

Core Curriculum Appraisal Task Force
Spring 2024 Report
13 May 2024

Submitted by Fletcher Linder

Charge: Goal 1, Objective 4 of the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan identifies renewal of the General Education Program (GEP) as a high priority. With the GEP Academic Program Review (APR) report and response in hand, the Provost Leadership Team affirms its commitment to renewal and to providing “all undergraduates with a high-quality liberal education program.”

To these ends, the Provost has appointed the Core Curriculum Appraisal Task Force to lead the division through a process of consultation, discernment and innovation. Curriculum is primarily vested with the faculty and developed through shared governance processes. This task force will facilitate broad collaboration and has the following responsibilities:

1. Use the 2021-22 APR to develop recommendations for facilitating discussion among faculty and other stakeholders for revising and renewing JMU’s core curriculum to better incorporate contemporary expectations for the liberal arts and sciences.
2. Identify and work with an external consultant to facilitate campus engagement and help us assess the university’s curricular needs.
3. Advise academic leaders on expanded communication and messaging about the General Education program’s role in JMU’s unique blend of liberal arts, research and professional education.
4. Analyze staffing levels needed to meet SCHEV base adequacy guidelines, with the possibility of strategic growth in full-time instructional positions to support the instructional needs of our core curriculum.

Note on the Note on the CCATF’s **charge revision:**

In the CCATF’s original charge, the first item in the enumerated list of responsibilities read: “(1) The task force will use the 2021-2022 APR to develop recommendations for revising and renewing JMU’s core curriculum to better incorporate contemporary expectations for the liberal arts and sciences.” In response to faculty concerns that the CCATF had been charged to draft a revised general education curriculum, the Provost’s Office revised item (1) to clarify that the CCATF will support the process of general education renewal by facilitating broad engagement in the renewal process, but that the curriculum will be developed and approved by faculty.

Members: Quentin Alexander, Bethany Blackstone, John Burgess, Allison Fagan, Fletcher Linder (chair), Christine May (Faculty Senate), Meg Mulrooney, Carole Nash, Kane Nashimoto, Angela Webb.

Meetings Held

Jan 11	Bi-weekly meeting
Feb 1	Bi-weekly meeting
Feb 6	Facilitate GenEd Conversation with Faculty #1
Feb 7	Facilitate GenEd Conversation with Faculty #2
Feb 8	Bi-weekly meeting
Feb 19	Facilitate GenEd Conversation with Faculty #3
Feb 20	Facilitate GenEd Conversation with Faculty #4
Mar 7	Facilitate GenEd Conversation with Faculty #5
Mar 7	Bi-weekly meeting (cancelled)
Mar 21	Bi-weekly meeting
Mar 27	Facilitate GenEd Conversation with Faculty #6
Mar 28	Facilitate GenEd Conversation with Faculty #7
April 1	Update President's Cabinet
April 4	Bi-weekly meeting
April 18	Bi-weekly meeting
May 2	Bi-weekly meeting

Scope of Work, Progress, Plans going Forward

Connect with faculty

In Spring 2024, the task force led seven General Education Conversations for faculty to discuss ideas central to GenEd reform and areas identified in the first faculty survey. Conversations were 60 minutes each. In order to expand opportunities for faculty attendance, conversations were held either virtually or in-person in different areas across campus. Each of the seven conversations concentrated on a single topic. Topics were, in order of conversation dates:

1. Student learning needs
2. Faculty perceptions of the current General Education Program
3. Engaging faculty in GenEd reform
4. Student learning outcomes
5. GenEd as a complement to other academic programs and areas
6. Integrative experiences
7. JMU students' first year

Notes from these seven conversations are posted on the CCATF [website](#).

As part of the task force's network-building work, the task force submitted in Fall 2023 a proposal to the AACU's Institute on General Education, Pedagogy, and Assessment ([iGEPA](#)) to

help enhance our campus' General Education reform work. JMU was chosen to participate in iGEPA, and the task force used this opportunity to further enhance connections with faculty by having our iGEPA team composed of five instructional faculty and one administrator. iGEPA participants are:

Allison Fagan
Michael Hickman (Faculty Senate)
Christine May (Faculty Senate)
Juhong Christie Liu
Meg Mulrooney (admin)
Angela Webb

JMU participation in iGEPA will help JMU in the following areas related to planning and optimizing participatory processes.

- detailing processes to have productive GenEd conversations with faculty, administrators, students, and other constituents;
- detailing processes to collect formal input from faculty, administrators, students, and other constituents regarding ideas for a renewed GenEd program;
- detailing processes to move from suggested ideas to constructing multiple concrete proposals for a renewed GenEd;
- detailing processes to gather input/responses on multiple concrete proposals; detailing processes to summarize input on multiple concrete proposals.

JMU's iGEPA work will finalize in early June, and the iGEPA team will bring their recommendations to the CCATF and GEC in early Fall 2024 for comment and refinement before presenting to the university-at-large.

Continue to develop formal connections with the General Education Council

Task force members continued to meet with the GEC during the spring semester. Connections with GEC will be ongoing.

Two Spring 2024 events/processes mark important coordination between the CCATF and the GEC. The first is the iGEPA work noted in the section above. Four of the six iGEPA team members attend GEC meetings: Fagan (CCATF liaison with the GEC), Hickman (GEC member), Liu (GEC member), and Mulrooney (GEC member). Four of the six team members are on the CCATF: Fagan, May, Mulrooney, and Webb.

The other significant collaboration involved the GEC sharing information they've collected from/about students in relation to General Education. The CCATF is interested in seeing the data JMU already has from/about students before embarking on any possible new data collection exercise. The shared information from the GEC includes information on such topics as student motivation in General Education courses and student expectations of the GenEd curriculum. The CCATF is grateful for the collaboration.

Based on the CCATF review of the student data, future possible areas of inquiry for the CCATF include alignment/misalignment between faculty and student expectations of General Education courses/curriculum.

Maintain formal connections with Faculty Senate

The task force representative from Faculty Senate continued to meet with Faculty Senate over the Spring 2024 semester. As noted in the section above, two of the six iGEPA team members are also Faculty Senate members. Connections with Faculty Senate will be ongoing.

Continue to build and maintain the CCATF webpage

The website will continue to be built as a repository of information relevant to General Education reform, and will serve as a standing communication portal for faculty input and questions. Updates to the webpage will be ongoing.

Build networks with external experts on GenEd reform

This work continues to expand, with Spring 2024 iGEPA/AACU work being the most prominent at this time. Potential benefits of this work include connecting with experts who can provide feedback/guidance on particular issues related to our reform efforts, building our internal familiarity with typical issues related to GenEd reform, connecting with people expert in particular “best practices,” and identifying individuals who may be able to provide specific support to our reform work.

END OF REPORT