

Idea 1: Incorporating Upper-Level Integrative Experience Requirements

Original Title: Integrating General Education and Its Structures

Summary of Idea

We propose not just to build on but also to adjust the structure and outcomes of the current program in ways that would make the logic and purpose of the program more visible to students, faculty, and other stakeholders. We are proposing (1) to add an integrative structure to the program while also (2) crystallizing the current Student Learning Objectives into fewer overall SLOs, which will nonetheless continue to challenge and support student learning with diverse learning experiences in Gen Ed courses.

Structurally, the current lack of a defined order or scaffolding (other than Madison Foundations in the first year) would be changed in order to emphasize the integrative nature of the learning facilitated and cultivated through General Education: we propose to add one or two 300-level integrative experiences and/or courses that would be taken after, perhaps, 20 credits of the GE program have been completed.

Integrative courses would focus on higher-level learning (connection, collaboration, synthesis/creation, reflection) whose student learning outcomes could be fulfilled through dedicated courses or complex integrative experiences like study abroad, X-Labs, Honors projects, internships, etc. The change would not entail an increase in required General Education credits, perhaps by consolidating or eliminating some of the current 14 group requirements or allowing a course in one or two of them to be completed through integrative experiences/courses.

We propose to retain, and make more evident, the outcomes-based model that is a strength of the present program. Building on work already completed by a working group of the General Education Council (GEC) that analyzed and synthesized the essential and shared learning outcomes (SLOs) across the General Education program, this proposed change would also include a reduction in the number of SLOs (from the current approx. 70).

The SLOs of the Integrative experience would advance and connect the other foundational SLOs, give the program a clearer shape and sense of purpose for students and faculty, and help students to succinctly see and make intentional connections between the disparate experiences of courses in the GE program and their majors.

In condensed form, this change would:

- Add a higher-level integrative experience requirement for all GE students (may or may not be credit-bearing).
- Give shape and direction to the program by articulating a set point for a shared beginning (Madison Foundations, perhaps including a first-year experience course), intermediate (many of the current GE courses would fit here, as they would

continue to fulfill the newly crystallized versions of the SLOs of the program), and advanced (integrative) learning experiences.

- Reduce the overall number of program learning objectives (based on an analysis of aligned current objectives) while actively maintaining the diversity of offerings and breadth of experiences students would have in the GE program.
- Introduce a small set of higher order Integrative learning outcomes that help students perceive, and take agency over, how their JMU and GE experiences mutually inform one another in their learning journey.

Rationale for Idea

The proposed change offers a number of benefits and addresses areas of the program often believed to be unclear or underdeveloped in their potential. It does not completely alter the current structure but builds on it.

- It supports faculty retention and professional satisfaction by enabling them to teach to their strengths and interests that often extend beyond their disciplinary limits. Many faculty have degrees or significant experience in fields outside the disciplines in which they teach. The proposal also opens the possibility of co-taught courses.
- By providing clearer beginning and culminating points to the program, it helps clarify its logic and structure, which students and faculty currently find challenging to understand or express. The newly proposed structure is one that can be expressed by an infographic.
- The upper-level integrative experiences/courses provide an opportunity for students to develop and understand more fully the relationship between their General Education experiences and their major courses, as well as their overall role as active agents in their own learning.
- By reducing the number of student learning outcomes (based on a consolidation and crystallization of the current outcomes), it provides for program flexibility by not attaching outcomes strictly to a particular (and current) group and area structure.
 - This will make it more common and more visible for courses from different disciplines to fulfill some of the same learning outcomes, embodying the principle that a liberal arts and sciences core curriculum helps students to hone their intentional learning skills, enhance their intellectual adaptability, and exercise their own agency as emerging lifelong learners.
 - This new structure will make evident that all disciplines are both meaningfully distinct from one another yet often connected by shared questions, challenges, and goals. The proposed revision would provide clearly defined objectives toward which experiences in the program would lead and which they would support through the content and the methods of individual courses.
 - Based on the synthesis of the GEC Working Group in early 2024, these Learning Objectives might include SLOs such as the following: Quantitative Reasoning; Critical Thinking; Information Literacy; Humanistic and

Interpretive Engagement; Communication; Civic and Cultural Engagement; and Ethical Reasoning.

