

January 27, 2015

Skidmore College

CEPP

Curriculum Model for Discussion

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If you could, we would like you to discuss what features you like and do not like about the proposed mode I. Sharing these preferences and the reasons or feelings for them with CEPP members and with your colleagues and debating them in the spirit of working out the best curriculum for Skidmore College is strongly encouraged! Finally, as individuals or as programs, please contact CEPP members for a meeting, we would love to talk with you about your ideas and suggestions.

CEPP 2014-15

Curriculum Proposal for Skidmore College

01-21-15 CEPP

CURRICULUM

Integrative Experiences:

FYE (1 course)

SOYE (1 credit course)

Senior Capstone in Major (program decides how to implement)

Foundations: In the first two years

Expository Writing (1 Course)

QR2 (1 Course), QR1 as a pre-requisite

Scientific Inquiry (1 Course)

Foreign Literature and Language (1 Course)

Explorative Themes: Must take at least one course in three out of four themes listed below by the end of the third year. Must be 100 and 200-level courses with no prerequisites.

Global Perspectives

Courses that provide a sense of the complexity of the world today

How did today's world come about? What are the roots and dynamics of today's partnerships and conflicts? What are the differences between and among social groups and why do they exist? (e.g. anthropology, art history, economics, foreign languages, government, history, international affairs, non-Western courses, regional studies, religion, etc.)

Artistic Experience

Courses that cultivate creative and or critical skills in the performing, plastic, and literary arts

How do we integrate and understand creative, artistic practices in order to express ourselves and to communicate with others? (e.g. Creative writing, dance, media, art and film studies, music, theater, studio arts, etc.)

Ethics, Power, and Justice

Courses that seek to understand collective human action.

Courses that explore how institutions, values, and beliefs informs our actions as well as the consequences of those actions in society.

Who has power and why? How might we create a more just world? How do we live courageously, deliberately, and well? (e.g. american studies, biology, civic engagement courses, classics, education, environmental

studies, foreign language, gender studies, government, history, intercultural studies, IGR, law, non-Western, philosophy, psychology, religion, social work, sociology, etc.)

The Future

Courses that prepare students to understand and to take leadership roles in solving complex problems related to sustainability, uncertainty, and innovation. How do we handle change? How can we understand the big problems facing us? How do we decide upon and implement courses of action and how do we know that our actions will result in a better life and a better world? (e.g. computer science, environmental studies, government, economics, natural sciences, history, international affairs, literature, philosophy, management and business, etc.)

In the Major: Technical skills appropriate to each major will be specified by each Department and Program.

- x Communication (Written and Oral) – Includes the existing Writing in the Major program, as well as an oral presentation as part of the senior Capstone project.
- x Information/Research Skills – To be specified by each Department and Program.

NOTES ON CURRICULUM

Stipulations:

- x A student cannot fulfill more than one all college requirement (Foundations or Themes) with any single course.
- x A student can fulfill an all college requirement AND a requirement for a major and or minor with any course, with the exception of FYE. For example, an Economics major taking Macroeconomics could get major credit AND QR2 credit.
- x Faculty can list a course for two all college requirements (Foundations and/or Themes) if approved by the Curriculum Committee, but if so each student will have to select which approved requirement the course will 'count' for. For example, some students might earn QR2 credit, while others might earn Scientific Inquiry credit for the same course.
- x Students who wish to become eligible for Latin Honors at graduation must take at least one course in all four of the Explorative Themes. The fourth course may be taken during the senior year.

Themes

One idea that we could explore with the themes is that of having the requirement be satisfied either by (a) a course that meets the guidelines for that requirement, or (b) by a supervised co-curricular experience initiated by the student and vetted by appropriate faculty and which meets the guidelines for that requirement. The questions of how to make this option available, of how to ensure the rigor of the associated co-curricular experiences, and of the resources needed to staff such experiences would need to be taken up during the implementation phase.

Integrative Experiences

An integrative and applied learning experience is one that “a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus. ... [It] is one of the most important goals and challenges for higher education” (AAC&U’s VALUE rubric on Integrative Learning).

- FYE

No major changes proposed to requirement

- SOYE

The Sophomore Year Experience is a one-credit experience. It will include mentoring and advising components along with personal and group reflection on Skidmore curricular and co-curricular experiences. In addition, the SOYE may include workshops and other activities where students work with experts on decision-making and on career, and life skills. The implementation committee will have to think about how the SOYE relates to FYE as well as to the other parts of the college curriculum and co-curriculum and on how it can be integrative according to the definition above. It will also have to consider the resources needed to implement such a program and ensure that they are available. Finally, it will have to decide if it works better in the fall or spring semester or in both.

