. Departmental assessment is required as well, though there are inconsistent practices and models in effect. This model for the curriculum could allow meaningful changes in assessment to move it from an often ineffective process to one that provides clear information on results and inspires meaningful faculty reflection on teaching improvement.

With the three-level, progressive learning structure, in theory, a competency could be assessed at any of the levels. To simplify assessment as much as possible while making it as useful as possible, we recommend the following:

- Assessment would happen through set rubrics, such as the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) VALUE rubrics, which provide different levels of mastery ([here](#)). These would be selected and adjusted for SUNY New Paltz by the Competencies Across the Curriculum Board (see below for more info on this body). Set rubrics would simplify the process of coming up with a plan for assessment each year and would provide consistency for year to year comparison.
- Assessment would take place at the advanced level. By doing this, instead of focusing on particular courses, students would have most or all of their GE experience to draw upon. Full-time instructors would usually be completing the assessments. Students could also be working in their fields of growing expertise.
- Assessment would use natural assignments in courses or capstone experiences. Regularly occurring assignments in capstones or other advanced classes would serve as the objects to assess. Selected instructors could use the common rubrics to simply record assessment numbers as they performed their usual grading of projects.
- By starting with the advanced level, the university could identify main areas of strength and weakness for students near graduation. These areas could get additional focus and resources at earlier levels. Smaller assessment projects could happen with natural assignments at the introductory or intermediate levels (perhaps on an instructor volunteer basis) to see how students performed in areas of weakness earlier on. Some majors, especially those with external accreditation, already conduct assessments in their courses. Thus, these competency assessments can be implemented with very little additional burden to the faculty.

D. Implementation

The main administrative changes required to enact the proposals above involve the Writing Board. Currently, the Writing Board (like the GE Board) is a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee. We suggest that it be renamed the Competencies Across the Curriculum Board (CAC) to reflect an expansion of its purview to include the other three required GE

competencies. This group would be elected to reflect proportional representation of the faculty. {This requires a change to the by-laws. The final proposal will need a specific recommendation to the Organization Committee with the language necessary to implement these changes.}

During the transition to the new GE, the CAC Board would have two primary tasks: 1) to choose and/or develop common rubrics for the 4 GE competency areas at the three levels; and 2) to work with departments to develop and implement curricular changes connected to competencies and to review and recommend for approval, program proposals reflecting these changes.

DECISION POINT: There are several different ways that courses involved in developing competencies could be made apparent to students and faculty. To provide guidance to the CAC Board as they implement these goals, we present two choices here for feedback prior to final proposal development. In either case, mechanisms would need to be set up to ensure that all students receive support in developing all four competencies in preparation for advanced level coursework.

Option 1: Competencies are embedded in the curricular map. The designations of which courses deliver intermediate-level and advanced-level instruction in a particular competency could be contained only in the curricular maps and course syllabus and other course materials. The designation would not show up on progress reports as a requirement that needed to be fulfilled. This option would provide the most flexibility to programs and would not require a one-size-fits-all set of student requirements.

Option 2: Competencies are also listed as a course attribute. All courses with intermediate-level and advanced-level instruction in a particular competency would be listed as such in the college catalogue, in the course schedule and in students' progress reports. Under this option, the appropriate number of courses that are required of each student in each competency would need to be determined by the CAC Board and students could track their progress on progress reports. Further, the CAC Board would make recommendations about class size and other unifying features that would be shared across campus by all classes addressing a particular competency at the intermediate level. This option provides the most transparency to students and faculty regarding the development of these core competencies over the course of a New Paltz education.

Note on Writing Intensive designation: The changes proposed here would result in removing the current "Writing Intensive" designation from the graduation requirements. By adopting this structure, we would be ensuring that students have a writing intensive experience at the intermediate AND advanced levels, something our current structure does not promote. This means that the competencies across the curriculum structure would need to be developed with the same attention to student learning and course rigor as the WI designation currently intends. Faculty feedback on which of the above options could allow us to best ensure student outcomes is therefore needed.

Timeline for implementation:

Fall 2016: By-law changes implemented so that CAC Board can form. Elections held to populate CAC Board.

Spring 2017: CAC Board chooses and/or develops common rubrics for the 4 GE competency areas, communicates these to the campus. CAC Board works with the TLC to offer professional development opportunities—this would be an ongoing activity.

Fall 2017: Programs are asked to submit curricular maps including a plan for development of the 4 required competencies for all students. Plans will be reviewed by the CAC Board and, if appropriate, plans are recommend for approval to the Curriculum Committee. If we decide that courses should be labeled in the catalogue as meeting particular requirements (option 2, above), then the CAC would be the body that would approve courses for this designation.

Fall 2018: By end of Fall 2018, all programs would be expected to have completed review of their curriculum for the 4 required GE competencies, and implemented any necessary changes.

V. Additional suggestions

In developing this proposal, we considered many ideas related to General Education that, for a variety of reasons, did not make it into the elements described above. However, we would like to advocate for the models below as lower-priority, but still powerful ways to enhance the campus curriculum. While we do not suggest supporting these as pilot programs or ideas we might eventually enact as requirements, we would like to 1) encourage faculty to develop their teaching in some of these high-impact or interdisciplinary ways, and 2) inform students of the range of learning opportunities that are available to them through GE and their major curriculums. Here we cover current initiatives and future teaching interests in the areas of interdisciplinary approaches, applied learning, and common student experiences. Towards the end, we talk about methods to encourage and broadcast our strengths in these areas.

A. Support for interdisciplinary approaches to learning

In several venues, many members of the faculty have expressed a desire for interdisciplinary or integrative learning opportunities within (and beyond) the GE curriculum. There are many challenges involved in implementing a general curriculum that honors this desire. How does one maintain the integrity of the disciplinary traditions when approaching non-traditional topics-and is this appropriate for novice-level learners, such as students? How do interdisciplinary experiences remain rigorous when instructors cross into new disciplinary territory for which they have little training? How can people be enticed/forced to collaborate in an equitable manner? How can we afford to put two instructors in a room when we have a hard time staffing existing courses that only require a single professor?

Still, we believe that there is a general consensus among the faculty that coursework, experiences and problem-solving through multiple disciplinary lenses can be a transformational experience for students and teacher/scholars. Thus, we seek here to advocate strongly for the opportunity to continue to build on current work and initiatives that foster interdisciplinary learning at New Paltz. We will highlight three ideas that could be implemented on a small-scale, voluntary basis with relatively little cost. The effectiveness of these initiatives could be determined at a future date and scaled up, or phased out, accordingly.

1. Strengthening First Year Interest Groups (FIGs)

First-year interest groups have been a part of the New Paltz curriculum for several years. However, this initiative has never had widespread and sustained institutional support. The idea of the first-year interest groups (FIGs) is that first-year students are placed into classes as a cohort. Because many first-year classes are GE classes, this effectively means that we can use FIGs to advance our efforts to provide more meaning, enthusiasm, and interdisciplinary or integrative approaches to General Education. Several studies have shown that cohort scheduling is a high-impact practice and leads to lasting gains in student learning.

We propose a renewal of efforts to make FIGs more appealing to faculty and students. We believe that investing time and resources in improving this program would go a long way towards providing an interdisciplinary experience early in students' college careers. Further, the changes that need to be made are relatively minor. For example, a common complaint is that faculty do not know they are involved in one until well into the semester. Or, seats reserved for a FIG are "given away" to meet continuing student demand during course registration.

In order to enhance FIGs, the program's administrative structure should be modified and enhanced. Currently, Academic Advising is solely responsible for soliciting faculty participation, overseeing scheduling and other aspects of the program. We propose that these responsibilities be shared by a small group of teaching and professional faculty members known as the FIG Board. Working with Academic Advising, the FIG Board would be responsible for encouraging faculty participation and working with faculty and staff responsible for scheduling in various academic units. In addition, we propose that faculty be modestly compensated for participating by awarding a small stipend (\$100 each) to acknowledge that time is required for two instructors to meet and discuss their courses prior to and during the semester, so that common areas could be found and incorporated into the courses.

The FIG program does not replace the FYS program, but as both programs grow, the two could complement each other.

2. Develop 1-credit multidisciplinary perspective classes

If the possibility of providing a significant number of 3-credit interdisciplinary courses requiring two instructors (see suggestion 4 below) seems unlikely due to fiscal constraints, we might instead allow and encourage instructors to develop 1-credit additions to coupled courses in which interdisciplinary perspectives could be specifically addressed.

This idea would be similar to FIGs, described above, with the following differences. Participation would not be restricted to first-year students, and both instructors would be scheduled for a 1-credit meeting time in addition to the regularly scheduled courses. Students would register for and attend all three courses, though not all students would necessarily have to participate. During the 1-credit meeting time, issues would be explicitly discussed from the two perspectives of the individual courses. Since this would be a credit-bearing activity, instructors would be compensated by having the course count towards their teaching load, or by receiving additional service pay equivalent to 1-credit.

3. Sequenced courses

Rather than adopt a "menu" GE as we have, some institutions have a General Education curriculum that is built around a core set of classes. An advantage of this model is that it ensures all students have a common experience and provides a theme around which knowledge accumulates in successive classes. A disadvantage of this structure is that is a fairly

restrictive curriculum, difficult to fit into the SUNY GE menu requirements, and we did not feel it was well suited as a requirement for all students.

However, the idea of thematic or sequenced courses within the GE and beyond is an idea that may be worth exploring. These thematically grouped or sequenced classes could be proposed to the GE Board (and curriculum committee if new courses are required). The GE Board could then develop a strategy for informing students of this opportunity.

Two examples are provided. First, a multi-semester “Western Traditions” course could be developed, with each course satisfying a particular GE category (WEST, USST, WRLD, HUM, for example). Second, a group of GE courses with a particular theme could be selected from the existing GE courses (sections of Chemistry in Art (NSCI), Intro to Studio Art (ART) and Philosophy of the Arts (HUM) could form a multidisciplinary Art theme).

4. Team-teaching

Team-teaching is a type of pedagogy that is frequently mentioned as something instructors here would like to participate in. Indeed, these types of courses may also be suitable for the First Year Seminar. However, many barriers currently exist which limit these opportunities. In particular, scheduling issues and a lack of funding have been insurmountable, with the exception of a few isolated cases. Here, we would like to advocate for the administration to continue looking for ways to support this type of instruction so that motivated faculty can create courses that are co-taught or team taught, either in the same classroom at the same time or at different times. Additional funds would be necessary to compensate professors for the extra time spent in coordinating the class and instructors would need to be available to teach the course through a course release or re-allocated time away from their current course loads.

Another model for team-teaching that may be worth considering is to have several instructors contribute on-line course material (selected readings, short lectures/podcasts, activities and assignments) that would be shared by multiple instructors in a multi-section interdisciplinary hybrid course. While this model might address the staffing issue, developing and sustaining this type of course would require resources. This might also raise intellectual property concerns among our faculty.