- With fewer overall objectives, students would take more than one course to fulfill each area and would achieve breadth of exposure to different content and methods by choosing different prefixes for each of their Gen Ed courses. Current Gen Ed class offerings now tend to fulfill one or more of these possible learning objectives, so individual courses offered would not necessarily alter much: their visible connections to one another and their specific role in the students' learning journeys would simply become more evident through the new structure.

While not fulfilling the definition of capstone courses/experiences, the upper-level integrative experiences/courses provide many of the same valued benefits of higher-level learning, integration of earlier experiences, development of student agency and responsibility for their learning, and sense of accomplishment and culmination.

The abilities and habits of mind developed through integrative experiences are ones that employers deem highly valuable, but which they cannot teach effectively to employees. This type of learning takes time and repeated (guided, curated) experiences of novelty and adaptation—which is precisely the method and the philosophy behind liberal arts and sciences curricula. It is necessary that employees enter the workforce and the real-world with meaningful experiences that have begun to teach them these essential metacognitive skills.

This proposal also builds on Integrative course initiative developed in General Education for nearly the past eight years, which is based on findings that show the benefits to students who experience an integrative education are substantial and measurable. Studies (Carmichael and LaPierre 2014; Fincham et al. 2021; NSSE 2024) indicate that students who participate in a variety of integrative learning experiences have higher grade point averages, increased rates of retention to graduation, and higher self-reported levels of satisfaction with their education. These students perform at higher levels when it comes to discovering and synthesizing information, working productively with a team, and solving complex problems, both within and beyond their specific majors. They are also sought after by employers (AAC&U; Ehiyazaryan and Barraclough 2009; Selznik et al. 2022).

Integrative learning helps students to prepare for a wide range of both expected and unexpected career paths, encouraging them to develop and to recognize their transferable knowledge and skills. This adaptability is particularly important in a future where the average college graduate will change careers multiple times (World Economic Forum). In this way, integrative education with a logical and meaningful progression based on well-defined Learning Objectives provides value to university students seeking both to earn a living and to live a fulfilling and meaningful life. The words 'integrate' and 'integrity' share the Latin root *integrare*, meaning to create or maintain wholeness. Bringing diverse people, ideas, and experiences together—often in new and unexpected ways—is essential to

lifelong learning and epitomizes what makes a James Madison University education both useful and distinctive.

Idea 2: Creating Optional Integrative General Education Capstone Projects

Original Title: Conceptualizing and Developing Integrative Learning General Education Capstone Experience

Summary of Idea

We propose to conceptualize and develop Integrative Learning General Education (Gen Ed) capstone experiences for 3rd and 4th-year JMU students. As a companion proposal to “Integrating General Education and its Structures,” the Gen Ed integrative learning capstone projects in this proposal will serve as one way of fulfilling the overarching SLOs of integrative learning (connection, collaboration, synthesis/creation, reflection). These capstone projects will be optional for upper-level Gen Ed students, to provide a scaffolded reflective review of their cumulative general education courses in JMU as a whole and envision their life goals (Weiss, Kirkscey, & Vale, 2021).

The non-credit bearing offering is intended to 1) appeal to students’ participation by foregrounding their agency; 2) support students to intentionally connect across Gen Ed courses; 3) use Gen Ed coursework for life goal planning. This proposed idea is planned to be evaluated between Spring and Summer of 2025, with collaboration among JMU Gen Ed faculty and other co-curricular experience providing units such as University Studies, Student Affairs, and Senior Compass. The evaluation will be using the AAC&U TLA Framework – Teaching-Learning-Assessment Framework. This idea is built upon the Gen Ed faculty summer 2024 work on the Integrative Learning Outcomes and Structuring Integrative Learning in General Education Courses, the CCATF webinars, AAC&U Institute of General Education, Pedagogy, & Assessment (iGEPA) 2024, and a comprehensive review Integrative learning literature and models.

