MAKING CONNECTIONS:

TRANSFORMING GENERAL EDUCATION
AT THE
COLLEGE OF ST. BENEDICT
AND
ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

A General Education Framing Document

Presented to the Joint Faculty Senate

by the

Common Curriculum Visioning Committee (CCVC)

College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

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Executive Summary

To ensure students at the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University (CSB/SJU) experience a rigorous and integrative general education curriculum, the Joint Faculty Senate (JFS) created the Common Curriculum Visioning Committee (CCVC) and tasked it to provide direction and strategy for potentially implementing changes to the Common Curriculum. The task force spent over two years reading the national scholarship on general education reform and listening to participants at community forums and in meetings with departments and programs. The task force also sent a team to the 2015 Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) Summer Institute on General Education and Assessment.

As a result of this work, CCVC produced this report, which is divided into three main parts. Part A describes the context for reform of general education at CSB/SJU, summarizes the feedback from the campus community to date, suggests "process principles" to guide campus conversations, makes the case for reform of the Common Curriculum, and identifies the opportunities and imperatives for change. Part B begins with a discussion, based on the conversations CCVC has had with faculty, of a vision statement and revised learning outcomes for general education at CSB/SJU, presents the "vision and design principles" that will guide the design of a new curriculum, and describes how other campuses have adapted the AAC&U's "Essential Learning Outcomes" to their own situations. Part C of the report proposes a new charge for the committee, offers a plan with a timeline that includes checkpoints, and identifies the characteristics of successful general education programs.

The CSB/SJU 2020 Strategic Plan calls for the liberal arts experience at our colleges to be "characterized by an innovative and integrative curriculum that provides our students with the knowledge, skills, experiences and values to meet their professional and personal goals and shape their civic identity." Specifically, the strategic plan establishes a goal to develop a revised general education curriculum that is "purposeful, sequential, integrative, and cumulative across four years. The new Common Curriculum will more intentionally link departmental and general education." CCVC's report provides a roadmap to general education reform at CSB/SJU. If the process recommendations and timeline proposed by this report are followed, a revised general education curriculum will be in place by 2020.

It is important to emphasize that this report emerges from a faculty-driven, grassroots effort to revise the Common Curriculum. While the CCVC consulted with the Academic Dean and the Director of the Common Curriculum, and had conversations with departments and offices affected by the general education program, this report was *written exclusively by faculty at the request of faculty governance and in response to faculty concerns*. This is in contrast to the last time the general education requirements were revised, in 2006-07, in response to an administrative mandate to shrink the Core.

A Paradigm Shift

We propose to move from a cafeteria-style general education distribution system that emphasizes the "collection of courses," to an integrated, purposeful, and reflective general education program that places emphasis on "making connections." Implementing this vision for general

education will require a significant paradigm shift in the way we design and deliver the Common Curriculum. This paradigm shift has at least five different features:

First, it implies a shift away from an emphasis on course content to a paradigm that also stresses student learning and the fulfillment of essential learning outcomes. While course content will still be important, this report assumes a shift from "what is taught" to a pedagogy that also includes emphasis on "what is learned" (Gaston 2015, p. 8).

Second, the report envisions moving from a general education program where learning goals are delivered in separate, individual courses to a program where courses are scaffolded in a developmentally appropriate sequence, assuring that students encounter, practice and refine key proficiencies and capabilities in multiple settings and in progressively challenging ways.

Third, it suggests rejecting the assumption that the general education program and the major are separate programs. The paradigm assumed in this report emphasizes the integration of the general education program and the major. Students should not perceive general education as something to "get out of the way," but rather as a foundation of liberal learning that is reinforced by work in a specific discipline.

Fourth, this report assumes the need for a shift in the way faculty and departments perceive themselves in relation to other colleagues and disciplines. Instead of working in isolation from other departments and in possible competition with other colleagues, this report envisions faculty working collaboratively to create thematic course clusters that allow students to address significant problems from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives.

Finally, this report assumes that a variety of campus and external audiences have a stake in a rigorous, integrative, and coherent program of general education at CSB/SJU. In particular, this report rejects the assumption that the curricular and co-curricular should be viewed as separate entities with unrelated missions and functions. While faculty retain the sole authority to revise the undergraduate curriculum, it must do so in conversation with other key campus stakeholders.

Based on conversations that have occurred in public forums and with individual departments and programs over the past two years, as well as a thorough review of the scholarship on general education reform, we find broad and enthusiastic support for the philosophical and practical transformation of the Common Curriculum advocated in this report. In fact, the features of the new paradigm were developed in large part by the conversations we have had with faculty over the last two years. As these conversations continue, we recommend that participants adopt a "stewardship posture" which places the needs of our students first, so that we can design a general education curriculum that prepares graduates for the expectations of work, life, and citizenship in the 21st Century.

Context and Conversations

The CSB/SJU Joint Faculty Assembly approved the components of the Common Curriculum in separate votes throughout the 2006-2007 academic year. A few years later, an Academic Affairs Steering Committee began a program review of the general education program, which included a

site visit by a three-person team from the Wabash College Center of Inquiry for the Liberal Arts, a leading research center on liberal arts education. After dozens of interviews, the team discovered broad dissatisfaction among faculty with how the Common Curriculum was created and a lack of broad faculty ownership of the general education program.

After it read the Wabash report and began its review of the national literature on general education reform, CCVC realized that a clear *process* needed to be established *prior* to the discussion of curricular models or program content. Terrel L. Rhodes, who taught in the Political Science department at CSB/SJU early in his career, and who now is a nationally recognized expert on general education, stresses this point in *A Process Approach to General Education Reform*: "Too often the response to a catalyst for change in general education is to begin by formulating a solution, a new curriculum. By minimizing the importance of process in change, the outcomes are much less likely to be accepted broadly or meet the perceived needs that prompted the calls for change in the first place…Focusing on structure or curricular content at the outset and ignoring the processes of change and the culture of the campus clearly reduces the probability for success in revamping general education" (2010, pp. 255-56). Following Rhodes's advice, this report does not propose a new curriculum model, but rather recommends an inclusive process, supported by guiding principles based on best practices, which provides a roadmap for revision of the general education requirements.