5. Utilize current interdisciplinary programs more effectively

A number of interdisciplinary programs already contribute to the GE. In these courses, instructors could be explicit in describing the interdisciplinary nature of their area and how it informs the General Education program. For example, Diversity classes are most often taught by interdisciplinary programs rather than through departments that represent particular disciplines. Deploying the rhetoric to articulate the value of diversity courses in promoting ways of thinking that step outside the traditional structures of subject fields and the intellectual tradition could allow us to show to students how we value such approaches to knowledge.

B. Support for applied learning opportunities, common student experiences, and connecting the curricular with the co-curricular

While above we discuss ways to support and further develop the interdisciplinary opportunities we provide, here we consider ways to similarly support and further other already existing teaching initiatives on campus that have clear value for the student body.

1. Common, or Core Experiences

The Common Summer Read is currently chosen and organized by the Composition Program. It includes a text incoming first-year students read over the summer along with various optional events during the subsequent fall semester. These texts are usually appropriate for a wide variety of disciplines. This program could be utilized more widely by courses or programs, rather than dwelling just in composition. A simple step towards making this happen would be to inform the campus of the selection early enough in the spring so that instructors can read the book and incorporate appropriate material into their fall course syllabi.

One Book/One New Paltz hosts a week of panels and discussion events on one chosen book a year. The event is designed to extend beyond campus to bring in members of the New Paltz community, but it also creates a common reading experience for the students, staff, and faculty who participate in it. This program presents an opportunity to not only provide students with a common experience, but also to involve faculty and the community in that common experience. Here, providing instructors with a time to discuss different models for incorporating the book into classroom instruction and activities would perhaps be useful in broadening the reach of the program.

The Distinguished Speaker Series, and other open-to-all campus seminars provide another opportunity for integrating additional material with instruction in a particular class. Here again, providing information about these opportunities as early as possible is key to achieving this goal. One example of how this advanced planning is working involves the Dorsky museum. Recently, an increased effort to discuss upcoming shows with department Chairs has been undertaken, and this has resulted in an increase in the number of opportunities for instructors to utilize the museum as a resource in their pedagogy.

2. Applied Learning

The State of New York recently sought to emphasize applied learning. The governor's office issued a mandate that an applied learning experience become a graduation requirement at the state's universities. The universities responded negatively and got the state to agree to shift from a mandate to require applied learning to a request for information on what universities currently offer. At New Paltz, we offer significant applied learning experiences embedded in course content. Fewer experiences exist outside the traditional classroom, but we have also

experienced some expansion of internships. In any case, the state and SUNY as a result are interested in Applied Learning Experiences as a component of a university education. The definition of applied learning is fairly broad. In her explanation of Applied Learning and its goals, the SUNY Chancellor has written “students learn by engaging in direct application of skills, theories and models. Students apply knowledge and skills gained from traditional classroom learning to hands-on and/or real-world settings, creative projects or independent or directed research, and in turn apply what is gained from the applied experience to academic learning.”

Our own campus’s report on applied learning experiences is currently being developed. But, we know that given the capstone courses now available in most departments, the internships cultivated across campus (with WGSS’s required internship experience one notable model), and the body of work produced by students in the fine arts, in the applied programs like Business and Education, and through undergraduate research and RSCA support we have long worked to provide our students with applied learning opportunities.

At this point, we do not recommend that an applied learning experience be part of General Education or other graduation requirements for students at New Paltz. While we already engage in these practices, making them a requirement might result in a lesser quality experience for all students, rather than a high quality experience for many. Furthermore, the governor’s initial mandate encapsulates another problem with ‘Applied Learning’ as conceived by SUNY Central and the State: this is a push that is not only unaware of what we already do, it is entirely unfunded and fails to recognize how the budget provided to the university has not given us the full-time faculty numbers necessary to move beyond a voluntary and slow development of applied learning to a systematic, campus-wide initiative.

One way we could develop applied learning within the curriculum would be to provide support for 1-credit applied learning “modules” that would be attached to existing 3-credit classes within or beyond GE. For example, these could be versions of labs, workshops for gathering or using primary data, service learning experiences, guided projects, field experiences of various types, or whatever else is appropriate to the course at hand and gives students hands on and/or real world experiences connected to their academic work and provides the opportunity to reflect on them. This type of course could be piloted in a similar fashion to that described for 1-credit interdisciplinary modules or the suggestion below.

3. Linking the curricular with the co-curricular

Students at New Paltz have an array of exciting co-curricular experiences they can choose to participate in, experience, and be shaped by. This university prides itself on the range of such events and opportunities we provide to our students and the scale of student participation in many of them. We would like to see our curriculum also work to advertise, emphasize, and most important, intellectualize such opportunities by creating explicit links between the curricular and the co-curricular.

The Psychology department provides an interesting model for recognizing the co-curricular experiences within the curriculum. They have designed a zero-credit bearing class (PSY 093; research experience in psychology) that students must complete to graduate with the major. Students complete 12 half-hour credits—and various activities, determined and approved by the faculty a priori, are presented to students as options. Such activities include participating in survey research, participating in in-person lab experiments, attending presentations and/or conferences related to research in psychology, etc. To organize and run the class, they have a grad student who is paid to oversee the records for it. They also have specialized software to help as well. When they conduct alumni surveys, students consistently say that this "required extra-curricular part" of the curriculum gave them experiences that they remember as significant in their academic development. A similar seminar-attendance requirement exists in the Biology degree, but the mechanism of record-keeping is different.

While we do not support a university-wide requirement for such curricular and co-curricular links and experiences, we encourage the university's efforts to promote those programs that already link the curricular and the co-curricular (such as study abroad and living-learning communities) and we encourage programs and departments to reflect on whether a major requirement similar to Psychology's could enhance student learning in their fields and help integrate students more with campus life. Further, a co-ordinated effort would likely result in less duplication of effort in administering these programs, thus leading to a decrease in overall workload while promoting high-impact experiences for students.

To unify campus thinking and messaging to students on such opportunities, and to present a model for programs to consider, we present here an idea for what might be called: **The Companions of Knowledge Experiences**. This could be a one credit or no credit requirement, depending on departmental desires. It would complement and further the work already being done for the Co-Curricular Transcript Program and link it in meaningful ways to knowledge areas and ways of thinking. We already have a rich number of programs and offerings that could apply to the 'Companions of Knowledge' program requirements, and instituting these requirements more broadly would encourage students to take advantage of them but also ensure that all students have a concrete 'certificate' or statement on their transcript to highlight that experience. Through these types of experiences, students (and faculty and staff) would be able to see the connection between the knowledge missions and the active citizen missions, between the academic content and the administrative units, between extracurricular activities and the central educational offerings. Students could also experience applied learning and gain concrete achievements to put on resumes and discuss in job interviews through some of these programs. Administering this type of program may be facilitated by appropriate ePortfolio software.

C. Elevating the practice of learning

Our campus does not support systematic sharing among faculty of teaching experience, innovations, and offerings. As the TLC evolves and searches for a new director, now could be

an ideal time to determine ways to shift away from insularity towards a culture of open discourse on pedagogy. The TLC to some extent has already worked to highlight effective teaching practices and course structures, but we believe an attempt to systematically understand the range of teaching practices and the diversity of student learning opportunities across divisions would be warranted. By summarizing teaching practices and highlighting the activities in this “Additional Suggestions” section, the TLC could do much to make the faculty aware of and inspired by their colleagues and attendant course development.

Students too should be made aware of learning opportunities. In their ‘Introduction to GE’, students would also be exposed to the opportunities for both deep and innovative learning experiences. For example, the following text could be added to the student rhetoric on categories described in section III.B.: “The General Education and major curriculums provide the overarching structure for your learning as an undergraduate. Within both sets of requirements, New Paltz offers a variety of proven deep learning experiences and innovative course opportunities. Within GE, you can fulfill course categories by signing up for First Year Seminars or Freshmen Interest Group classes, which provide you with unique classroom experiences through explorations of thought-provoking topics. Beyond your first year, you may want to keep an eye out for other team taught and linked courses, that let you see faculty from different disciplines and areas of expertise build upon one another’s knowledge to draw you into academic debates. Within your major, you may want to complement the courses that deepen your knowledge of your fields with an applied learning experience that allows you to develop your own research or in other ways apply what you have been learning through your coursework.” Of course, such messaging would have to be developed as the campus cultivates its own awareness of the availability of things like applied learning opportunities. Plus, we must also seek to emphasize the benefits of pure knowledge development and ‘old’ but effective means of teaching like socratic classrooms. Old or new, the goal should be to make students aware that exciting possibilities exist within GE and their majors that may not be required and of which many students are unaware. Just as GE would have a perpetual information campaign to ensure student awareness and engagement with their education, these exciting learning opportunities would be highlighted through the website, orientation, advising, and a range of other campus information sources. While current campus messaging about student experience tends to focus more on the physical (the glass pyramid) and social (smiling students sitting on a wall), we propose a more coordinated effort be made to emphasize the intellectual experience of university life as well. Student profiles that address learning in these courses or effects of the curriculum could serve this purpose.

VI. Funding and Administrative Support

Every component of our proposal relies on one central resource: the full-time faculty. First Year Seminars require additions to the numbers of full-time faculty. Improving GE delivery and assessment loops will rely on the engagement of the full-time faculty. Innovative pedagogy and developing student experiences would stem from the work of the faculty. We believe therefore that the best use of university funds is to put it into supporting the work of the faculty already here and expanding the ranks of the full-time faculty. In what follows, we outline how to support and encourage faculty to develop applied learning curriculum, interdisciplinary teaching and First Year Seminars. We then discuss ideas on how to allocate new hires in the coming years to enable us to move from a First Year Seminar pilot to a required First Year Seminar program. Finally, we include a couple suggestions for one-time expenses that would support some of our initiatives.

Please note that we can still implement most of our proposal without these expenditures. While expansion of the First Year Seminars is likely contingent on more faculty hires, the pilot is not and all other components could be attempted without additional resources. We recognize that our university has severe budgetary limitations, nevertheless, we ask that the administration consider curriculum improvement as they make allocation decisions with the limited resources coming our way over the coming years.

We also believe the redesign of the curriculum and assessment practices described here would be a perfect opportunity for grant writing. For example, the university could pursue NEH/Teagle/Gates Foundation grants to support curricular development, teacher training, assessment needs like ePortfolio software, or challenge grants to create endowed chair positions. Perhaps an early-stage implementation of this proposal could involve allowing some faculty release time for grant writing.