In this proposal, Integrative Learning is defined with the AAC&U 2007 and 2024 definitions: “Integrative and applied learning, including synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies—demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problem.” (AAC&U, 2024) “An emphasis on integrative learning can help undergraduates find ways to put the pieces together and develop habits of mind that will prepare them to make informed judgments in the conduct of personal, professional, and civic life.” (AAC&U and Carnegie Foundation, 2007)

Rationale for Idea

This idea proposes two closely related changes: (1) that all upper-level Gen Ed students should have some kind of integrative experience, and (2) that an Integrative Learning General Education Capstone Project needs to be evaluated, conceptualized, and developed as an elective option for students’ integrative learning in General Education at

JMU. The rationale behind emphasizing integrative learning, and the option of capstone projects, includes the following:

- The Goals of JMU General Education and the JMU Mission, Vision, and Values for preparing graduating Dukes to be educated whole human beings.
- The nature of Integrative Learning (AAC&U, 2024; AAC&U, 2020; AAC&&, Carnegie Foundation, 2007; Carleton College. Science Education Resource Center, 2016) and Capstone Projects as defined by AAC&U reemphasizes connection, collaboration, synthesis, and reflection.
 - These outcomes will support students to associate the knowledge they learn from discrete general education courses to fulfill their productive and meaningful life in the real world.
 - The nature of integrative learning emphasizes and illuminates that the students themselves are the agents of their own learning and development, which will not only strengthen their academic and social experiences at JMU but also will be a crucial part of ensuring that they have the tools and awareness to continue to grow and seek lifelong learning beyond their college days.

Modify Current Gen Ed

This idea would modify two categories of the current General Education

1. ****requirements****: If all students must select some kind of integrative learning experience, this will add a type of “overlay”/not-necessarily-credit-bearing requirement to the program; for 3rd or 4th year students who wish to fulfill this overlay with a credit-bearing Capstone Project, this could be one way to accomplish this because: i) the project is anticipated to synthesize at least 2-3 areas of GenEd classes that the student will have taken by then. ii) it will demonstrate the students’ reflective and synthetic view of their project’s social impact. iii) It will reflect the illustrated realistic value of critical thinking with artifacts, a solution to social or global issues with writing or media. iv) it will scaffold students to develop/project life and career goals with the cumulative Gen Ed experience by then.
2. This would affect ****outcomes****, as it will map to the revised Integrative Learning Outcomes – Connection, Collaboration, Synthesis, and Reflection with the JMU Gen Ed Competencies. This proposal is not intended to change the structure of the current General Education Program in JMU, though it could be applicable to new structures. The option of a GenEd Capstone Project of Integrative Learning is proposed to have 1-year span for students to have sufficient time to connect, reflect, and synthesize different GenEd classes they will have taken and collaborate on a project that demonstrate their cognitive and developmental confidence. The time will also allow collaborating on in-person experiential learning on the capstone project with a virtual space of community of peer learning where the students would exercise their learning agency (Nancy Budwig (2021). It would not raise the number

of credit hours required in General Education but could possibly fulfill 3 credits of their Gen Ed total hours.

Student Learning Outcomes

The idea will strengthen Connection, Collaboration, Synthesis, and Reflection outcomes with a project that students are proud of and also may be able to use in the future, for example, as evidence of their abilities. These projects will require students to demonstrate their learning agency by engaging through real collaboration with their gen ed classes and peers and seeing and articulating the interconnection of their Gen Ed and major courses. As noted above, these optional Capstone Projects would be consistent with a non-credit bearing requirement for Integrative Learning for all students, which could be studied through a resource and investment evaluation in summer 2025 to ensure student learning as well as the balance of investment of resources and logistics.

The idea will follow the Integration of Learning Model (IOL) (James Barber, 2020) in the context of the JMU General Education program. To prepare to develop the idea, we can collect feedback from students and faculty focus groups in Spring 2025.

Some examples of a Gen Ed Capstone Project could include but are not limited to:

- an interview project with responsible protocols to discover different perspectives about a global issue.
- a 3rd-year reflective project of It's Complicated (ERiA) after their first-year experience [pending confirming with ERiA Office];
- a writing praxis across contexts in connecting and comparing gen ed classes from different areas.
- reflective juxtaposition regarding a scientific or economic standpoint across different space and cultural settings;
- proposing solutions to societal issues using knowledge from gen ed courses across at least 2-3 Gen Ed areas, et al.
- a hands-on creation of an integrative learning object in xLAB or Libraries Maker Space.
- experiential learning like Hands-on experience at Dominion Energy Charity Classic
- a research experience in a field that of different major of the undergraduate, like the STAIR FYRE project but in 3-rd year of a JMU undergraduate so that they would have more coursework and knowledge.