After its review of the general education scholarship, CCVC developed and adhered to the following process recommendations as it began its work:

> Process Principle #1: Focus on Student Learning
> Process Principle #2: Form a Task Force
> Process Principle #3: Support Proposals with Research
> Process Principle #4: Establish Process before Discussing Content
> Process Principle #5: Establish a Timeline
> Process Principle #6: Devote Resources to the Work
> Process Principle #7: Encourage Open Communication
> Process Principle #8: Engage a Variety of Audiences
> Process Principle #9: Discuss Vision and Learning Outcomes Prior to Design

During the 2014-2015 academic year, CCVC met with 22 academic departments and several other programs and constituencies, including CSB and SJU students. Based on these conversations, there was broad agreement on what students needed to learn. For example, in discussions held at the 2014 Fall Faculty Workshop, participants said they wanted students to be flexible, adaptable, innovative, and creative. Faculty identified several skills students needed to possess, including critical thinking, communication, and collaborative, team, and leadership skills. Faculty also wanted graduates to be knowledgeable, tolerant, and engaged public citizens, with the ability to render moral and ethical decisions based on Benedictine values.

The conversations with faculty, staff, and students identified several strengths of the current Common Curriculum, including its reliance on what the AAC&U refers to as "high impact practices" (HIPs). These include first year seminars and experiences, writing intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity and global learning,

and service and community based learning. (Interestingly, faculty also expressed strong desire for "common intellectual experiences" and "learning communities," two of the high-impact practices recommended by AAC&U that are not featured in the Common Curriculum.)

However, despite these strengths in the current general education curriculum, members of the campus community expressed a clear desire for change by identifying several areas for improvement. Echoing the concerns raised in the Wabash report, participants noted the lack of broad ownership of the Common Curriculum, the possible variation in the quality of the Common Curriculum experience, distribution requirements that encourage students and their advisors to "check boxes," the lack of an overall vision for the program, learning goals that are sometimes difficult to assess, lack of integration between the general education program and the majors, a dearth of opportunities for interdisciplinary cooperation, and a program that lacks coherence or intentionality. And while there was substantial praise for the leadership of Dr. Ken Jones, the Director of the Common Curriculum, participants noted the Common Curriculum is in a period of transition and risks lack of institutional and administrative direction and coordination.

Making It Happen: Designing a New General Education Curriculum

Among the first steps recommended in this report is the approval of a general education vision statement followed by the revision of the learning goals and outcomes for the general education program. In our early meetings, we heard over and over again about the faculty's disappointment with the lack of a unifying philosophy or vision that provides the foundation for the Common Curriculum. We do not want to repeat that mistake. Strong programs express a clear vision for general education, and the discussion of learning outcomes prior to the design of a curriculum helps to unify participants around common goals. As part of a larger initiative known as Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), AAC&U has developed a set of "Essential Learning Outcomes" (ELOs) that can serve as the starting point for campus conversations about learning outcomes for the general education program. Several colleges have adapted the ELOs to fit their unique learning environments. During the academic year 2015-2016, CCVC plans to host multiple public forums and workshops to evaluate, discuss, and modify the Essential Learning Outcomes to reflect our distinct mission, culture, and values. Based on these forthcoming discussions, CCVC will revise the Common Curriculum learning outcomes and present them to the Joint Faculty Senate for consideration.

Typically on many campuses, "general education curricular decision-making looks like this: a charge is handed down by the provost, president, or chancellor; a campus-wide committee is selected; this committee is sequestered for the better part of an academic year; they come up with a plan, present it to the faculty, suffer the slings and arrows of criticism and opposition, and the plan comes up for a final vote" where it can be "doomed to failure from the outset" when the majority of the faculty have not been included in the decision-making process (Gano-Phillips and Barnett 2010, p. 11). In contrast, CCVC proposes to include the campus community in all aspects of the curriculum design process.

Once the faculty adopts revised general education learning outcomes, CCVC will invite colleagues to submit "targeted suggestions" for curricular reform, and also invite members of the campus community to design and submit proposals for a revised general education curriculum

(either as individuals or as teams). To assist with the design process, and to promote understanding and discussion of the salient issues involved, CCVC will host workshops, training sessions, reading groups, and other events. Campus teams will have opportunities to present drafts of their work to the larger community for feedback and reflection. CCVC will shepherd the reform process while faculty work collaboratively to design curriculum proposals. National experts on general education reform, as well as peers from other institutions undertaking curriculum revisions, supported this approach enthusiastically at the AAC&U 2015 Institute on General Education & Assessment when CSB/SJU presented this action plan for feedback.

Campus teams will design general education curricula based on the following principles developed by CCVC and supported by the literature on general education reform:

> Design Principle #1: Make High-Impact Practices Purposeful and Integrative
> Design Principle #2: Consider Alternatives to Distribution Model
> Design Principle #3: Follow Learning Outcomes Endorsed by the JFS
> Design Principle #4: Focus on "Connections." Possible connections include:
>> a) Make General Education Coherent by Scaffolding Courses
>> b) Integrate General Education with the Majors
>> c) Establish "Interdisciplinary Concentrations"
>> d) Demonstrate Integrative Learning Through "Signature Work"
>> e) Improve Connections with Activities Outside Classroom
> Design Principle #5: Consider Equity in Curricular Design
> Design Principle #6: Establish an Assessment Plan
> Design Principle #7: Re-Brand General Education at CSB/SJU
> Design Principle #8: Ensure Students Can Graduate in Four Years

These design principles will help move us away from a general education program with a collection of disconnected courses, to a coherent program with clear pathways to student success.