A. Recognizing Faculty Teaching in the New Curriculum

In considering all of the best practices we would love to see the university cultivate, such as applied learning experiences, First Year Seminars, co-teaching, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching, engagement in deep faculty development, etc., every single one of them relies on more time and effort for the faculty involved than would teaching the same old classes in the same old way. Many faculty are deeply desirous of reinvigorating their own teaching and improving the education we provide to students, yet given how stretched for time faculty typically are, curriculum too easily becomes static. Many departments are so understaffed in offering their traditional curriculum that they are prevented from adopting high impact practices, increasing student research opportunities, expanding internships within departments, and offering capstones and other seminar-style classes. We thus propose reinstating the practice of counting faculty teaching outside of their regular classes. In addition to once again allowing faculty to be compensated for independent studies and directing theses

and internships, this would give us a framework for motivating and compensating faculty for their work in developing new First Year Seminars, new applied learning curriculum, developing or administering new one-credit 'experiences', and other high impact priorities on campus. The provost's office and deans and chairs would have to work together, using information from faculty on time commitments with each project, to determine the calculations on how much of this extra teaching work is equivalent to a course in that faculty member's teaching commitments. We recommend this model over the one whereby the university offers a one time pot of money for course development (as has been done for online courses). Significant numbers of faculty are already desirous of offering First Year Seminars, and many faculty develop new classes with some regularity. The benefits of compensating all the other extra teaching tasks as well would make a substantive difference to all faculty and to all four years of the curriculum.

B. Potential staffing impacts

1. New Math requirement

The faculty voted to change our math requirement last year. Currently students can place or test out of math and never have to take a math course at the college level. With the new Math requirement, all students would have to take a math course. In Fall 2015, there were 1191 first-year students. Of these, 635 had their GE MATH requirement met through work done in high school. However, this does not mean that an additional 635 seats of GE MATH would be needed each year.

Some (37 this year) will have college credit for MATH via AP work. Others (199 this year) are pursuing majors that require additional math work at New Paltz (pre-biology, pre-business, engineering, etc.) For these students, we do not need to consider their needs as additional to what is currently in place, since the seats these students' needs are already accounted for currently.

This leaves ~400 students that would potentially need to take a GE MATH class that currently do not. However, the vast majority of these students are listed as undecided majors. If we assume that they will gravitate towards majors in a way consistent with previous students, then ~15% will be psychology or sociology majors—both of which provide a GE MATH within the major program. These students would not need additional seats in GE MATH. Finally, this leaves us with an estimate of ~360 new students in need of GE MATH if this proposal is enacted. Assuming a section size of 35 students, this results in the need to add ~10-11 more sections of GE MATH courses to the current schedule. While instructors and adjuncts could be hired to offer these sections, or other we believe the administration should consider adding to the full-time, tenure-track faculty in departments offering GE MATH courses.

2. Expanding the First Year Seminars

The ideal behind our First Year Seminar program is to provide students at the beginning of their academic career an opportunity to experience a discussion-based seminar led by an active

teacher scholar that engages them in a discipline through a specific topic but also teaches them in broader ways about the value of that discipline. Since the First Year Seminars are so thoroughly integrated with GE (not only as GE requirements, but as means of teaching students about a discipline), they would be offered in the areas of: ART, HUM, NSCI, SSCI, USST, WEST, and WRLD. The pilot would initially seek to offer ten sections from a range of those categories. However, since this would just be a pilot and not a requirement, distribution across the categories would not be a concern. A pilot would draw from the ranks of faculty volunteers—people eager for this form of teaching experience and already feeling prepared to develop a course—who would also be able to be released from some of their other teaching commitments to do so. The pilot could thus not be considered a full exploration of what a FYS requirement would look like, since it would be limited to smaller departments and faculty who may have already taught a course that might easily convert. If developing FYS into a requirement were deemed to be of interest, then the pilot program would also include a planning component to determine ways to expand the program beyond the volunteers who typically teach courses equivalent in size to the seminars. While the pilot plan should include proposals for how to incorporate more faculty to teach FYS, it would never be a curricular model that faculty would be required to teach. We believe the FYS presents an exciting enough pedagogical opportunity that sufficient numbers of faculty in the various GE fields would develop and offer seminars to cover needs. Regardless of faculty interest, however, current staffing levels in the core areas of GE cannot support a full FYS requirement.

There are sufficient numbers of faculty who teach or have taught something like a First Year Seminar and sufficient numbers of GE courses capped at 20-25 students to easily pilot the FYS as suggested in this proposal. A department that contributes significantly to GE with low student: faculty ratio and small GE class sizes might already be able to support the teaching of First Year Seminars, but those with high student-faculty ratios, substantial numbers of sections contributing to GE, and large GE class sizes may not be able to participate as readily. It is our position that sustaining and expanding the First Year Seminars beyond the pilot should not be restricted just to those departments with small majors and already small class sizes, which would happen de facto if purposeful hires were not made to staff GE FYS. To keep FYS true to the ideals of offering students exciting learning opportunities from teacher-scholars from across the disciplines, strategic hires would have to be made to enable departments with large, full GE class sizes and large enrollments of majors to teach as well. Many of the departments least able to offer FYS have faculty with major teaching and research awards; they too should be in FYS classrooms.

If FYS were to be moved from a pilot to a requirement, we therefore recommend investment in approximately ten full-time faculty hires through consideration of FYS offerings in allocation decisions. We base this recommendation on a calculation we did that took into account GE offerings, course sizes, and size of departments in number of full-time faculty and number of majors. Our projections gave us a starting point for conceptualizing the scale of investment in full-time faculty lines required. We concluded 1) the numbers indicate a pilot is feasible at current staffing levels, but a required FYS as a component of GE is not; 2) the number of hires needed was substantive enough to warrant attention, but not so substantial that it would be

impossible to pursue over the course of a few years; and 3) there is enough unevenness between departments that how hires would be distributed across departments must be a project of study for the pilot to ensure the integrity of FYS offerings if the program were to be expanded. We developed an informed projection of how hiring allocations could be distributed to best support GE seminars, but we do not detail the results of those numbers here beyond the general number of hires needed to staff GE. Our enrollments and faculty levels are in flux, and numerous variables across divisions, departments, and individual faculty ensure that a projection model based on numbers could not be complete. We therefore do not wish to offer a hiring guide or a list of what departments can offer FYS's at this point. Should faculty vote to implement the pilot, as the pilot was occurring, conversations should be had with faculty and divisions over who has interest in offering the seminars and who feels they need what to do so. A simple calculation cannot factor in all the variables that faculty and department chairs know about their teaching load and the availability of their faculty for an initiative like this. What we present is simply an attempt to show approximately how many more hires we might need across the GE categories to allow us to provide FYS's and that this projection is based on sound reasoning and responsible calculations. We found that if a FYS were offered that was true to the ideals presented above, some of the departments most suited to offer them would not be able to release their excellent faculty to do so. For this reason, we offer this recommendation for ten strategic FYS hires and we hope the administration would pursue such strategic hiring to allow all suitable departments and their full-time faculty an opportunity to teach in these high-impact settings, should a FYS be deemed desirable by the campus.

Details on the calculations:

To offer enough seminars for incoming freshmen (typically 1100 annually), early transfer students coming in with only a few classes, and the potential problem of students signing up for more than one seminar to fulfill GEs, we estimate that eight to ten sections per applicable GE category would be needed a year. The seminars would be offered in the ways of knowing and the regional categories (NSCI, SSCI, HUM, ART, USST, WEST, WRLD). If the seminars were capped at 25 students and each of the categories offered eight seminars a year, that would equal fifty-six sections for a total of 1400 seats. A 20 student cap for FYS would mean each of the categories would have to offer ten sections to get the same number of seats. While in reality, the neat division of eight or ten seminars per category would probably not occur because of varying faculty interest and different departmental and division priorities, using these numbers can at least give us a general sense of what might be required to staff this program.

Our model looked at current GE offerings, excluded the online and hybrid classes, upper-level courses, and the very high enrollment courses on the assumption that these would not be appropriate for a direct conversion to a seminar model since they offer something entirely different to our student body (Table [here](#)). After those exclusions, we distributed projected yearly FYS offerings in proportion to current GE offerings by department. We removed from consideration for new hires all the departments with only one section a year offered in the hopes they may be able to divert one faculty member from a current GE offering to a FYS (and absorb the lost seats involved—which range between five and twenty seats lost because the GE courses with very high seat caps were removed from consideration in this projection). This left departments that would be contributing two or more sections of FYS a year if they offered them

in proportion to their other GE contributions. Then we multiply the number of sections by a factor reflecting the number of seats lost if reduced to 20. Since sections were chosen based on current offerings, we could then add to the calculation the current seats offered in the GE courses taught by those same departments. Multiplying the sections by a percentage that reflected the number of GE seats lost when seats are reduced to 20, gave us a clear picture of the extra courses departments would need to offer to staff FYS above their current course offerings. Next, we sought to determine if the current staffing of a department could take on some of that added teaching burden. Of course, for the most part, these departments had very little room to maneuver. But, considering a combination of the number of full time faculty and the number of majors, we had another bit of data that provided some context to the teaching burdens outside of GE for each of these departments. Thus, the departments with the highest student-faculty ratios might be less able to manipulate their course offerings in order to offer FYS than those with low student-faculty ratios.

Conclusions

These calculations indicated ten allocation needs across nine departments to staff the FYS program, if the courses were capped at twenty and 70 sections were offered every year.⁵ If there weren't staffing needs distributed across departments, three to four hires would have been equivalent to the number of extra sections needed, but hiring cannot work that way. These ten hires would be contributing to their departments' other curricular needs in addition to releasing faculty to teach the FYS and teaching it themselves. Perhaps we could get away with less than the ten projected here. Or, perhaps departments feel they need more given the combination of the GE FYS commitment with their other teaching burdens. The pilot would hopefully begin to generate more of the data needed to determine full-time hiring needs. However, our projection indicated that if three to four faculty hires were made per year over three years with GE and FYS staffing needs in mind, we could offer the FYS as a requirement for all students after three years.

3. Competencies across the curriculum

The proposal to ensure progressive development of writing, speaking, critical thinking, and information management seeks to ensure our students' progressive development of essential practices across the four years of their curriculum. To successfully deploy this plan and ensure that students receive rigorous training at the introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels,

⁵ We do not include the actual numbers and the ranking of hiring needs by department because we believe too many variables exist in the day-to-day reality of departments to use numbers alone to determine hiring needs. We are also sensitive to the fact that many of us inhabit departments included in the results of these calculations. Furthermore, there are clear problems with simply using this projection, which include the shift in diversity offerings, the fluctuations in student and faculty numbers department-by-department, and all the realities of departmental teaching load that these data points fail to account for. As a component of the pilot, therefore, we recommend a more qualitative study of departmental offerings and abilities. What is described here is simply the results of one projection model in order to show approximately how many more hires we might need across the GE categories to allow us to provide FYSs as a general requirement for all students. Though not detailed here, we would be happy to supply this projection to those in charge of the FYS pilot. Or, should any individual faculty member believe a more detailed hiring projection is necessary for their consideration of a FYS pilot, we would be happy to share it with anyone who sends us a request.

some resources will need to be allocated. The plan involves a subtle shift from ‘writing intensive’ courses to written communication across the curriculum but adds classes with oral communication, critical thinking and information management as foci.