Evaluation will be conducted in Spring and Summer of 2025 about how such non-credit bearing Gen Ed Integrative Learning Capstone projects can be designed and how and where the projects can be stored, assessed, managed, and retrieved with ease for institutional sustainability. In Summer 2025, the working group will provide resources to support the possible formalizing and implementing of the idea, with assessment

plans about whether such Gen Ed Integrative Learning Capstone Projects would meet the student learning outcomes and competencies.

Idea 3: Organizing General Education into Three Interdisciplinary Clusters

Original Title: Questions, clusters, and bubbles

Summary of Idea

1. Three clusters. Students take four courses from each cluster.
Total courses: 12.
Total credits: 36.
2. Each cluster is an interdisciplinary question or problem.
These can change every few years, maybe.
Possible examples:
 - a. How do we build sustainable democratic cities?
 - b. What is the relationship between information, evolution, and life?
 - c. What are the origins of social inequality?
 - d. What are the biological implications of the Anthropocene?
 - e. How will AI shape future political economies?
3. Within each cluster are multiple “bubbles” of 3-4 courses
4. Students choose which bubble of courses they take in a cluster
5. Each bubble explores the cluster question in some way (faculty decide)
6. Each course in a bubble is taught by a different academic unit. Examples: a. SOCI, PSYC, HIST, ENG b. ANTH, BIO, GEOL, ART c. ECON, ISAT, MATH, PHIL d. PHYS, ENGR, THEA, SMAD
7. Each course in a thread does four things:
 - a. introduce traditional disciplinary content
 - b. explore the “bubble” question/problem
 - c. do “bridging” work to incorporate perspectives, concepts, methods of other disciplines in the bubble
 - d. teach core “Liberal Arts” skills (critical thinking, communication, writing, etc)
8. Some previous Gen Ed courses (Madison Essentials) are now taught across the curriculum

Rationale for Idea

1. A Liberal Arts education teaches students to learn; arguably, learning happens best in interdisciplinary contexts where students are challenged to interweave knowledge and skills in pursuit of understanding of questions and problems of real

significance to them, where innovative and creative thinking has direct implications and rewards

2. A Liberal Arts education should prepare students to engage critically with different kinds of knowledge and perspectives; working across disciplinary boundaries in bubbles will facilitate these skills, as will learning how individual disciplines evaluate and produce knowledge, as will considering the real-world implications of their overarching question for different human populations
3. A Liberal Arts education prepares students to communicate ideas, collaborate in teams, and evaluate options, vital in effectively participating in democratic society and in the workforce; these skills are also best honed in interdisciplinary, problem-focused contexts, in which core competencies are taught in all courses

Idea 4: Creating GenEd Concentration Pathways, Overlays, and Integrative Capstone Experiences

Original Title: Core Curriculum: The Human Community (Total Credits: 40)

Summary of Idea

While working in an interim capacity on the General Education Council, I observed that the general recommendations emerging from the Gen Ed APR process (2021-2022) and from Gen Ed working group discussions (2023-2024) were as follows:

- Provide a better narrative that explains the core and its constitutive parts and thereby encourages students to be invested in the core and to see its connection to their major
- Revise Gen Ed program description, mission statement, and area descriptions with 6 core competencies and JMU Mission Statement in mind; also keep in mind that some of these core competencies might need clearer definition especially as they relate to different areas (in other words, how narrowly or broadly are these competencies defined?) and clearer explanation of why they are important for students to learn
- Reduce number of credits in the program to make space for an integrative capstone experience and make it easier for students to complete majors and minors beyond Gen Ed
- Streamline the number of sub-areas so that students have more choice and are able to choose concentrations that connect with their interests/major; also increase the number of options in each sub-area so that students can create concentrations
- Increase flexibility for how our Gen Ed interacts with general education programs at VCCS and other institutions
- Add overlay requirement to ensure that students have exposure to inclusive excellence/DEIJA, writing, and tech infused classes without increasing credit hours of the program; consider whether these need to be limited to Gen Ed classes or could be satisfied beyond Gen Ed
- Add concentrations and capstone so that students feel more connected to their Gen Ed experience
- Not create dramatic changes that would have an adverse effect on faculty/college teaching loads

Provided it is possible to staff the capstone options and offer enough sections of overlay requirements and concentration pathway courses, the below curriculum would meet all of these recommendations and would require only minimal modifications to current course offerings and departmental loads.