A revised Common Curriculum that is more purposeful, reflective, integrative, and sequential could have profound effects on CSB/SJU graduates. Paul Gaston sums up the benefits: "*The single most direct and effective approach to improving the educational experience for all students is the redesign of general education* as a platform for integrative, digitally rich, proficiency-based, and question-centered learning grounded in the humanities, arts, sciences, and social sciences. Rather than a buffet of survey courses to be 'gotten out of the way,' general education must become the integrative center for the most important learning outcomes—from the first year until the degree" (2015, p. 5, emphasis added). We look forward to ongoing conversations over the next two years as we make this vision a reality for students at CSB/SJU.

Part A: The Context for Potential Reform of the Common Curriculum

A.1 Introduction

Writing in the Winter/Spring 2015 issue of *Liberal Education*, Carol Geary Schneider argues that "general education has become, for many students, a perplexing wasteland of disconnected courses taken across the liberal arts and sciences. Typically, almost all students are advised to get these requirements 'out of the way' as soon as possible. Neither the advisors giving such advice nor the students receiving it hold any expectation that students will actually use their broad learning for any purpose other than to fulfill institutional requirements for the degree" (p. 13). In the broader political, economic, and social context where liberal arts colleges face enrollment challenges amid mounting public discourse challenging the relevance of its curricula, with "efficiency-mindedness and chronic cost-cutting" the norm, "requirements without apparent purpose are poised to sound a death knell for multidisciplinary college education—that is, for liberal education" (Schneider, "The LEAP Challenge," 2015, p. 13).

Even if one is not convinced the consequences are this dire, there is a broad and emerging consensus in the literature that reform of general education is needed to better prepare students for their lives of work, personal fulfillment, and citizenship in the 21st Century. General education refers to that part of the curriculum shared by all students, typically grounded in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and the fine arts. At the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University (CSB/SJU), the general education program is known as the Common Curriculum, and it includes several "high impact practices," such as experiential learning, first-year seminars and upper division ethics courses. However, it is not designed to move students in a purposeful educational sequence; instead it is a series of distribution requirements that students (and sometimes advisors) feel they must "get out of the way."

The Joint Faculty Senate (JFS) created the Common Curriculum Visioning Committee (CCVC) and tasked it to provide direction and strategy for potentially implementing changes to the Common Curriculum. As it began its work, CCVC discovered that the national "battlefield of undergraduate education" was "strewn with the skeletons of well-meaning but unsuccessful reformers who attempted to stem the tide of specialization in defense of general education" (Newton 2000, p. 165). Undaunted, and encouraged by numerous colleagues who voiced support for revisions to the Common Curriculum, we spent over two years researching the national scholarship on general education reform and engaging in conversations with the campus community (see Appendix A for a list of CCVC Outreach Activities in 2014-2015), and now present the results of our research in this report.

While we find the Common Curriculum to have many strengths, we also believe this is an important opportunity to create an updated and distinctive general education curriculum that better meets the needs of our students and is more aligned with practices established in the literature. In this report, we make our case in three parts. In Part A, we describe the context for review of the Common Curriculum, identify process principles for general education reform,

summarize feedback from the community, explain the strengths of the Common Curriculum as well as areas for improvement, and discuss the opportunities and imperative for change. In Part B, we begin with a discussion of a revised vision statement for general education, describe the principles to guide the design of a new curriculum, and discuss the "Essential Learning Outcomes" and how other colleges have revised their programs. In Part C, we discuss the role of faculty governance, propose a new charge for the task force, offer a timeline for general education reform with key checkpoints, and describe the characteristics of successful general education programs.

A.2   How We Got Here: The Context for Review of the Common Curriculum at CSB/SJU

In 1988, what were then separate faculties at the College of Saint Benedict (CSB) and Saint John's University (SJU) created a single curriculum for students at both schools. This "Core Curriculum" was a major step in the unification of academic affairs at CSB/SJU. It remained in effect until 2006-07, when the Joint Faculty Assembly replaced it with the present "Common Curriculum." (The JFA approved components of the Common Curriculum in separate votes throughout the 2006-2007 academic year, with changes to the First Year Seminar made in September 2006 and the Gender requirement adopted at the last meeting of the academic year in April 2007.)

The CSB/SJU Common Curriculum defines a set of general education requirements that every student must satisfy for graduation. It combines a set of *distributional* requirements with a set of *common* courses and learning experiences. The common courses, which bookend the typical student's four years here, are the First Year Seminar and the Ethics Common Seminar. (See Appendix B for a list of current Common Curriculum requirements.)

In 2007-2008, an Academic Affairs Steering Committee initiated a process to completely revamp disciplinary program review and assessment. As the first cycle of disciplinary program review was completed, attention shifted to program review of the Common Curriculum.

In September 2011, a three-person team, led by Charles Blaich, the Director of Inquiries at the Wabash College Center of Inquiry for the Liberal Arts, a leading research center on liberal arts education, visited campus and helped formulate the questions that would guide this program review. The team met with dozens of people, and its report is available on the CCVC public Moodle site. Among the team's conclusions:

1. There was broad dissatisfaction among faculty with how the Common Curriculum was created and a sense that there was a lack of broad faculty ownership of the Common Curriculum;
2. Despite the name, the Common Curriculum is not common. Students can move through the general education requirements in multiple ways and this raises questions about the possible variation in the quality of Common Curriculum experience;
3. Since the Joint Faculty Assembly adopted components of the Common Curriculum in a series of separate votes, general education at CSB/SJU lacks an overall vision;

4. While the approval process for Common Curriculum designations is rigorous, there is no follow up to ensure that courses still deliver the outcomes, content, and pedagogy required;
5. With so much of the Common Curriculum located in distributive requirements in various departments, students and their advisors have focused on "checking boxes." The requirements are not carefully orchestrated;
6. An assessment process should create interesting and engaging findings so faculty are more willing to participate in the process;
7. The Wabash team reminded us that CSB/SJU is the size of a mid-sized private university, not a small, residential, liberal arts college (Ottenhoff, Wise, and Blaich, 2011).