It is possible that this shift may require smaller class sizes in some instances in order to provide the conditions necessary to support students in meeting these learning outcomes. The university is already supporting capstone courses in most majors which would teach these competencies at the advanced level, but some programs may need resources to develop the intermediate-level courses. Finally, support for faculty development in teaching writing, speaking, information management, and critical thinking would be vital to the success of the program. This could be done through the teaching-time compensation model proposed above and through professional development opportunities facilitated by the CAC Board and the TLC.

C. ePortfolio software to facilitate assessment and curriculum development

The GE Board is most excited about the potential for a meaningful reform of assessment in the wake of the proposal’s adoption. To facilitate the work of the GE category faculty groups and departments/programs as they initiate some of the suggestions in the ‘competencies across the curriculum’ section, we believe having campus access to an ePortfolio software would be ideal.

Education currently uses one ePortfolio product for program assessment and student portfolio construction. Based on this experience, and a thorough survey of other software packages, we suggest that a group be tasked with deciding which software would be adaptable enough to accommodate all the needs of the GE faculty groups and the various programs and divisions across campus. Faculty input would also be essential in this process. Education has had to place the burden of the portfolio’s software costs on their students, which faculty and students in that division feel is problematic. We therefore recommend that the university purchase the software for the entire campus as a one-time cost. Once funds were allocated for purchasing the software (or expanding the use of the one we already have), we would still need to allocate resources for the training of faculty, staff, and students in the use of these portfolios.

The GE and the development of competencies at the intermediate and advanced levels in majors all involve the production of student work. If they were placed in an ePortfolio, students and faculty would have a way to look back, reflect, assess individual student progress, and cull data points for GE Program assessment or assessment within departments. Such a practice not only pushes more reflection, it would better allow us to establish action plans for improvements than our current course-based assessment. The ePortfolio could also allow for other interesting enhancements to faculty and student engagement on the achievements and future needs of curriculum. For example, History majors are required to write an exit essay to consider what from the students perspective was done well and how the department might improve to meet student wishes and needs—ePortfolios would provide a place for such curricular reflection. Many campuses have successfully employed this strategy for curricular development and assessment. For example, Bard has introduced an extensive integration of the ePortfolio with student degrees and curricular improvement. By having student portfolios become public

evidence of student achievement and requiring student engagement in “naming their curriculum and learning over the years, Bard feels they have cultivated student engagement in GE and in self-assessment across the four years of the curriculum. As New Paltz initiated broader discussion of ePortfolio use, study of how other programs successfully (or not) made the shift would be useful.

VII. Appendices

We refer to several supporting documents in the above text. Documents that have been presented elsewhere can be found by clicking on the link supplied in the text. Documents that are unique to this proposal are included below.

A. Responses/Amendments to LEC proposal

The Art Department's response to the proposed Liberal Education Plan

The Art Department respectfully submits its objection to the structure of the proposed Liberal Education plan as it stands, seeing in it a bias towards modes of learning that favor quantitative inquiry over other equally important ways of thinking about knowledge formation and ways of knowing the world.

The Liberal Education Committee may be interested to know that Stanford University recently re-imagined their General Education curriculum by shifting entirely away from discipline-based to capacity-based ways of achieving breadth of knowledge. Stanford “recognizes the diversity of approaches to learning within any discipline and asks its faculty to consider what approaches they are taking in a given class and the overall approaches emphasized within a major. “ (<https://undergrad.stanford.edu/programs/ways/about> and <https://undergrad.stanford.edu/programs/ways/ways>).

They have identified EIGHT WAYS OF THINKING/WAYS OF DOING:

- Aesthetic and Interpretive Inquiry (2 courses)
- Applied Quantitative Reasoning (1 course)
- Creative Expression (1 course)
- Engaging Diversity (1 course)
- Ethical Reasoning (1 course)
- Formal Reasoning (1 course)
- Scientific Method and Analysis (2 courses)
- Social Inquiry (2 courses)

Art Department faculty agree with Stanford faculty that this structure provides students with a more clearly articulated and meaningful rationale for breadth and more flexibility in selecting courses of interest in a wide array of fields. We note that Creative Expression and Aesthetic and Interpretive Inquiry are central to their plan and equally valued with other ways of thinking and doing.

Stanford's rationale for the importance of Creative Expressions reads: “The ability to design, to create, and to perform—each enriches our lives in substantial and meaningful ways. Thinking

creatively, giving expressive shape to ideas, and communicating those ideas imaginatively, are not only indispensable to all artistic endeavors, they also represent broadly applicable skills that strengthen and enhance traditional academic pursuits, stimulate effective problem-solving, and foster originality and innovation in new areas.” Stanford’s rationale for Aesthetic and Interpretive Inquiry reads: “Every reflective person needs to confront the variety of cultural and artistic efforts to express and understand the human condition. These efforts include theoretical traditions, such as philosophy, and aesthetic or expressive traditions, such as literature, music, and the visual arts. Students should develop the analytic techniques and interpretive skills to appreciate and understand both creative and theoretical achievements of human cultures, and thus to nurture a deeper conception of their own place in the universe.”

The Art Department strongly believes that our own Liberal Education structure needs to support coursework that relies on experiential learning, that involves critical thinking, material exploration, open-ended questioning, aesthetic and cultural practice, qualitative forms of data gathering, and emergent forms of inquiry. We believe the fine arts and design offer unique experiences not found in any other discipline. Specifically, the study of studio art practice is a process that reaches beyond the borders of art making. It includes creation, production, innovation, presentation, distribution and communication, each having the same weight of importance. As students apply their creativity and intellect to solve problems, they learn there is no singular right answer, but a myriad of possibilities. The practice of making art develops an agile and nimble mind, one open to imagining divergent and convergent scenarios. This is a prerequisite skill necessary to spark innovation and navigate the complexities of the 21st century.

It is written and acknowledged widely that today’s high school and university educators see far less divergent thinking and creative problem solving than in the past. (With the instigation of the New York State Common Core tests adopted last year, it has been noted that only one “right” method of deriving answers is acknowledged. So a student could arrive at the correct answer using an alternative method and get the whole thing wrong. As K-12 gets more compressed into packaged curriculum and students are rewarded for conformity, the only other opportunity to encourage self-motivated creative and intellectual risk-taking is college.) Schools across the country are trying to address this problem. See the article: [Gaining STEAM: Teaching Science Through Art](#) (some schools are adding art to the STEM equation, with good results) and [Learning to Think Outside the Box](#) (Creativity Becomes an Academic Discipline).

We wish to call the Committee’s attention to the SUNY Potsdam team led by Provost Dr. Margaret Madden that is embracing an art-integrated STEM curriculum. This initiative is being funded by a grant from Lockheed Martin Corporation, and is tied to a \$27 million fundraising campaign. Thus the initiative to widen the framework of STEM to STEAM is already happening within the SUNY System. www.potsdam.edu/newsandevents

The Liberal Education committee’s website frames liberal education as a philosophic approach to education that, among other things, prepares individuals to live responsible, productive,

creative lives in a dramatically changing world, fosters intellectual resilience, and “develops core skills of perception, analysis, and expression.”

There are several ways we learn about, understand, and take action in the world. The sciences utilize empirical methods allowing us to investigate the world as it exists; language is a systematic method for communicating ideas about the world with others; and art is a method of inquiry enabling us to imagine, investigate, and construct possible worlds. In other words, the arts, like science and language, are not simply content areas: they are fundamental ways of knowing impacting both physical and ideational aspects of existence. The arts require unique skill sets that enable individuals and groups to engage with ill-structured problems characterized by uncertainty, innovation, uniqueness, and value conflict (Schön, 1983). Failing to provide students with opportunities to experience and develop the skills to face ill-structured problems is tantamount to failing to prepare our students to meet the needs facing contemporary society. It disallows us to meet the objectives set forth in the Liberal Education Committee’s stated goals. Additionally, by neglecting this critical component, SUNY New Paltz presents a public face to the world that demonstrates a “blind spot” in a critical area related to innovation in real-world contexts.

To realize the Liberal Education Committee’s goals and address this blind spot, the proposal should include a required Arts course in addition to NSCI and Composition/Foreign Language, allowing students to experience three fundamental ways of knowing (science, language, and art).

In the proposal’s current form, “enhanced” courses are designed to allow General Education requirements to be taken within the major which 1) is disruptive to the plan’s emphasis on interdisciplinary learning, and 2) positions an unreasonable amount of roadblocks to students taking art classes. For example, according to the STEM description, classes in Science and Engineering will be automatically designated “STEM-enhanced” even though according to this same description many art courses could meet the STEM enhanced designation yet would not automatically receive such designation. This places an unfair workload burden on art faculty to submit paperwork to have courses designated STEM enhanced so that art students can also take GEs within their major. How can a biology class be STEM enhanced when it is inherently STEM curriculum? It is like saying a painting class is “art enhanced.”

And finally, we wish to point to the college’s Eight Vision Points, which state that the focus of SUNY New Paltz is to “meet regional economic and schooling needs and be a cultural and intellectual hub for the Mid-Hudson Region.” In this statement the President notes the national scope of our highly renowned MFA Program, and the significant economic impact that the arts have upon the region. Recognizing the long tradition of excellence in the arts, the vision plan states “Our Fine and Performing Arts events [] should be magnets that draw friends and fans to the college. We will proudly proclaim our cultural and economic impact, and aim to be celebrated as a regional resource and gem.”

We agree with President Christian's statement and believe that a firm grounding in the fine arts is an intrinsic part of what makes New Paltz a unique and exceptional institution. The School of Fine and Performing Arts at New Paltz enjoys the reputation of being one of the strongest Schools at the College, and one of the strongest in the State University system. It is possible to argue that culture is more richly embedded in the arts than in the other schools of knowledge. It is certainly true that once an individual is awakened to the richness of culture in the arts, this culture is easily accessible to them. Artists create, artists share, artists help people access information and make space for solutions.

We leave you with this thought:

Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed)

Amendment to the Liberal Education Committee's Proposal

Bruce Milem

March 29, 2014

In this amendment, I propose the following modifications to the Liberal Education Committee's proposal.

1. Eliminate the First Year Seminar.
2. Eliminate the requirement of two STEM-enhanced courses
3. Eliminate the requirement of two communications-enhanced courses.
4. Restore the requirement of courses in ARTS, HUM, WEST, USST, SSCI, WRLD, and DIVR.
5. Restore the requirement of two courses in NSCI.
6. Keep Critical Thinking/Systematic Inquiry as a competency that GE courses may have.

If these changes were made, the General Education requirements would be:

one COMP course, 4 credits;
one MATH course;
two NSCI courses;
two FLNG courses, consecutive in the same language;
one DIVR course;
one ARTS course;
one HUM course;
one WEST course;
one SSCI course;
one USST course;

and one WRLD course.

This amendment leaves unmodified the LEC's recommendations for COMP, MATH, and FLNG. It endorses the elimination of the competencies from GE except those mandated by the SUNY Board of Trustees. It keeps the LEC's requirement of a capstone in major programs.