Core Curriculum: The Human Community (Total Credits: 40)

- Overlay requirements: all students must choose one course from each of the below overlay requirements:
 - Inclusive excellence or DEIJA-infused course, options identified in the list below with a symbol.
 - Tech literacy-infused course, options identified in the list below with a symbol.
 - Writing-infused course, options identified in the list below with a symbol.
- Concentration recommendations: students have the option of taking a Core concentration, which would appear on their transcript
- Students doing concentrations would take roughly six courses across various areas that have a broad thematic connection. For example, drawing on the JMU mission statement, these concentration areas could be innovation; diversity; community; integrity; and sustainability.

[Removed individual course list]

Rationale for Idea

This core curriculum has been designed to better reflect the current program's core idea that the disciplinary approaches of our colleges and the liberal arts promotes the cultivation of habits of the mind and heart that are essential to informed citizens in a democracy and world community. The newly designed program is committed to helping students develop their critical thinking skills, ability to reason, make ethical choices, and ability to express themselves effectively in written, oral, and technical forms; to appreciate beauty and diversity in the natural and social worlds they live in; to recognize the importance of the past and work towards a better future. This redesigned core also encourages students to follow concentration pathways through the curriculum that connect to their own goals, majors, and interests, and allows them to have a capstone experience that reveals connections across the core while showcasing the value of the disciplinary approaches of the liberal arts.

Idea 5: Structure and Curricular Ideas for Student Success and Optimizing Resources

Original Title: Possible Structure and Curricular Ideas

Summary of Idea

Potential considerations:

1. In addition to a writing requirement in the first year (would be great to be a first year writing seminar class and potentially include more grammar and usage if possible), an upper level writing requirement (perhaps 4 credit) and within the major with specific competencies required (e.g. rigorous extended piece of writing with analysis) could help support this critical skill
2. Remediation courses available in math, reading and writing to build basic academic skills needed to be successful in college level coursework for those who need these supports
3. More cross listed courses that serve and support multiple program pathways - could potentially increase enrollment, allow for more faculty collaboration across departments, and reduce faculty resources needed
4. There are current gen eds that are not offered regularly and/or required gen eds that students can not get into due to limitations of faculty resources - utilizing a (larger) menu of options approach to existing courses that are not just limited to certain majors or minors might reduce some of these issues
5. A first year college skills (in addition to writing seminar) could help support student academic and social-emotional success
6. I know this is about gen eds, but JMU has a lot of majors that are very heavy with credits - perhaps the revised gen ed curriculum can be the starting point of a re-envisioning of credit load on each program and consider how we can balance the requirements in a way that supports students in pursuing multiple interests more easily

Idea 6: Six Ideas for a Cohesive and Dynamic General Education Program

Original Title: Six Ideas Pitched Together

Summary of Idea

1. Develop an identity around the general education program and make it central to the marketing of JMU (similar to the Blazer Core at the University of Alabama, Birmingham). The identity should be built around two or three core values/themes that can be communicated effectively in a mission statement that is enticing (e.g., <https://www.uab.edu/core-curriculum/>). This branding of the core curriculum should be tightly wed with the mission of JMU, it requires a catchy name, a mascot or imagery, and an infographic of how the program is interconnected as a program and not just a checklist of requirements. This identity and infographic need to be prominently featured in university marketing, recruiting events, web presence, etc. The core curriculum is common to all students and needs to be visible and prominent at JMU.
2. Create a first-year experience that is a blend of common-to-all and major-specific. One model to consider is having a seven-week block class, where students take a common-to-all class for one block and a major-specific first-year experience the other block of their first semester. The reason to split this is because many departments offer introductory seminars for their majors that help their students navigate and succeed in their program. What is left out is common-to-all insights such as study skills, basic communication skills, computer literacy, etc. a. As our students are coming to college less prepared and with wider achievement gaps, we need to help all students succeed and reduce the burden on faculty to provide fundamentals. For example, the university use to require a proficiency test for common software such as Excel. Now, faculty members spend too much time teaching how to make a simple graph rather than advancing data or science literacy. A common-to-all experience can include a proficiency test and then guide students to a workshop series if they need it. This will also help with basic computer literacy as we have an increasing number of students who have only used Chromebooks and do not understand file naming, structure, etc.
3. Revise the program to have fewer credit hours. Currently, JMU has more than the required number of credit hours for the core curriculum and students struggle to complete within four years and often forgo a minor. Many universities allow credits towards a minor that is outside of their major's college to count toward general education requirements. This can lead to greater interdisciplinarity and greater equity.
4. Increase high-impact practices. The core curriculum should include more opportunities for integrative courses that all students can participate in (currently

only transfer students can take 300-level integrative courses), internships, capstone experiences, etc. Understandably, these are difficult to scale-up to the size of JMU but this is the time to explore possibilities.