Following this visit, the institutions, led by Ken Jones, continued to collect available evidence of student learning, administer other nationally-normed instruments to evaluate student learning, and compile significant amounts of data about how students satisfied the requirements of the Common Curriculum and why they made the choices they did. (Prior to the Wabash team visit, CSB/SJU had well-developed assessment in FYS, and many areas such as Math, Theology, Natural Science, Social Science, and the Languages had instruments and were collecting data.) Evidence of student learning in the Common Curriculum came from a number of different sources, including the use of both homegrown assessment instruments and nationally norm-referenced assessment instruments. The institutions collected evidence of student learning from the beginning of the implementation of the new Common Curriculum in 2007.

In the fall of 2013, the Joint Faculty Senate appointed an ad hoc task force on Common Curriculum Program Review (CCPR), to review all the available information that had been gathered on the Common Curriculum. The charge reads:

> The JFS charges the ad hoc committee on the Common Curriculum Program Review to: (a) review the Common Curriculum learning goals, (b) solicit faculty concerns regarding the Common Curriculum, (c) review the Common Curriculum assessment data, (d) review the Common Curriculum descriptive data, and (e) review the document entitled *Summary of the Common Curriculum Overview*.

In November 2013, the CCPR facilitated two Joint Faculty Assembly forums to discuss the Common Curriculum. At the forums, faculty and staff were invited to provide comments regarding the current Common Curriculum and suggestions for change. A series of questions were presented to those in attendance in order to provide some structure to the discussion. The forums were well attended and several themes emerged from the discussions, including:

- The need for continued faculty discussion regarding the value of a liberal arts education and the purpose of the CSB/SJU Common Curriculum.
- The recognition that the transition from the old Core Curriculum to the current Common Curriculum occurred without a discussion of the purpose of general education at CSB/SJU. There was no discussion of what we want students to know when they graduate from these institutions.
- Students and advisors have the perception that Common Curriculum requirements need to be "checked off." Students do not understand the purpose of the requirements or how the courses relate to each other.

- The desire for a mission statement (or a vision document or framing document) for the Common Curriculum that would provide context for the Common Curriculum and, perhaps, facilitate faculty ownership of the Common Curriculum.
- The Common Curriculum student learning goals and, in turn, the curricular model should be developed from, and be consistent with, the Common Curriculum mission statement (or a vision document or framing document).
- There are currently relatively few common experiences across Common Curriculum courses, as suggested in the Wabash report. Several reasons for the relatively few common experiences were suggested in the discussions, including the lack of a common framework for the Common Curriculum, insufficient resources, the independent nature of CSB/SJU faculty members, and work avoidance on the part of CSB/SJU faculty members.
- Any changes to the Common Curriculum would likely have intended and unintended consequences, including consequences impacting the institutions, departments, individual faculty members, current students, and prospective students. These practical considerations need to be a part of any discussion regarding Common Curriculum reform.

After review and discussions with many faculty members and other stakeholders, the CCPR concluded: "At this point the recommendation of this committee is to begin fresh with a new vision for what we want our students to be able to do upon graduation. We choose not to dwell on the fact that we might be abandoning the Common Curriculum after just a short lifespan, rather we choose to look at the current Common Curriculum as an extension of the old Core Curriculum (though with slightly shorter arms). Our finding is that there is little or no support for the current model and that it is in the best interest of our students to begin with a fresh vision. We suggest beginning with the questions of: 1) What do we want an educated Johnny and Bennie to look like after graduation; 2) What is our vision for the Common Curriculum (is it to be a truly "common" experience or is it to be a "distributive" model); 3) Do the missions of these institutions support a liberal-arts based common model; 4) What will our future students look like and how can we best serve them?"

A.3 The Common Curriculum Visioning Committee (CCVC) and its Charge

Following the report of the CCPR, the Faculty Senate passed a motion in spring 2014 creating the Common Curriculum Visioning Committee (CCVC), a task force of faculty and students charged to provide direction and strategy for potentially implementing changes to the Common Curriculum. As updated in the spring of 2015, the charge to the committee states:

The JFS authorizes the Common Curriculum Visioning Committee (CCVC) to continue its work in providing direction and strategy for potentially implementing changes to the Common Curriculum. This shall be done by:

1) Continuing the review of national scholarship, trends, and research on general education to determine best practices for undergoing curriculum review;

2) Developing a concise description of the issues regarding general education at CSB/SJU that need to be addressed;

3) Continuing conversations with academic departments, programs, and other stakeholders on general education reform;

4) Organizing forums for student feedback about their perception and experiences with the Common Curriculum, as well as processing relevant data from senior exit surveys and other student feedback mechanisms;

5) Developing a set of guiding principles to direct future reform in general education at CSB/SJU;

6) Presenting ideas for a vision of general education at CSB/SJU to serve as a starting point for deliberation in the JFS on this topic;

7) Developing a proposed process and timeline for consideration of revisions to the Common Curriculum at CSB/SJU;

8) Working with JFA leadership during spring 2015 and summer 2016 for possible inclusion of general education themes at the 2015 Fall Faculty Workshop; and

9) Participating in the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) 2015 Institute on General Education and Assessment in June 2015.

The Common Curriculum Visioning Committee will write a draft report to be presented at the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) 2015 Institute on General Education and Assessment in June 2015 for review by institute staff. CCVC will revise the report based on feedback received at the summer institute and present it to the JFS during the fall semester 2015.