Brief justification:

1. Eliminate the First Year Seminar.

The LEC's proposal calls for around 55 sections of FYS per year, taught by fulltime faculty and capped at 20 students. A First Year Seminar could be valuable in giving students a common academic experience. But I am concerned about the potential consequences of instituting the FYS:

- a. The FYS would include more sections per year than some departments offer, but with no dedicated faculty. It would need a director, presumably with a course release and stipend, and probably an office and secretarial support. Staffing would be a perennial problem, and the program would need resources.

There are departments on this campus that are already strained and in need of more faculty. Setting up a new program is not the best way to make use of what little we have.

- b. The First Year Seminars are small, capped at 20, and to be taught by fulltime faculty. But student demand for courses will not be reduced. If 55 faculty are teaching a First Year Seminar every year, that is equivalent to 89 full-time tenure-line faculty teaching First Year Seminars and nothing else. The question is, how will those faculty be replaced? How will we ensure that there are enough courses and seats that students get the classes they need and graduate on time?

Three options come to mind:

- i. Hire adjuncts.
- ii. Raise class sizes in other courses. Yet this would run counter to the aims of the Liberal Education Committee, because larger classes would reduce opportunities for active and experiential learning, writing, speaking, and so on. It is to create such opportunities that the First Year Seminars would be capped at 20.
- iii. If the LEC's proposals are adopted as they currently stand, students would need to take just three courses from six current GE categories. Demand for courses in those categories may drop. This could free up faculty in departments that service those categories to teach in the First Year Seminar. (iii) may seem like the best outcome. But notice what it means. Departments that service those categories will offer fewer courses. Thus, setting up the First Year Seminar could lead to a reduction in the programs of standing departments. Given the categories involved, it seems reasonable to predict that departments in LA&S and F&PA would be affected most. In this way, a "liberal education" proposal could reduce course offerings in the arts, social sciences, and humanities. In any case, it is important to recognize that the LEC's proposal for the First Year Seminar and GE could, if passed, lead to a reduction in the programs and course offerings of some departments.

2. Eliminate the requirement of two STEM-enhanced courses.

Here I refer to the English Department's proposal to drop this requirement, as well as the Faculty of the School of Science and Engineering's statement about changing the NSCI requirement. It would be much better to retain our current requirement of two courses in NSCI.

3. Eliminate the requirement of two communications-enhanced courses.

These courses would be capped at 20 students also. Essentially the LEC's proposal doubles the current Writing-Intensive requirement. Thus, we would again be adding a significant number of courses that are capped at 20.

This aspect of the proposal raises the same problem of serving student demand that the First Year Seminars do, but here the only solutions are to hire adjuncts or raise class sizes.

I share the LEC's goals of giving students more opportunities to write and speak. My suggestion is that programs be encouraged or required to add proficiency in writing and speaking to their program learning outcomes (if they're not already there) and work out how best to reach those goals.

4. Restore the requirement of courses in ARTS, HUM, WEST, USST, SSCI, WRLD, and DIVR.

Under the LEC's proposal, it would be possible for students to graduate from New Paltz without ever taking a course in humanities, or a course in social sciences, or a course in art. They would have to take courses in some of these categories. But they could graduate without taking courses in one, two, or three of them. The proposal sacrifices breadth of learning and signals the lesser importance of these categories. (See also the Art Department's proposal to require courses in the ARTS category.)

5. Restore the requirement of two courses in NSCI.

Here I refer to the "Amendment proposed by the Faculty of the School of Science and Engineering" and the statement in support of it, which argues cogently for the importance of science education at the college level.

6. Keep Critical Thinking/Systematic Inquiry as a competency that GE courses may have.

In the LEC's proposal, the Board of Trustees' required competency of Critical Thinking would be served in the First Year Seminar. If the FYS is eliminated, we will still need to address CT. Which we are now, in many courses in our current GE3. So we should retain this model by permitting appropriate courses in any category to apply for this competency.

B. Fall 2014 Faculty votes related to GE revision

1. Procedural Vote. 10/24/14: Two thirds of the members present voted in writing to *approve* dividing the pending proposals for revising our General Education program into 11 separate motions. In favor: 60 Opposed: 16 Abstaining: 3
2. F14. Oct. 24.1 , Senior Capstone Seminar passed by a voice vote.
"All SUNY New Paltz students will complete a capstone, senior-seminar or an equivalent

experience as a part of their major. By Sept. 2015, all Academic Departments will forward to the Curriculum Committee the syllabi for their designated capstone, senior-seminars or equivalents for all of their major plans."

3. F14. Oct. 24. 2, Composition Requirement passed by a voice vote.
"All SUNY New Paltz. Students must complete Composition I & II as a part of their General Education requirements. Current procedures for allowing students to place out of Composition 1 will be continued."
4. F14. Oct. 24.3, Math Requirement passed by a voice vote.
"All SUNY New Paltz students will complete 1 course of at least 3 credits in college-level mathematic as a part of their General Education requirements."
6. F14.Nov. 14. 2. Thanking the Liberal Education Committee
"WHEREAS, the Liberal Education Committee, having been duly comprised and charged by the faculty in September of 2012 and WHEREAS, the said committee has fulfilled said charge in the form of tendering its report and recommendations to the faculty; The business of the Liberal Education Committee is determined to have been completed and it membership duly discharged with profound thanks for their service.
10. F14, Dec. 10. 1 Information Management Competency passed by voice vote
"All students will develop competency in information management as a part of completing their General Education requirements. At New Paltz. This information management competency will be introduced in the 2nd course in the two composition course sequence, Composition 2. "
11. F14, Dec. 10. 2 Critical Thinking Competency passed by voice vote.
"All GE courses will foster Critical Thinking."
12. F14, Dec. 10. 3 Diversity Requirement passed by written vote. 143 approved, 12 opposed and one abstention. (Written ballots available for inspection.)
"Consistent with our SUNY New Paltz mission statement and our history, all students are required to complete at least one course that examines the perspective of traditionally underrepresented groups within the United States *as a graduation requirement.*"

C. Summary of survey conducted by GE Board, Fall 2015

The GE Board has reviewed the General Education survey results. One heartening result of the survey was that the answers reflected a great deal of common ground. 80% of respondents said they felt students could benefit if we changed the current GE. This summary will first cover the common ground on desired reforms and then get into the areas of disagreement. Please note that the Board considers the survey as an important source of information in drafting our plans, but it does not remove from our attention other sources of information, which include ongoing informal conversations, ongoing meetings with representatives of different campus groups, last year's faculty votes on GE and university requirements, and the research of the liberal education committees.

Survey respondents expressed an overwhelming desire to have both General Education and other university requirements be **meaningful**.

Message: Cohesive goals behind requirements and reasoning behind the inclusion of courses within categories should be thought out and made clear to both students and faculty.

Administration, faculty, and advisors should all convey unified ideals and purpose behind a university education at New Paltz and particular requirements.

Rigorous Practice: Courses and requirements should also implement the stated goals. A desire for more rigor was thus another common theme in survey responses. To ensure rigor and success in outcomes, survey responses advocated for full-time faculty to offer the General Education requirements, supporting full-time faculty in that endeavor, and making assessment more effective.

Clarity: The development of General Education and University Requirements should not make them more complex. To ensure new requirements are simple for students to understand and not overwhelmingly complicated for faculty to consider and assess, the survey responses expressed a desire that the categories and outcomes for General Education remain the same categories and outcomes provided by SUNY—though this does not mean people felt the SUNY BoT should determine the number required, as you will see below in the areas of disagreement.

Integration and choice. Though General Education requirements should represent a common experience for students, faculty also wanted requirements to allow individual choice, feed into specialized degree programs, and include some degree of flexibility. Students should be helped to understand how the broader General Education requirements feed into their more specialized degree programs.

Beyond the broad discussion of a clear, rigorous, and meaningful curriculum, faculty also included particular requests on components of General Education and the upper-levels of curriculum:

- A reform of the education requirements should also consider progressive development of skills and competencies.
- The survey suggested that there is broad support for incorporating writing and critical thinking at all levels of a university education in a stepped way; majors would thus require more advanced writing development just as General Education courses would on the lower level.
- General support for seminar-style classes in the major and General Education was expressed as one way to do this; respondents liked the capstone requirement and the idea of a First-Year Seminar (though not as previously proposed).
- The survey also included comments on what the faculty felt the GE Board should consider as they engage in the task of developing GE and university requirement proposals.
- The general consensus was that the GE Board should consider New Paltz's place in SUNY, New York State, university education in general, and modern society and the modern economy.
- Our focus should be on student needs and how to benefit them; certainly we should follow the principle of 'do no harm' for the students' (and faculty's) sake.

- We were urged to try to figure out what went wrong before so as to avoid such mistakes this time and to determine available resources and current offerings to ensure any proposal's feasibility.
- Fiscal considerations should guide development of plans.

Given all of these points of agreement, the GE Board will be working towards developing plans that contain within them suggestions on how to understand, express, and implement the meaning behind General Education and a university degree. We will also make suggestions on how to improve the quality of those courses that would be required and how to implement progressive development of writing skills, critical thinking, and speech. We will also exclusively use SUNY BoT terms and learning outcomes for General Education content area requirements and their outcomes.

Diverging Views:

While the survey showed a great deal of common ground on the necessity for overall goals and meaning behind General Education and university requirements, there were key areas of difference on particulars. To aid our goal of developing two or three plans and distributing them to the faculty for consideration, we have grouped the results according to what respondents said about General Education distribution and credit requirements. Other considerations on university requirements, competencies, organization, and pedagogical practices follow. Suggestions from the faculty in this summary represent positions expressed by at least a few respondents. Many great ideas and comments from the survey are being considered by the board, but the unique, individual ideas have not been included here.

The survey responses divided between those who wanted to retain a broad GE program and those who wanted to reduce General Education requirements. The categories we chose for our calculations are as follows:

Broad GE (48 faculty/ 34.5% of respondents). This group ranged from retaining our current requirements for General Education to reducing our campus requirements to requirement of all 10 of 10 SUNY categories. Some voices in between those two poles wanted to reduce the extra NSCI requirement we currently have, but retain the extra language requirement. Others wanted to have requirements in all categories but add more to the Language or Arts requirements. The 'broad GE' position was more likely to be advocated for by faculty in Education, Fine and Performing Arts, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Professional faculty, and responses from people categorizing themselves as 'Other' than the Reduced GE option below. Arguments for retaining broad General Education requirements mentioned the ideals and purpose behind a university education as their reasoning. Breadth of Learning and rigor in the first two years of a university education, they suggested, should not be reduced or diluted because we have students who enter in the third year of learning with seamless transfer. Those who spent their first two years at New Paltz would thus have something to show for it—and that should be a well-rounded, broad, and rigorous education. Many respondents also mentioned New Paltz's strengths in liberal and fine arts education as a reason to have a set of GE requirements that reflected those categories and styles of learning as core values.