5. Change the governance structure. As the APR identified, the current governance structure excludes many voices and should be revamped. A renewed program governance should be like the Graduate Council, where all departments have a representative, a voice, and a vote. Having college-level representatives and unelected area coordinators without term limits (many have served on the GEC for over a decade) is not conducive to a dynamic program. Along with a new governance structure, each department should provide time for their representative to provide program updates at faculty meetings (similar to faculty senators). The University of Alabama's model of having faculty 'champions' for the program that are deeply invested in general education and rewarded for it, is outstanding and effective. Our departments and colleges must begin to value general education, or we will not succeed at creating a dynamic program.

6. Consider a set schedule for first-year students. Students having access to classes is fundamental to their success and our current scheduling is problematic for all involved. JMU should consider creating a set schedule for first-year students that leaves some pre-determined and consistent time blocks open for major courses. There are many models for this and given our size, we need to simplify.

Idea 7: A Common Core Journey through the Past, Present, and Creative Future

Original Title: Liberating Learning: A Common Core Journey through the Past, Present, and Creative Future

Summary of Idea

The basis for this Gen Ed reform proposal is to reconsider how we organize the knowledge skills and experiences that we want our students to gain/have in different ways. This proposal focuses on learning from the past to inform actions in the present and anticipate possible futures by working across a range of disciplines and more importantly using student interest as a critical driver of present- and future-focused coursework.

This proposal is split into three temporal domains: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow and could look something like the following:

- Yesterday (Past) – (proposed load - ~10 credit hours)
 - How we got here (e.g. History/Philosophy/Art/Science/Political Science)
 - In this proposal, we'd like to break free of three credit hours as the standard and think about shorter or longer offerings that could encapsulate ways of knowing and examples but not be the traditional survey/intro class.
 - We still have a US History obligation that we need to meet, can we bring in arts and humanities “modules” that would be engaging to students (and hopefully spur interest in additional coursework) and develop a solid background in the key ideas/actions from the past that inform our current world?
- Today (Present) – (proposed load - ~20 credit hours)
 - In this section, we focus on what students need to thrive in the world today through the lens of literacies. This would include some of our old friends, such a writing and rhetoric, but also take into account the critical impact of technology, the importance of civic engagement, as well as intercultural competency. Again, the idea would be to think about these outside the usual 3 credit hour buckets and think about how we might combine the literacies.
 - Possible Literacies -Quantitative -Visualization -Communication - Technology -Civic -Wellness -Financial -Intercultural -Science/Engineering - Environmental/Space/Place
- Tomorrow (Future) – (proposed load - ~10 credit hours)
 - The final section focuses on how we can prepare students to adapt to the world of tomorrow in order to become enlightened citizens who can lead productive and meaningful lives no matter what the future holds. In this portion, we can imagine interdisciplinary courses that bring together cutting-edge technology with philosophy, ethics, aesthetics allowing students to build an experience base that will help make them resilient. It will include such concepts as -Changemaker mindset -Risk assessment -The impact of

technology on human endeavors And be a space for experimentation
(imagine X-Labs writ large).

Rationale for Idea

This liberating new framework closely integrates knowledge, understanding, and skills. It develops every student's capacity to both understand the present world and begin to create their productive future by innovatively fusing exploration in different academic areas and foregrounding tools and skills. It prioritizes informed and adaptable preparation for the future: essential for every undergraduate today.

Modify Current Gen Ed

Requirements, Areas, Outcomes, Competencies, Structure

Student Learning Outcomes

Through (a) creating a highly logical and legible framework for the core curriculum, and (b) opening up innovative ways to craft and assemble courses, this proposal should renew interest in common educational learning in general amongst students and faculty alike.