During the spring of 2015, CCVC submitted an application to attend the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) 2015 Summer Institute on General Education and Assessment. Through the JFA distribution list, faculty members were invited to participate in CCVC and as members of the team attending the institute. The team attending the institute consisted of five CCVC members: Dr. Terence Check, the chair of the CCVC, a professor of Communication, and 2014-2015 chair of the Joint Faculty Senate; Dr. Emily Esch, an associate professor of Philosophy and Director of the Honors Program; Dr. Barb May, an associate professor of Biology and chair of the Faculty Handbook Committee; Dr. Anne Sinko, an assistant professor of Mathematics and a member of the Faculty Senate; and Dr. Karen Erickson, the Academic Dean at CSB/SJU.

Both our review of the scholarship on general education reform and our experiences at the AAC&U Summer Institute convince us of the importance of agreeing to guiding principles before attempting to revise the curriculum itself. The remaining sections of Part A abide by the process principles suggested in the literature. It identifies process principles to guide the campus conversation on general education reform, summarizes the results of campus conversations to date, then presents vision and design principles to guide the development of suggestions and models for reform.

A.4 Process Principles Based on a Survey of the National Scholarship on General Education Reform (The "How" of General Education Reform)

CCVC suggests the following principles to guide the process of general education reform:

Process Principle #1: Focus on Student Learning.

Reform efforts should focus on improving student learning. Participants in discussions on general education reform should view themselves as "stewards of the university/college" and place the needs of students first.

It seems obvious that, above all, the interests of students are central to any general education reform process. But we need to state this explicitly and place it ahead of other process considerations. In addition to reminding reformers why they are doing this work, it helps to unify participants around the single goal of doing what is best for students. As Nancy Mitchell and her colleagues write, "Focusing on the overall goal of the students' welfare helps unify the process" (2010, p. 182).

Numerous case studies cited in the literature on general education reform attest to this important principle. For example, at the University of Michigan-Flint, reformers focused the campus discussion on the "interests and needs of our students," and as a result diffused "angst about credit hour losses or gains and territoriality about the curriculum. All faculty and administrators had a stake in meeting 'students' needs'" (Gano-Phillips 2011, p. 74).

As we focus on students, we must remember that student demographics are changing. In the environmental scan prepared for SD 2020, the CSB/SJU Strategic Directions Council emphasized that the traditional-age college population is changing: "As the population of color grows, colleges and universities across the country will have unprecedented opportunities to enroll a more culturally diverse student body…At the same time, though, many of those new students will come to campus under-prepared for college level study" (Strategic Directions 2020 Environmental Scan, 2014, p. 12). The students served by the curriculum we design for the future are not the same as the students who enrolled at CSB/SJU when we created the Common Curriculum (We address this point again in more detail in Part B).

Focusing on student learning directs attention toward the outcomes we expect students to achieve, and makes the subsequent design of the general education curriculum more intentional. Ann S. Ferren, writing in the edited collection, *General Education & Liberal Learning*, contends that "when faculty members intentionally design curricula around the needs of students" they may "understand that a general education program guided by desired outcomes…is preferable to a program with broad distribution requirements. Institutions that adopt outcomes-directed programs accept their rightful responsibility for coherence and integration rather than simply assume that students will somehow draw together the disparate elements of their educational experience" (2010, pp. 26-27).

With reform of this magnitude, there is always the possibility that faculty who are "housed in departments with strong vested interests" can create "additional challenges to revitalizing the general education curriculum" (Pittendrigh 2007, p. 34). Such "preexisting conditions of secrecy and suspicion across disciplines or academic units" can thwart reform by preventing "honest and meaningful conversations necessary to realize significant progress" (Gano-Phillips 2011, pp. 66-67). But a focus on student learning makes this less likely. Writing in *The Journal of General Education* in 2011, Susan Gano-Phillips and her colleagues urge reformers to adopt a **"stewardship posture"** that places the needs of students above other considerations: "When leaders adopt a stewardship posture, rather than acting as proponents of their own programs, departments, or units, they transcend narrow views of the institution, and the needs of the whole campus relevant to the reform process become salient" (2011, p. 67).

When the "stewardship" approach has been adopted at other colleges, faculty have come together to implement meaningful reforms. Writing in the Winter/Spring 2015 issue of *Liberal Education*, Jennifer Dugan provides the example of Hendrix College, whose faculty "disagreed without being disagreeable," and "began with what they could find consensus on, and kept the process student-centered. In the end, Hendrix did not tinker; it transformed. Hendrix adhered to a historic mission, even as it innovated" (p. 63). Given our Benedictine heritage, we believe the same results can be achieved at CSB/SJU.

Process Principle #2: Form a Task Force.

A special committee or task force should be charged with the responsibility of guiding the process of general education reform. This committee should work within the existing faculty governance structure, and the Joint Faculty Senate should endorse the process, principles, vision and timeline.

So far, the Joint Faculty Senate has engaged in this best practice. It tasked CCVC to write this report and conduct campus conversations on general education reform. The literature confirms this is the best approach to take. Paul L. Gaston and Jerry G. Gaff write in their book, *Revising General Education—And Avoiding the Potholes*, in 2009: "That curricular review should be conducted by the standing curriculum committee may seem reasonable. However, forming a special task force might be a better route to take. While a standing committee has its regular, time-consuming business to accomplish, a task force can devote all its energy to the single purpose of reviewing or revising the curriculum" (p. 10).

While the Faculty Handbook gives the Common Curriculum Committee the authority to "oversee the ongoing development of the Common Curriculum" and "propose revisions in the Common Curriculum to the Joint Faculty Senate," it also requires the committee to "review and act on proposals for Common Curriculum designations" (Faculty Handbook August 2015). This is time-consuming work, leaving little opportunity for committee members to immerse themselves in the literature on general education reform. In contrast, a special task force can devote its time to managing the general education reform process. Gaston and Gaff go on to argue that "a dedicated committee can work with less distraction, take advantage of opportunities for concentrated work such as that provided by the AAC&U Institute on General Education, and pursue a timeline more likely to bring results" (2009, p. 10).