Minimal GE (28 faculty/ 20% of respondents). This group included those who wanted to lower General Education requirements substantially. Many specifically mentioned the desire to go to the minimal SUNY Board of Trustees requirements that would involve allowing students to choose between categories of learning in natural science, social sciences, arts, languages, and humanities but require math and writing. These responses argued for flexibility between choices and more time devoted to major requirements and student interests. Some expressed concern over time to graduation as a factor. Others mentioned SUNY mandated seamless transfer, saying a reduced GE would ensure the same requirements for both four year and transfer students. Some faculty in Business and Science and Engineering tended to advocate for this 'minimal GE' model over the 'Broad GE.'

Not Specified (54 faculty/38.9% of responses). Many faculty did not include in their comments an explicit recommendation on number of GE courses and which categories should be required, for they were more interested in advocating for some of the other ideas covered below. Those faculty were included within this group. Others were included in the not specified category if they seemed to be expressing an opinion that fell between the minimal and optimal GE requirements as outlined above. Where on that spectrum they fell often reflected disciplinary divisions, as some science faculty wanted to add more math and science beyond the minimal GE, art faculty wanted one or two Arts requirements, and liberal arts faculty requested additions to humanities, world, or languages. In other cases, faculty in the N.S. category wanted GE requirements to remain broad, but suggested cutting just one category (for example, one felt USST could be cut because of high school education in New York State). It should be noted that in the two other categories above, several voiced a counter position that picking and choosing between which categories are important was inappropriate and contentious, thus the General Education requirements should go for an all-10 or minimal 7 of 10 approach with the SUNY BoT requirements. Counted within this category: **Liberal Education Proposal** (4 faculty/ 3% of respondents). A minority voice explicitly expressed a desire to see the former liberal education proposal adopted in its original form. Because the numbers were small, they were grouped as desiring a 'in-between' GE and were thus in the 'Not Specified' group though they did specify their position. Another small but vocal minority desired **program-specific** General Education requirements (5 faculty)

Other positions on General Education and curricular goals expressed by different respondents:

Excluded from the counting and categorization of responses above was the discussion of the **Diversity** requirement. Few faculty mentioned it and those small numbers were divided between wanting to retain and wanting to drop it. It was also voted on as a University requirement last year, so would not necessarily be included in General Education requirement numbers.

Encouraging **progressive development** and 'scaffolded' learning popped up repeatedly, but mostly among LA&S and Science and Engineering faculty.

Flexibility popped up frequently in the responses, though the word took on two meanings. 60% (12) of those mentioning flexibility wanted students to have more course choices within each of the categories. That form of flexibility was a voice that emerged across all schools. 40% (8) wanted more student choice between categories. This was a version of flexibility that was expressed mostly by Business and Professional faculty.

Interdisciplinary practices and co-teaching opportunities found support across divisions. Developing students' **writing** abilities was a concern for many, regardless of division of the faculty. Requests included increasing the rigor of existing writing classes (such as comp), creating more opportunities for writing development across levels from the first year through the last, and ensuring that full-time faculty teach writing at both the basic and the specialized disciplinary level.

Math training at the basic level and in discipline-specific areas emerged as a common request among Science and Engineering and Business faculty.

10% of responses explicitly requested a **First Year Seminar** experience for students as a part of the General Education program. While some respondents thought allowing First Year Seminars in areas of faculty interest would provide a good model, others wanted them to provide a common experience. Those suggesting a form for the First Year Seminar differed between those who wanted a writing-focused seminar, seminars within areas of faculty expertise, and seminars that transcended disciplines. Those leaning towards a multi-disciplinary model like in the liberal education proposal expressed concern over whether it was feasible as a requirement. Others suggested using the FIG model of linking courses in different disciplines. The one caveat expressed by this group was that the model behind FIGs was desirable, but the current implementation does not work. Among those who specified that a First Year Seminar should focus on writing development, some suggested it could replace Composition II and others that it would be just a lower-level writing intensive course. This group especially emphasized a desire to ensure rigor by having full-time faculty teach these seminars, though that did pop up among the other responses as well.

D. SUNY General Education learning outcomes

SUNY Basic Communications Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms;
- demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts;
- research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details;
- develop proficiency in oral discourse; and
- evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.

SUNY Mathematics Learning Outcomes:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- interpret and draw inferences from mathematical models such as formulas, graphs, tables and schematics;
- represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically and verbally;
- employ quantitative methods such as arithmetic, algebra, geometry or statistics to solve problems;
- estimate and check mathematical results for reasonableness, and
- recognize the limits of mathematical and statistical methods.

SUNY Natural Science Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical analysis; and
- application of scientific data, concepts, and models in one of the natural sciences.

SUNY Social Science Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis; and
- knowledge of major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.

SUNY Humanities Learning Outcome

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the General Education

SUNY Learning Outcome for the Arts

Students will demonstrate understanding of at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process inherent therein.

SUNY Learning Outcomes for American History

Students will demonstrate:

- knowledge of a basic narrative of American history: political, economic, social, and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society;
- knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups; and
- understanding of America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world.

SUNY Foreign Language Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- basic proficiency in the understanding and use of a foreign language; and
- knowledge of the distinctive features of culture(s) associated with the language they are studying.

SUNY Western Civilization Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- demonstrate knowledge of the development of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of Western civilization; and
- relate the development of Western civilization to that of other regions of the world.

SUNY Other World Civilizations Learning Outcome

Students will demonstrate:

- knowledge of either a broad outline of world history, or
- the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of one non-Western civilization.

SUNY required competencies:

SUNY Critical Thinking Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own and others' work; and
- develop well-reasoned arguments.

SUNY Information Management Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- perform the basic operations of personal computer use;
- understand and use basic research techniques; and
- locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

E. Syllabus excerpt from a potential GE FYS

Youth Culture in Europe, 1400 to the present

This First Year Seminar in the humanities explores the history of Europe's youth in the modern era. Concepts of the stages of life shift over time, but for much of European history, the years between early childhood and adulthood have been seen as a distinct era in life. This course will review the role of youth in culture from the late medieval through the modern era in the West. From functioning as arbiters of social control in early modern Europe, to fomenting revolution or driving cultural and intellectual reforms, youth have a history all their own. As a distinct category, youth have always played a prominent role in culture, while at the same time they are often subject to extreme depictions within culture. Whether feared or romanticized, youth were historically granted license and societal expectations that differed dramatically from other cultural groups. This course will also consider why many cultural depictions of youth focused on young men and will explore the resulting concerns that arise as young women enter cultural discourse and are recognized as public actors. Towards the twentieth century especially, women start to join the cultural depictions of this life stage, for example with the creation of the 'new woman' early in the century and women's participation in the subcultures of the 60s, 70s and 80s. Reactionary movements promoting rigid masculine and feminine roles often arose in response. Regardless of the specific context of debates, however, youth consistently have been evoked as the source of a culture's idealism or a sign of its decline over the modern era.

While learning about the cultural and intellectual discussions surrounding this life stage and the social role and historical contributions of this group, you will also be asked to reflect on what this material tells you about your own experiences and place in contemporary culture of this stage of life. As the GE Humanities category asks that you consider what it means to be a human, this course will ask you to consider what it means to be a youth.

This course will hold seminar-style meetings. You will read intensively in the subject, discuss the material in class, and develop analytic skills through frequent writing assignments. In addition to covering the GE humanities category, then, this class also develops Critical Thinking and Written Expression competencies.

Learning Objectives:

As a student in a First Year Seminar fulfilling the "Humanities" requirement, you will demonstrate: "knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the General Education program."

This means in the context of history as a humanities discipline that you will:

- Demonstrate proficiency in the analysis of a range of primary sources, including literary and philosophic.
- Contextualize these works historically.
- Express their resulting knowledge in essays, formal papers, and seminar discussions as a way of developing your understanding of the nature of what it means to be human.

In addition to the content requirements, you will also be expected to develop your ability to identify arguments, construct arguments, and communicate effectively in written discourse.

The Critical Thinking competency ensures you will:

- identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in your own or others' work; and
- develop well-reasoned arguments.

The written communication learning objective you will work on include:

- produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms;
- demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts; and
- research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details.

Required Books:

Rousseau, *Emile, Or Treatise on Education*

Goethe, *Sorrows of Young Werther*

Hermann Hesse, *Demian*

Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*

Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*

In addition to these full length texts, there will be a large number of required readings available through Blackboard.

Course Schedule:

Week One.: Course introduction: The Humanities as a discipline and its foundations in Renaissance Humanism.

Read: New Paltz's "Introduction to General Education" and Vergerio's *The New Education*

Discussion: What are the Humanities and how do they fit in the broader scheme of knowledge and its categories?

Week Two: Youth in Universities around 1400.

Readings: Medieval Student Songs, Rules and Regulations of Universities on Blackboard, and article on violence of students on Blackboard.

Monday Workshop: Reading primary sources—Methods of understanding and analyzing texts in the humanities.

Thursday Assignment: In class written assignment. Using the primary sources from fifteenth century Europe as a template, write your own song and student rules depicting student life in New Paltz. Purpose: reflecting on the comparison between university life and experience from 600 years ago to today.

Week Three: The study of how youth learn: from Locke to Rousseau.

Readings: Locke on Blackboard, Rousseau's *Emile*, Book 1 and part of Book 2 (p.5-114).

Read Locke and Rousseau, p 1-43 for Monday, the rest of *Emile* for Thursday.

Monday: Lecture and Discussion on Humanism and the Enlightenment: the Historical Development of the Humanities Disciplines

Thursday discussion: What underlying assumptions about youth are revealed in these treatises on education? Can you identify how they influence how university education is structured today?
Assignment: Write a revision of the medieval university curriculum employing Locke and Rousseau's ideas.

Week Four: Education continued. Explanations of How Youth Learn from the Humanities, the Arts, the Natural Sciences, and the Social Sciences

Readings: Rousseau's *Emile*, book 4 and 5

Monday: Lecture and Discussion: How do the different disciplines use their methods to tackle the same question? What value does each add to understand how youth learn?

Thursday: Short Paper on Locke's theories and Rousseau's novel. What is their stance on the disciplines and use of disciplinary methods?

Week Five: Youth functioning as social control in village culture.

Readings: Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivari in 16th century France" Peter Brown, selections from *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Edward Muir, selections from *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*.

Workshop: on constructing written arguments.

Assignment: In-class essay on readings.

Week Six: Elite Youth in eighteenth century Europe. The Grand Tour, pleasures of urban life, and Gender Relations.

Readings: Article on the Grand Tour, Boswell and Casanova excerpts on Blackboard.

Discussion: Travel and personal development. From the Grand Tour to Study Abroad today.

Workshop: Editing your own and others' written arguments

Week Seven: The artisanal classes and life as a journeyman.

Readings: Robert Darnton, "The Great Cat Massacre", and Jacque Louis Menetre, selections from 'My Life' on Blackboard

Paper due Thursday: compare attitudes of elite and lower class youth in the eighteenth century. Are there common attitudes towards what it means to be young, male?

Week Eight: The Youth in the French Revolution. Street Violence, Politicization, and gendering of revolution.

Readings: On Blackboard

Week Nine: Romanticism.