By organizing this cross-cutting education by temporal domain, liberating knowledge and literacies from traditional disciplinary boxes and contextualizing them, students are empowered to apply a greater diversity of skills and understanding. And in particular, it is more consciously future-oriented. Explicitly embedding contextual as well as skills-based learning, and better connecting various essential literacies, it is hoped this structure will more effectively prepare students to put their education into future use. A critical character of this suggested framework is that it is liberating: it should provide a broad learning structure and legible logic into which a diverse range of course formats, cross-disciplinary combinations, knowledge-tools/skills integrations, and topical focuses can be developed, responding to contemporary needs, richly informed by the past and our world. A rigorous core education should be a reflexive and open education. This should revitalize both the student and faculty engagement with this academic space, elevating the potential learning opportunities. By liberating the core curriculum, opening within this legible structure more innovative opportunities for faculty and students, we can renew the value of a forward-looking liberal arts education for our undergraduates.

Idea 8: Creating a Timeless and Relevant Liberal Arts Core Curriculum

Original Title: Creating a Timeless and Relevant Liberal Arts Core for the 21st Century

Summary of Idea

JMU should lean into its historical identity as a liberal arts institution by overhauling our General Education program by reconceptualizing it as the exploration of timeless concepts and principles made relevant and accessible to current students by teaching these in the context of contemporary issues and challenges. The importance of a liberal arts education has received increased skepticism in recent years as critics – as well as some students and their families – come to see a university education as being employment-focused, emphasizing professional and applied knowledge and initial job placement. At the same time, this generation is seeking a meaningful educational experience that can help them being a part of making their world better. Reorganizing JMU's General Education program to be more flexible and to be taught (at least partially) in the context of the current issues can reinvigorate JMU's liberal arts core.

This proposal builds off JMU's vision as the national model for “engaging with ideas and the world;” it is Engagement 2.0. General Education often is central to the academic identity of an institution. Reforging JMU's identity as a university dedicated to helping students explore the timeless questions and knowledge of the liberal arts through the lens of relevant issues (such as the UNs Sustainable Development goals, for example) can make JMU as an attractive option for many prospective students, and adding this distinctive trait could become a critical competitive advantage as the so-called “demographic cliff” looms.

Rationale for Idea

This proposal builds on JMU's strongest traditional strength as an outstanding teaching-focused liberal arts institution. Most obviously, this proposal would double-down on JMU's historical strength as a liberal arts institution with an excellent General Education program. Unfortunately, General Education has been under increasing pressure in terms of being able to provide enough seats to meet student demand. Longer-term health of the program will require a more flexible structure and broader participation, which this proposal suggests and enables. The recent reclassification of JMU as an R2 provides some advantages for the institution, but it also carries the risk of JMU losing its focus on its biggest reputational strength unpinning our long-term financial health: our outstanding and relevant educational experience for undergraduates. By modernizing General Education and making it more interesting to and relevant for our students, it can protect JMU's valuable reputation for instructional excellence. Additionally, this proposal builds on JMU's strength as an engaged institution. It offers the opportunity for the core academic experience of a JMU undergraduate education to be infused with connections to the relevant topics and issues of the day. In a very real sense, this revamped General

Education curriculum truly would make JMU the leader in engaging both ideas and the broader world to a degree that is perhaps unmatched.

This proposal is sweeping in its proposed change, as it would be a new frame for General Education. As such, it would require broad participation across colleges, units, and offices. My proposed change focuses on a single concept that, although it may not be radical, would require fundamental changes in the General Education program. Because it would involve a more flexible structure enabling a more expansive range of courses, participation in General Education would expand to more faculty. This structure should also decrease the bottlenecks in the current system and would enhance our enrollment management for incoming as well as returning students.

Notably, the proposal is quite content- and topic-agnostic. Because it focuses on a conceptual approach and an identity for the program, this proposal could easily be combined with any number of other General Education reform proposals

Idea 9: Streamlined and Clarified Outcomes for JMU's General Education Program

Original Title: Streamlined outcomes-based model.

Summary of Idea

- Simplify the basic outcomes categories – Get it down to 8-10 outcomes. No faculty or student can grasp all of this language and we certainly can expect coherent understanding and execution with that many outcomes. I have come up with nine suggested categories (numbered below) based on having gone through all of the outcomes for the various dimensions.
- Make it truly outcomes-based: The dimensions in American and Global Perspectives, as currently described, are content-based – they use two verbs across all of the “outcomes” (conceptualize and evaluate) to then describe
- Develop BRIEF trainings for faculty and for students – expectations, general principles.