Process Principle #3: Support Proposals with Research.

The process of general education reform and the possible redesign of the general education curriculum should be supported with national scholarship, best practices, and research on general education.

As the conversation on general education reform continues on these campuses, it is critical that advocates support their claims with research on general education reform and pedagogy. In case studies of general education reform documented in the literature, authors have warned against assertions based on isolated personal experiences, memories of programs in the distant past, or positions motivated by self-interest and protecting departmental turf. Writing in their influential booklet, *Revising General Education—And Avoiding the Potholes*, authors Paul L. Gaston and Jerry G. Gaff note that participants often "begin their deliberations by having members share their best ideas for improving general education. This approach can pool a great deal of ignorance and half-truths, and it frequently results in premature polarization of the group. By contrast, other task forces have embarked on a scholarly exploration of the topic and have consciously cultivated a spirit of inquiry so that each person learns to expand, refine, and alter his or her initial ideas. These task forces read the literature…" (2009, p. 19).

To determine national trends regarding general education reform, CCVC members reviewed prominent texts such as AAC&U's *College Learning for the New Global Century* and *Greater Expectations* reports, Paul L. Gaston and Jerry G. Gaff's *Revising General Education—And Avoiding the Potholes*, Gaston's edited collection *General Education & Liberal Learning*, Andrea Leskes and Ross Miller's *General Education: A Self-Study Guide for Review & Assessment*, Susan Gano-Phillips and Robert W. Barnett's edited collection, *A Process Approach to General Education Reform*, and numerous articles from publications such as the *Journal of General Education* and *Liberal Learning*. This aspect of the charge involved review of multiple books, reports, and articles on general education reform, and continued throughout the 2014-2015 academic year. In preparation for the AAC&U 2015 Summer Institute on General Education and Assessment, CCVC team members read two recent reports: Paul Gaston's *General Education Transformed: How We Can, Why We Must* (2015) and AAC&U's *General Education Maps and Markers: Designing Meaningful Pathways to Student Achievement* (2015). CCVC has worked to make this research available to all members of the CSB/SJU community by posting articles on the public Moodle site. In addition, community members can access most of the sources documented in the extensive bibliography at the end of this report through databases available on the library home page.

As our general education reform efforts continue, we anticipate numerous opportunities for community members to become involved in the conversation, including faculty forums, workshops, reading groups, and more, each with assigned and suggested readings, so that "both advocates for re-investing in what we know works in student learning and advocates for revolutionary change in teaching argue from good evidence" (Sullivan, "The Sustainable College," 2015, par. 20).

Process Principle # 4: Establish Process Before Discussing Content.

A Reform Process must be established before discussion of models or curricular content.

It is tempting to move to a discussion of curricular models right away. CCVC members realized this was one of the "potholes" to avoid because "quick fixes" rarely work. Instead, a program for revising and improving general education "must be designed to embody each institution's character, the needs of its students, and the strengths and interests of its faculty" (Gaston and Gaff 2009, p. 8). CCVC has adhered to this principle to date, and we outline a specific design process and timeline in [Part B](#).

A clear reform process helps keep the conversation focused on learning outcomes. "So often when it comes to curriculum, faculty immediately want to discuss additions and changes to courses and programs," writes Blase S. Scarnati in his article, "The Politics and Process of General Education Reform: Key Political Principles." However, in general education reform, "one must keep the discussion focused on student learning outcomes for the program, because it is at this level that meaningful curricular change can occur, be assessed, and have its value demonstrated. This also focuses the discussion on areas of broad agreement (the institutional values that are captured by student learning outcomes) and keeps faculty from arguing about personal, disciplinary, or departmental turf" (2010, p. 194).

In a session with the CCVC, Dr. Lee Knefelkamp mentioned the University of Southern Maine (USM) as a model for reform because it devoted separate attention to designing goals and outcomes. USM began with a review of its old curriculum, followed by a process document, then discussions about the vision and purpose of the program. Then they moved to deliberations over learning outcomes, which provided a framework for a new curriculum. The process from review to implementation took six years. Although it was a "slower and more labor-intensive process, it ultimately produces a better-designed curriculum" (AAC&U, Campus Models and Case Studies, June/July 2007). This was confirmed by a team from another institution who attended the AAC&U Institute and reported back to its faculty: "Perhaps the most profound insight we developed is that a formal *process* for general education must be developed and approved by the faculty *before* discussions of curricular *design*" (Roach 2010, p. 151, emphasis in original).

Finally, a well-designed process ensures that faculty are entrusted with the key decisions about general education reform. As Susan Gano-Phillips et. al. point out in *The Journal of General Education* regarding their own experiences: "We decided to *define a process and time line* explicitly for developing and selecting our new GE curriculum before we discussed the content of that curriculum. In this way, the leadership respected faculty governance and ensured that decision making, both for the curriculum itself and for the process of arriving at that curriculum, remained in the hands of the faculty" (2011, p. 75).

Process Principle #5: Establish a Timeline.

It is also important to agree on a timeline with specific action steps and milestones. In our research, we encountered numerous case studies where general education reform took six years or longer. But we believe "engaging in general education reform with a clear timeline in place

can help shorten the curricular reform process" (Gano-Phillips and Barnett 2010, p. 14), especially since two years of work has already been done by CCVC and its predecessor. We have established a timeline for the reform process and present it in .

There are other reasons to adopt a timeline. It can make the broader community aware of the process. Stephanie Roach explains: "A clear timetable for reform should be established by the General Education Reform Steering Committee so everyone is aware of the process as it unfolds" (2010, p. 152). A clear timeline establishes the seriousness of the work ahead, as Terrel L. Rhodes contends: "Having a timeline with periodic decision points for moving the process forward, though, is essential for actually accomplishing change…Demonstrating early in the process that the reform process is taken seriously, including honoring the timeline, sets a tone that the work is important, valued and necessary" (2010, p. 252). Finally, a timeline ensures progress and work completion prior to 2020, the goal date set in the strategic plan. Kathleen Rountree, Lisa Tolbert, and Stephen C. Zerwas confirm this point: "Clearly articulating stages in the reform process and identifying specific deadlines for different stages helps reinforce a sense of progress and closure" (2010, pp. 33-34).