Readings: Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

P24-86 for Monday, 87-134 for Thursday

Paper: Idealism and Despair in early nineteenth century youth culture

Week Ten: Nationalism and activism in the age of Revolutions

Readings: Lord Byron, Garibaldi excerpts for Monday, Demian, pp1-57.

Week Eleven: Industrialization and its Discontents, Nietzsche and The Bildungsroman.

Readings: Finish Hermann Hesse, *Demian*.

Paper due Thursday: The development of young men

In-class discussion: The 'new woman' emerging as a cultural force.

Week Twelve:The Spirit of 1914, Home Front and Trench Life

Readings: Trench Poets, Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, selections from Blackboard.

Discussion: Analyzing the evolution in attitudes towards war and society from 1914 to 1918 using literary sources. How does the Great War transform Britain's youth?

Week Thirteen, Activism in the Streets: fascist and communist paramilitary gangs and more on the "New Woman".

Readings on Blackboard

Bring in a proposal (two paragraphs) and begin work on research paper on the connections between mass and sub cultures among youth in the second half of the twentieth century. 6 page paper to be due in week Sixteen.

Week Fourteen, Mass Culture and Sub-culture. Teds, Mods, and the Students of '68.

Read Dick Hebdige: *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, pp 1-70 for Monday, the remaining chapters will be divided up between the class members for Thursday.

Week Fifteen The Students of '68 continued.

Discussion: How did student activism transform universities and the student experience. Do we see any of the effects of their activism on our own university today?

Week Sixteen: The seventies and eighties. Racism, Punk and the British music scene. 1989 and after.

Research paper due.

Final Exam: December 19th, 12:30-2:30 in our normal classroom

F. Potential differential impact of these choices on various groups of student

For a well-prepared student entering a high credit major (engineering, BFA art, science education, etc.) any of these offerings would work, as long as a selection of 3 credit courses in each category are available to students, and DIVR can be met through a course that meets GE or major requirements.

We provide here some examples of the number of credits to complete the GE that would be required for a selection of high-credit majors.

BS Engineering:

Option 1: While many combinations are possible, here is one for the point of discussion. Gen Phys I (GE NSCI 4 cr), Calc I (GE MATH 4 cr), BCOM (4cr), ART (3cr), HUM (3cr), FLNG (6 cr), USST/DIVR (4cr), SSCI (3cr). Total = 31 credits, 8 apply to major, total number of credits outside major for GE = 23; major requirements = 102, so total = 125cr. Thus, this program would be just under the 126 credit limit.

Option 2: Gen Phys I (GE NSCI 4 cr), Calc I (GE MATH 4 cr), BCOM (3cr), ART (3cr), HUM (3cr), FLNG (3 cr), USST/DIVR (3cr), SSCI (3cr), WEST (3cr), WRLD (3cr). Total = 32 credits, 8 apply to major, total number of credits outside major for GE = 24; major requirements = 102, so total = 126cr. Thus, this program would be just at the 126 credit limit.

Option 3: Gen Phys I (GE NSCI 4 cr), Calc I (GE MATH 4 cr), BCOM (4cr), FLNG (3-6cr), ART (3cr), HUM (3cr), USST/DIVR (3cr), SSCI (3cr), WEST (3cr), WRLD (3cr). Total = 33-36 credits, 8 apply to major, total number of credits outside major for GE = 25-28; major requirements = 102, so total = 127-130cr. **Thus, this program would be above 126 credit limit.** An adjustment would have to be made to the GE requirements in order for the engineering program to remain within the SUNY-mandated cap of 126 credits for a BS degree. This solution to this would be discussed with the Engineering program and the GE Board.

BFA in Studio Art:

Option 1: While many combinations are possible, here is one for the point of discussion. Design: Form (GE ART 3cr), HUM (3cr), BCOM (4cr), NSCI (3cr), WEST (3cr), FLNG (6 cr), USST/DIVR (4cr), SSCI (3cr), WRLD (3cr). Total = 32 credits, 3 apply to major, total number of credits outside major for GE = 29; major requirements = 81, so total = 110cr. Thus, this program would be well under the 126 credit limit.

Option 2: Design: Form (GE ART 3cr), HUM (3cr), BCOM (3cr), NSCI (3cr), WEST (3cr), FLNG (3 cr), USST/DIVR (3cr), SSCI (3cr), MATH (3cr), WRLD (3cr). Total = 30 credits, 3 apply to major, total number of credits outside major for GE = 27; major requirements = 81, so total = 108cr. Thus, this program would be well under the 126 credit limit.

Option 3: Design: Form (GE ART 3cr), HUM (3cr), BCOM (4cr), FLNG (3-6cr), MATH (3cr), NSCI (4-6cr), USST/DIVR (3cr), SSCI (3cr), WEST (3cr), WRLD (3cr). Total = 32-37 credits, 3 apply to major, total number of credits outside major for GE = 29-34; major requirements = 81, so total = 110-115. Thus, this program would be well under the 126 credit limit.

Note that for BFA Art students, coursework in HUM, WEST and WRLD may be available within the major program courses in art studio and/or art history, though that assumption is not made here.

BS in Biological Sciences, Adolescence Education:

Option 1: While many combinations are possible, here is one for the point of discussion. Gen Bio I (GE NSCI 4 cr), Calc I (GE MATH 4 cr), BCOM (4cr), ART (3cr), HUM (3cr), FLNG (6 cr), WRLD (3cr), WEST (3cr). Total = 30 credits, 8 apply to major, total number of credits outside major for GE = 24; major requirements = 100, so total = 124cr. Thus, this program would be just under the 126 credit limit.

Option 2: GenBio I (GE NSCI 4 cr), Calc I (GE MATH 4 cr), Developing Adolescent (GE SSCI 3cr), BCOM (3cr), ART (3cr), HUM/DIVR (3cr), FLNG (3 cr), USST(3cr), WEST (3cr), WRLD (3cr). Total = 32 credits, 11 apply to major, total number of credits outside major for GE = 21; major requirements = 100, so total = 121cr. Thus, this program would be just under the 126 credit limit.

Option 3: Gen Bio I (GE NSCI 4 cr), Calc I (GE MATH 4 cr), Developing Adolescent (GE SSCI 3cr), BCOM (4cr), ART (3cr), HUM/DIVR (3cr), FLNG (3-6 cr), USST(3cr), WEST (3cr), WRLD (3cr). Total = 33-36 credits, 11 apply to major, total number of credits outside major for GE = 22-26; major requirements = 100, so total = 122-126cr. Thus, this program would be just under/within the 126 credit limit.

G. TAP and other financial aid considerations

Recently, there has been a change in the way that our institution has been interpreting financial aid eligibility for students. In particular, concern has been focused on Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), a New York State funded college financial aid program. TAP provides grants—not loans—to eligible students. About ½ of our undergraduates receive these awards, ranging from ~\$250-\$3250 per semester. Ensuring that these students continue to receive appropriate financial support for their studies here is an important part of the mission of the Enrollment Management division of our college. Professional Faculty members in financial aid, student accounts, computer services, records and registration, and academic advising have been working tirelessly this semester to understand the changing financial aid landscape, with respect to TAP and federal programs that are undergoing similar changes.

The intent of these regulations is to ensure that the limited state/federal support for students in higher education is going to students that are making satisfactory progress towards their primary degree. For TAP, that means that a student must take at least 12 credits each semester that are applicable to his/her primary degree program. The definition of what constitutes a “primary degree program” is the source of the confusion. Previously, we defined this as any 12 credits at the college, with an understanding that any individual student was likely selecting courses that would result in a degree. Now, the rules are narrowed, so that “primary degree program” includes ONLY the following: credits towards the major, GE, and/or credits necessary to achieve other graduation requirements—including upper division credits, credits to reach 120, writing intensive courses, etc.

With these new requirements, the math necessary to determine if a student is in compliance becomes a little bit trickier. For example, let's say a student is an English major. She needs 44 credits for her major + 42 credits of GE. This means she needs 34 credits (free electives) in addition to get to 120 (we're ignoring upper division requirements for now). In any semester, she can take 12 credits of any combination of GE, major or free electives and be fine for TAP. However, when one of these pools of credits runs out, then she has only the remaining 2 to draw from to achieve 12 credits towards her major program. Here is an example of how she could get into trouble. If she came here thinking she would major in geology and took 34 credits of math, geology, chemistry and physics in her first two years, in addition to GE classes. If she changes to English in her junior year, all of that geology-based coursework is now considered "free electives," so now she needs to take at least 12 credits of GE (if she has any remaining) and English major classes in order to qualify for TAP.

Contrary to popular belief, TAP does allow "free electives" to be used to meet the requirement, but some students use these up early in their academic career, as they are choosing a major. Another problem might be a student that intends to double major and focuses on coursework in each area sequentially. Since the second major doesn't "count" for TAP, this could mean that the student would be over the free elective credit limit in a particular semester. In addition, repeating a class that has been passed means that that class does not count for TAP (unless a degree program requires that a certain grade be met). As the professionals in the areas responsible for financial aid process more students, we are becoming more aware of the situations that get students into trouble. The intention is to share this information with the campus community once it is clear and to provide appropriate advising remedies and/or resources so that students can consult with financial aid professionals in a timely manner so that changes to schedules can be made before the semester begins.

This semester was the first that the "new" TAP regulations were enforced. Our ability to identify students that did not meet the requirement has been the subject of refinement as the semester has proceeded. In fact, this has involved going through hundreds of individual student transcripts. At this point, it looks like ~100 students will be considered ineligible for TAP. Thus only ~3% of students receiving TAP were negatively impacted, even though we provided NO advising to students specific to the new TAP regulations when they chose their classes. While this is a matter of considerable importance to those students and something that our administration is keenly aware of and working towards a solution, it is not an issue that should fundamentally change the fabric of our institution.

One thing that is clear is that changing the amount of credits in the GE does nothing to change the likelihood that a student encounters financial aid difficulty. If the size of the GE is smaller than 42, then students would have more "free electives" that are allowable under TAP. Increasing the size of the GE would mean that students would have less. In either case, the real issue is how these "free electives" are distributed across the 8 semesters of study. Further, it is not the job of the faculty to design a curriculum that addresses the changeable regulations regarding financial aid eligibility. We have a responsibility to develop a GE curriculum that we believe will be the best in terms of preparing students for education, careers

and life. The financial aid professionals will then prepare appropriate advice for students about how best to provide funding so that this education can be accessed widely and with as little stress as possible.

H. Composition Program statement on Basic Communication requirements

SUNY New Paltz has a two-semester Composition requirement, but through AP exams, Composition in the high schools programs, and placement exemptions close to 40% of first-year students do not take Composition I. Students come to New Paltz with highly varied skills and preparation with writing and speaking, along with little experience with self-aware rhetorical reflection. Writing and speaking are very situational activities with different expectations and even different qualities required in various disciplines and genres. Because of the variety of settings for writing, it can be taught well through regular work over time in different settings.