- Writing In Major
No major changes proposed to requirement at this time.
- Information/Research Skills
Implementation committee will consider ways in which discipline based information/research skills can be intentionally included in the major, either through a “Writing in the Major” model or by some other mechanism.
- Maturity Level Requirement
No major changes proposed to requirement at this time.
- Senior Capstone in Major
Most programs already have a capstone experience where the skills developed in earlier work are marshaled in a project that demands the framing of a significant question or set of questions, the research or creative exploration of these question to find answers, and the communication skills to convey the results to audiences both expert and uninitiated in the subject matter.¹ These range from a 5 credit, two-semester process all the way to a one-credit or even no-credit addition to an existing experience or seminar. A few programs will need to introduce a capstone to their curricula. The Capstone must now include an oral pr

Skidmore College Goals for Student

Learning

I. Knowledge

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II. Intellectual Skills and Practice

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Update on Driving Forces for Reforming the General Education Requirements May, 2014

Beginning in the spring of 2012, CEP began discussions of the need to review the general education (GE) requirements. An external scan of requirements of nationally ranked liberal arts colleges occupied much of the spring 2013 CEP retreat. Based on this work, CEP drafted a letter to the faculty (also shared with SGA) articulating the reasons why the committee felt that the time had come to review the GE requirements (See Appendix). Briefly, the committee felt that the GE requirements should be reviewed because:

- x Aspects of the GE curriculum may no longer fit the context in which our faculty teach and our students learn.
- x The age of the curriculum calls for review in the same way that our departments are periodically reviewed to ensure that they are relevant current and achieve their goals.
- x The goals for student learning and development (GSLD) were passed on after the current GE system was put in place.
- x Given that the college is currently in the process of crafting a new strategic plan, it seems wise to consider how that work might bolster faculty and students' GE experiences.

In early October of 2013, CEP brought this letter to the faculty and student government, beginning what has been a year-long study of our GE requirements. During the academic year, the committee discussed the current GE requirements, the GSLD, and met with faculty in both large and small groups on several occasions. While not unanimous, a repeated theme of these conversations is that we should be bold as we think about new possibilities. In addition to our work and review at the college level, we considered the focus of the national conversation on integrative learning in higher education at places such as the AAC&U. In the latter part of the year, our focus turned to generating a number of alternative GE models. While the work was highly non-linear in fashion, CEP is now

or shared integrative experience. Importantly, we see great opportunity for students to benefit from intentionality behind integration with the co-curriculum as well.

- x This academic year, the Assessment Steering Committee (ASC) undertook a project to assess science literacy and quantitative reasoning. The results indicated that, while our first year students' performance is similar to our peer institutions on science literacy questions, there is still much work to do to meet our aspirations. More importantly, our students' performance on the quantitative reasoning portion of the assessment indicated that we are lagging behind our peers and not achieving our goals for student learning independent of performance relative to our peers. Thus we see the need to significantly bolster our students' learning in these critical areas.
- x Since 2007, CEPR (and more broadly the college community) has learned through student assessments that we need to help them see beyond their own experiences by considering difference. In 2012/13 CEPR settled on a strategy of modifying the current CD/NW requirement by reconfiguring the non-western requirement and adding an additional "considering difference" requirement. Regrettably, such a requirement was undeliverable given the current mix of courses available at the college. Rather than continue to try to solve this problem in isolation, CEPR decided it could be better addressed through a comprehensive review of the GE requirements. CEPR is still committed to resolving this important issue.
- x A new GE curriculum could make more intentional in our efforts to prepare our students for life after Skidmore. This topic has appeared consistently as an area of concern intentional

Appendix

Dear Colleagues,

The following document outlines the motivation for conducting (and a proposed plan for engaging) a review of Skidmore's General Education (GE) curriculum. CEP emphasizes that the current effort is simply a review, not a proposal to make revisions to the College's existing GE requirements. CEP invites the Skidmore community to join us in conversation and analysis regarding the GE curriculum.

Plan to Initiate a Review of the General Education Curriculum

Impetus for the Current Review

Beginning in the spring of 2013, CEP initiated the process of reviewing the general education requirements. There are four primary motivating matters pointing to the need for such a review, including:

1. Context: The current GE curriculum may no longer fit the context in which our students now live. CEP believes it is necessary to review our GE requirements periodically given the context of the changing world and the multiple communities in which we all take part and with which we interact. In recent years, we have seen dramatic changes

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