Process Principle #6: Devote Resources to the Work.

The general education process committee should receive appropriate resources and support to carry out its work.

To this point, CCVC has operated without a budget and its members have completed the charge given to the committee despite other significant service obligations. Clearly, this level of work is not sustainable without resources. After reviewing effective general education reform efforts, Paul L. Gaston and Jerry G. Gaff come to this conclusion: "Too many task forces try to effect massive curricular change without adequate support... Unless adequate support is given, a task force or committee cannot be expected to provide creative and effective leadership for curricular change. Allocating budget resources to this initiative is a major way in which academic administrators can demonstrate institutional support for educational improvement" (2009, pp. 10-11).

We have identified three specific areas of need for the task force as it continues its work:

- *Course Release Time for CCVC Chair or Co-Chairs*
  Reassigned time for the task force chair is essential for the success of the reform effort, as confirmed by Gaston and Gaff: "We have learned that reduced teaching assignments can be essential, at least for a committee chair, if there is to be sufficient time and energy to provide leadership for curricular revision" (2009, p. 11).

- *Support Staff and Student Employee Assistance for CCVC*
  If the JFS endorses a new charge for the committee (the text of a proposed charge is in Part C of this report), there will be numerous community outreach activities and workshops to collect feedback at each stage of the process, and to prepare for the design and possible implementation of a new general education curriculum. Secretarial assistance will be needed to help organize and document these efforts. "Adequate

resources must be provided to ensure the short- and long-term success of general education reform, including resources in support of…staffing, communications, consulting, and community building" (Roach 2010, p. 152).

- *Dedicated Budget for CCVC Outreach Activities*
  Many of the workshops, retreats, and reading groups CCVC intends to host over the coming two years (see timeline in Part C) will require funding to secure consultants, guest speakers, and reading materials. "Further, task forces need modest funds to purchase materials, hold retreats, invite consultants, reproduce papers for campus distribution, and, perhaps, send a team to the AAC&U Institute on General Education and similar meetings" (Gaston and Gaff 2009, p. 11).

The timeline we propose assumes these resources will be available for the committee to continue its work.

Process Principle #7: Encourage Open Communication.

At all stages of the process, it is essential to have open, inclusive, and transparent communication.

Given the scope of possible changes to the general education program, it is essential to include community feedback at all stages of the process. Scholars of general education have emphasized the importance of open and inclusive communication in the reform process. As Kathleen Rountree, Lisa Tolbert, and Stephen C. Zerwas explain, "The need to maintain open, transparent communication about the reform process and content is critical for creating broad faculty support" (2010, p. 32).

Process Principle #8: Engage a Variety of Audiences.

A variety of constituents need to be engaged and included in the process of revising the general education learning outcomes and designing a new general education curriculum.

While faculty have primary responsibility for changes to the academic curriculum, feedback should be sought from a variety of campus stakeholders. Susan Gano-Phillips and her colleagues consider this as a critical feature of reform efforts: "An essential component of this collaborative leadership involves the development of trust and common purpose in revitalizing the GE curriculum, and *it is through engagement of a wide variety of campus constituents that such trust and a sense of institutional stewardship are achieved*" (emphasis in original, 2011, p. 81). In particular, student voices need to be considered and included in the process. Paul L. Gaston and Jerry G. Gaff put it this way: "Faculty members typically regard the development of the curriculum as their prerogative and sometimes neglect the important contributions students can make to the process" (2009, p. 14). In 2015-2016, CCVC had two student members (one from each campus) and hosted feedback sessions with both student senates.

Process Principle #9: Discuss Vision and Learning Outcomes Prior to Design.

The faculty should establish a vision for general education at CSB/SJU. The faculty should also re-examine and revise the general education learning goals.

Prior to the development of specific curriculum proposals, the faculty should draft a vision statement for the general education program. "My experience is that curriculum committees or task forces tend to rush too quickly into the design of a new curriculum," writes Jerry G. Gaff. "It is important to take enough time to discover what is common among the faculty and to secure basic agreement about what they think students should learn and about what qualities should characterize a high-quality, coherent college education" (2004, p. 5).

These qualities are typically summarized in a vision statement that describes the purpose of the program. A well-crafted vision statement helps direct the drafting of the learning outcomes, and gives purpose and meaning to the program overall. As described on its homepage, the purpose of the Common Curriculum is "to provide all students with a solid academic foundation and the fundamental tools necessary to continue developing their intellectual abilities through a broad liberal arts education." We feel the purpose statement for the general education program could be more inspiring. In their pamphlet, *General Education: A Self-Study Guide for Review & Assessment*, Andrea Leskes and Ross Miller argue: "A broad understanding of both the purpose a campus assigns to general education and how the program embodies mission needs to precede the definition of learning outcomes and design of a curricular structure" (2005, p. 5).

Leskes and Miller identify several steps that colleges should take when reforming their general education programs. The first step is to "start the review," which includes a review of the national scholarship and trends and a review of the institution's current program (accomplished by CCVC in 2014-2015). The second step, according to Leskes and Miller, is to "Agree on major parameters" which includes a vision statement for the program (CCVC began community conversations on vision in 2014-2015). The authors suggest the following inquiry:

1. Elucidate the purpose of general education
   - What is the purpose of the general education program in our entire undergraduate curriculum (foundational, integrative, summative, or a combination)?
   - What kinds of learning do we want general education to further (e.g., essential intellectual and practical skills, a knowledge of many disciplines or modes of inquiry, integration across disciplines, experiential learning)?
   - Is the approach based on competencies, the disciplines, or is it interdisciplinary?