The three main GE options above seek to reduce the Composition requirement by making one Basic Communication course the standard, rather than two semesters. The main Composition or Basic Communication course would prepare students to by helping them become more rhetorically aware, develop greater understandings of working with genres and situations, and work in academic writing contexts.

The prerequisite course would provide an opportunity for those students who need the most help at the sentence level, in idea development, and in basic organization to further their skills and avoid struggling immediately in their first writing classes. The approximately 20% of students who take our current Supplemental Writing Workshop versions of Composition would likely be placed in the prerequisite course. That prerequisite course would also serve as a way to give students college credit for Composition in the High Schools classes and AP exams, while still giving the vast majority of students an important college writing course experience. College writing or composition courses usually have a very different focus from literature-based high school classes, and AP exams are not reflective of the content of our Composition classes.

Intermediate Composition, or a similar course, could then be used for students wishing to pursue further work on their writing and for students, like those in Education, who need a second Composition course. The GE options above seek to reduce the overall Composition requirement while creating flexibility for the varying needs of students.

The recent faculty survey performed by the GE Board (Fall 2015) found many faculty wanting to emphasize writing as a skill for students, particularly across the curriculum. The overall reduction in the Composition expectation in initial GE courses would have to be offset by writing in varied contexts and across the years of schooling in the intermediate and advanced writing competencies courses within majors.

I. Rationale and Objectives for the Foreign Language GE Requirement

Currently, SUNY New Paltz has a two-semester Foreign Language requirement. Students can also fulfill the requirement by taking one Intermediate, or one 300-level class, by bringing college or AP credits from high school, or by taking a CLEP exam. For students who are still learning English (who have ESL classes on their high school or college transcript), the requirement is waived. As explained below, these requirements are minimal and diminishing them would greatly hinder our students' capacity to have a meaningful experience of a foreign language.

For 3-credit courses, the two-semester requirement consists of two and a half hours of instruction a week, a total of thirty-seven hours and a half each semester, minus class examination time, for a total of seventy-five hours by the end of two semesters. In language classes, the focus is on developing four skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In addition to developing language proficiency, students become familiar with the pragmatics of the language and the culture or cultures of the place or places where the language is spoken. These skills develop at a different pace, depending on such factors as students' capacities and aptitudes. The American Foreign Service Institute (FSI) has established the number of hours it takes a learner whose first language is English to develop different levels of proficiency. These periods of time vary according to the characteristics of the second language that is being studied: its writing system and how close its grammar is to English.

For example, to achieve an Intermediate-Mid level in Spanish or French, the FSI establishes that it would take a motivated learner 240 hours of instruction to achieve this level, whereas it would take 480 hours of instruction to achieve the same level in Chinese or Japanese (Archibald, J., et. al, 2006). An Intermediate-Mid speaker is one that is "able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture. These include personal information related to self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel, and lodging. Intermediate-Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices, and services." (ACFTL, 2012, p. 7). As this description indicates, Intermediate-Mid is the level at which the student is able to have a meaningful experience of the target language. The student can process spoken and written language and produce meaning, however limited, to interact in a variety of situations.⁶

⁶ Lower than the Intermediate level is the Novice level: "Novice-level speakers can communicate short messages on highly predictable, everyday topics that affect them directly. They do so primarily through the use of isolated words and phrases that have been encountered, memorized, and recalled. Novice-level speakers may be difficult to understand even by the most sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to non-native speech." (ACFTL, 2012, p. 9)

The goal in our Department is that students achieve Intermediate-Low level in which they can perform some of the communicative tasks of an Intermediate-Mid speaker by the time they complete two semesters of a language. This is an arduous task, since the current requirement only allows for 75 hours of instruction, as mentioned above. We have developed a variety of strategies to increase the number of hours during which students can advance their second language skills: conversation tables, film nights, and cultural activities. Another strategy is the use of textbooks with an online component to support the learning process, in an attempt to compensate for the lack of hours of instruction. Learning a second language is a demanding and long process that has no parallel with other subjects. However, this long process is necessary and vital for the development of our students as citizens of the world.

It would be ideal if all students were required to take many years of language instruction in high school, but this is not the case. In English, Math and Sciences, among other areas, students build a foundation of knowledge beginning at an early age. A student who starts a new language in college and takes just two semesters gains some familiarity with a language and the culture or cultures associated with it. For students who have had some language instruction in high school and place at the intermediate level or above, completion of just one semester of college-level language instruction improves their linguistic and cultural proficiency immensely and contributes to the choice to continue studying that language and studying abroad.

Studies show multiple advantages of learning a second language. It develops brain density, increases the capacity for concentration and completing difficult tasks, and slows down the process of brain aging (Porter, 2010). Additionally, speaking a second language increases speakers' abilities in English. A study by the College Board found that, "students who completed at least four years of foreign-language study scored more than 100 points higher on each section of the SAT than students who took a half year or less. In fact, students who studied four or five years of a foreign language scored higher on the verbal section than students who had studied any other subject for the same number of years" (CED, 2006, 16).

In addition to linguistic advantages, there are multiple professional and economical advantages of becoming fluent in a second language. The Committee for Economic Development's (CED) statement about the importance of studying foreign languages, asserts how firms and companies increasingly have the need for employees with knowledge not only of a second language; but also with the cultural competence and skills to work and interact with clients from other countries. Furthermore, this need is even higher in government offices; it is common that government agencies lack sufficient linguists to translate critical government information. The CED statement also mentions how diplomatic efforts have been affected by a lack of cultural awareness, which certainly can be acquired in second language classes. As a conclusion of this report, the CED makes three recommendations: 1) teaching international content across the curriculum and at all levels, 2) expanding the training at every level of education to address the scarcity of Americans fluent in foreign languages, and 3) making use of American leaders to inform the public about the importance of improving education in foreign languages and international studies. (CED, 2006, p.2-3)

The advantages of learning a second language are countless, both linguistically and professionally. Furthermore, those who study a second language learn and experience first hand the differences among different cultures. This allows them to become multilingual and multicultural citizens of the world and to be more prepared to deal with all the challenges that a globalized and multicultural world brings to them.

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J. Statement in support of robust NSCI requirement within GE

To satisfy the science Liberal Education requirement at SUNY New Paltz, we propose that students take either one 4-credit science course that may or may not include pre-requisites (for example, the course may require students to have a specific MPL) or, two 3-credit science courses. In some cases, the 4-credit course could include a laboratory component where students would be expected to perform experiments throughout the semester and write reports on their findings. Any existing 3-credit introductory science course for science majors that is currently offered, along with the 1-credit laboratory course, would satisfy this requirement. If students chose to complete two 3-credit courses instead, they would select from courses that are similar to those being offered now (geared towards non-science majors). With this change, students that we wish to attract to our college, the ones that want to be challenged by a rigorous education would in turn have a set of serious science courses to choose from.

In terms of the current proposal provided by the LEC, while it is acknowledged that there is an effort to include more STEM enhanced courses in the curriculum, the STEM guidelines call for only 25% of a course dealing with STEM topics and no guarantee that any of the content therein will actually be science—the description of the STEM enhanced courses has been described as including elementary data analysis and/or only some introductory statistics. While it may be true that this is useful for students, it is merely a tool scientists use to interpret a problem. A basic

science course typically includes learning about a scientific model or theory, learning how to apply it in order to solve a problem, and then re-evaluating the theory more critically to determine if/when exceptions might exist. Substituting only the tools in place of a basic science course will not help to teach students how to evaluate problems critically. We do hope that faculty will continue to include some science and math in the courses they teach, where appropriate, in much the same way that courses in the sciences will continue to include components of writing and oral communication.

There has been a long-term erosion of science requirements at SUNY New Paltz over the past couple of decades. In 1993 when GEII was put into place, the science requirement included either two lab courses or three non-lab courses, for a total of 8–10 credit hours. In 2003 when GEIII was put into place, the science requirement was reduced to a minimum of two non-lab courses for a total of 6 credit hours.

On top of the concerns that we feel for the state of science education in and of itself, there is also the question of where the science requirements place SUNY New Paltz in the larger collegiate landscape. There has been much discussion over the past few months over the College Board's "Admitted Student Questionnaire PLUS" survey and the results have shown that New Paltz struggles to compete for the best students it accepts due, in part, to a perceived lack of rigor and competitiveness. Thus, when the one SUNY comprehensive that ranks ahead of us, SUNY Geneseo, maintains a two-course science requirement, one has to wonder if we will ever make up any ground in creating a rigorous and competitive curriculum for our students. At a time when the state of science education in the United States is struggling, and at a time when SUNY New Paltz is struggling to be more competitive in attracting the best students, the Liberal Education proposal that continues to water down the expectations for scientific knowledge at SUNY New Paltz is not what this institution needs to move forward in the 21st century.

Science Education Backgrounder

National Science Foundation report on the state of scientific knowledge in the United States and the most recent release from 2012 contains some alarming statistics.

- Over 25% of American adults believe that the Sun revolves around the earth.
- Over 45% of Americans adults believe that antibiotics kill viruses.
- Over 50% of Americans believe that humans did not evolve from earlier species.
- Over 50% of Americans believe that lasers are highly focused sound waves.
- Over 60% of Americans believe that the universe did not begin with Big Bang.

The literature on the failings of the United States educational system at the K-12 level is voluminous and educational leaders - as well as politicians and the business community - have decried the lack of American competitiveness in math and science. Perhaps the best comparative measure for scientific learning among students is the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) that measures the learning of 15 year olds from selected countries

around the world. Because PISA is run by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, it is primarily advanced nations that are compared. Among the 34 OECD members in the PISA study, the United States ranks 20 out of 34, slightly below average. That puts the United States ahead of countries like Mexico, Greece and Hungary, but well behind leaders like Japan, Korea, Finland, Canada and the Netherlands.

Other studies of American preparation in math & science are even more alarming. The World Economic Forum’s “Global Competitiveness Report” from 2010-2011, ranking the quality of American math and science education, placed the United States 52nd in the world, which is typical of many such studies.

The lack of preparation of American students in math and science is clearly seen in the ranks of college programs around the country. The OECD study from 2009 found that the United States ranked 27th among developed nations in the proportion of college students receiving undergraduate degrees in science or engineering. In fact, were it not for the fact the over half the graduates students in STEM related fields were from abroad, as a recent study from the Task Force on the Future of American Innovation has found, the United States would have already lost much of its global competitiveness in STEM related fields.

K. GE categories met by first-year students through AP credit in Fall 2015

ART	72 students (6% of cohort)
Comp 1 ⁷	275 (23.1%)
Comp 2	74 (6.2%)
DIVR	4 (0.3%)
FLNG	234 (19.6%)
HUM	106 (8.9%)
Math ⁸	37 (3.1%)
NSCI	251 (21.1%)
SSCI	247 (20.7%)
USST	270 (22.7%)
WEST	47 (3.9%)
WRLD	100 (8.4%)

⁷ in addition, some students place out of comp 1 through non-college credit bearing high school work

⁸ see section V for discussion of math met through non-college credit bearing high school work other than AP