Proposed Outcomes Themes:

1. Identify Basic Components (concepts, vocabulary, processes, theories, models, conventions/ guidelines) – disciplinary literacy
2. Understand and interpret sources/primary texts/ideas
3. Evaluate (biases, rhetoric, quality, credibility, soundness, strength... of sources, arguments)
4. Communicate (message, audience, purpose, context; using traditional & digital tools, writing, speaking) [creating]
5. Research (discovery, questions, information literacy) [applying]
6. Argumentation (hypotheses, evidence, strategies) [create]
7. Interdisciplinarity (recognizing interconnectedness, interdependence, how they're distinct, how they relate) [understand, analyze]
8. Context (cultural, sociocultural awareness, global, historical, evolution of ideas, diversity)
9. Ethics (appropriate, fair-minded, alternative points of view) [evaluating]

Rationale for Idea

Because students need help understanding how their classes relate to one another and what they are meant to be getting out of each class and all core classes in combination. Faculty also need help/training with that. We have no central messaging or means of training new faculty on the relationship of their courses to the core curriculum.

Idea 10: Incorporating Interdisciplinary Learning Outcomes, Information Literacy, and Research Skills into General Education

Original Title: Ideas from JMU Libraries colleagues

Summary of Idea

Dear taskforce colleagues,

As a group of colleagues from across JMU Libraries, we're writing to you with some topics we hope you'll consider as part of your important work of re-thinking general education here at JMU. As we discussed these topics and our experiences both here and with other institutions, we realized something we hope you'll consider: general education is not only important from a pedagogical standpoint – it's also a driver of culture on college campuses.

The nature of general education and the shared foundation that it provides for first-year students goes far beyond the classroom. While JMU is in a pivotal moment of adjusting our identity to the national scene as we transition to R2 status, to the Sunbelt sports conference, and to adapting to trends and changes across higher education, we encourage you to consider how the general education program here can also help drive the university's culture and shape our identity. We want to see this done in a sustainable, healthy way.

As library workers who support students and faculty across all majors and disciplines, there are several things we want to see our students able to do as a result of their general education:

- We hope to see a shared foundation in writing and reading, with shared interdisciplinary learning outcomes that can support all students as they move into their majors.
- We hope to see students being taught how to read academic writing. We shouldn't assume that students have read research papers, or college-level texts, before.
- We hope to see students be introduced to library resources and basic information literacy and research skills and habits, like searching for information and citing information, before they need to use these skills in their majors.
- We hope to see students establish better connections to research skills across their courses, in order to consistently apply information learned earlier on – both in general education and in early steps of their major – to later courses and capstone experiences.
- We hope to see skills taught in the first year that reinforce carrying knowledge over to the future, not re-learning skills and information.
- We believe in the interdisciplinary, intertextual nature of research – that all scholarship is based on conversation – and we would like to see students continue to get a basic understanding of and engagement with the arts, the humanities, and the sciences, regardless of their intended major.

- We hope to see free and Open educational resources used more often in the classroom, especially in general education classrooms, when possible, to lower the barrier to student participation in coursework.
- Because we also support faculty as well as students, we would like to see faculty plugged in to and aware of learning outcomes in general education, regardless of whether they instruct courses in general education or not.
- We would like to see general education learning outcomes be accessible to everyone at JMU. We can't assume what our students know. Instead, we hope to see more cross-disciplinary work happen to intentionally bring our students to the same points of shared knowledge – together.

Finally, we would like to be partners at the table to help collaboratively shape this work. When we talk about reading and writing, we're talking about literacy skills. There are various literacies that stretch across many disciplines in addition to the more general level. We strongly urge the taskforce to consider the Association of College & Research Libraries' Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (<https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>), which is a guiding pedagogical document that librarians consult when creating our own learning outcomes.

This framework asserts these principles about information literacy:

- Authority is constructed and contextual
- Information creation as a process
- Information has value
- Research as inquiry
- Scholarship as conversation
- Searching as strategic exploration

The Framework is regularly augmented and updated. Discipline-specific companion documents now exist to help colleagues apply these concepts to visual literacy; education studies; journalism; politics, policy, and international relations; writing and literature; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; social work; sociology; and women's and gender studies. Additionally, the Framework is due for review and potentially a general update in summer 2025. We hope you'll stay connected to the work ongoing in our field in order to connect learning outcomes for general education at JMU to best practices in information literacy instruction.

Sincerely,
JMU Libraries colleagues