2. Illuminate distinctiveness
   - How does the general education program reflect our mission, culture, history, and values? Are the answers sufficiently clear and widely known?
   - How is the nature of our student body reflected in our approach to general education?
   - What makes our general education program distinctive?
   - What makes it essential for students? (Leskes and Miller 2005, p. 5)

The conversation about the vision for general education can begin with these categories and questions but does not need to be constrained by them. We think it is important to think about these questions but not to be paralyzed by disagreements over terminology. Paul L. Gaston and Jerry G. Gaff make this suggestion: "Avoid becoming mired in disagreements over the definition of terms; reach a working consensus and move on" (2009, p. 31).

In addition to a general education vision statement, and prior to a discussion of curricular details, the faculty should determine what our undergraduate students should know or be able to do upon graduation, and frame these as well articulated statements of learning outcomes. In the reform process at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Nancy Mitchell and her colleagues posed the following question to their colleagues and to the students: *"What should all undergraduate students—irrespective of their majors or career aspirations—know or be able to do upon graduation?"* (2010, p. 181). If the conversation can be kept at this level, it will be less likely to fracture due to turf battles. Blase S. Scarnati writes: "Institutional values, captured as student learning outcomes, ground any set of initiatives in the common space that is easiest for various constituencies to embrace. If the conversation can be kept at the level of shared values, then it is unlikely to fracture along lines of disciplinary self interest and departmental turf" (2010, p. 196).

Leskes and Miller suggest three tasks for this stage of the process, each with a set of corresponding questions:

1. Clarify important outcomes
   - Have we articulated clear learning goals and outcomes?
   - How well do our goals and outcomes align with the growing national consensus about the important aims of college study?
   - How do our outcomes describe the complex content knowledge, intellectual and practical skills, and dispositions students and society will need for the complexities of the twenty-first century world? Have we made certain to include important outcomes even if they are difficult to measure?
   - How have we articulated the aspects of personal and social responsibility necessary to the reflective, engaged citizens we want general education to develop?
   - In what ways do we acknowledge, over time and across courses, the developmental changes students undergo to achieve general education's key learning goals and outcomes? Have we collectively developed clear expectations for novice, intermediate, and advanced levels of performance?
2. Relate goals to mission
   - In what ways are our learning goals and outcomes aligned with the institution's central aims and mission?
   - How do these goals and outcomes reflect our distinctive values, culture, history, and student body?
3. Show centrality of learning goals and outcomes
   - Do our students, faculty, and administrators accept and possess common language for describing the goals? Are the "owned" by the faculty as a whole?
   - In what ways have the learning goals and outcomes taken on a real life at the center of our undergraduate program? What is our process for using them to shape curricular structure, course design, and the choice of teaching methods?

- Have we refined the outcomes into assessable objectives (clear statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do)? (2005, pp. 6-7)

In answering these questions, it is important to remember we do not need to start from a clean slate. The Common Curriculum already has learning goals, and these can be modified as necessary if the faculty feels only modest changes are needed. In fact, revisions to the Theology and Mathematics learning goals have recently been passed by the JFS.

Over the past two years, CCVC has collected feedback from the community, and this data provides an excellent foundation for the creation of a vision statement and learning outcomes. (It is worth noting that these larger questions were not discussed fully at the time we created the current Common Curriculum.) We summarize this feedback in sections A.5-A.7 of this report. As a result of this work, CCVC has drafted a vision statement for general education (in Part B of this report) that we expect to be further modified as the community discusses the learning outcomes for the program.

Further, AAC&U has developed a set of "Essential Learning Outcomes" which can advance conversations on revising learning goal and outcome statements (see Appendix E). Agreeing on revised learning outcomes can also make the discussion of models easier, as the statements provide a foundation for the development of a general education curriculum. Susan Gano-Phillips et. al. discuss their own experience with this approach: "The learning outcomes provided an agreed-upon foundation that could be referred back to at times of disagreement. This foundation fostered a trust that stakeholders were moving toward a mutual goal that enabled them to see the good of the whole, to tend to the public garden of the university and not just their own small patch" (2011, p. 78).

In our review of the scholarship, we benefitted from the work of others who had been charged to review their general education programs. Consistently, the institutions that were successful in reforming their programs had started by crafting a vision statement followed by revision of learning outcomes. For example, the general education task force at Washington State University made the deliberate decision not to propose models at a similar stage of the process. The task force explained in its report, "Such a structure would be premature, and not grounded in a set of outcomes agreed upon by the faculty." The task force argued that the "highest priority among next steps is for the learning goals to be rearticulated and realigned into the foundation for curriculum and requirements. This is a necessary step in re-engaging faculty in the aims and values of general education. Faculty participation in the process should be broad, even at the risk of slowing the timeline down a bit" (General Education Visioning Committee, 2009, p. 18).

Throughout this report, CCVC demonstrates how it has followed these process guidelines to date, especially its efforts to involve a variety of campus audiences through feedback and listening sessions. We summarize the results of these sessions in the following sections (A.5-A.7).

A.5   Feedback from the Fall Faculty Workshop

During the summer of 2014, the CCVC worked with faculty leadership to integrate general education themes into the 2014 Fall Faculty Workshop. Seeking to foster a Common Curriculum with a cohesive vision and learning outcomes, CCVC framed the workshop on the theme of liberal education and invited a nationally recognized scholar on general education to help stimulate faculty conversations at the workshop. Dr. Lee Knefelkamp, a professor of Psychology and Education at the Teacher's College at Columbia University and former Academic Dean of Macalester College, delivered the keynote presentation discussing several questions and themes: What is an excellent liberal arts education for the 21st Century? How do we create the competencies to achieve this? How is this done in the historic culture of the campuses? How do we engage the entire community? and How do we communicate all of this to our students? Dr. Knefelkamp discussed several essential learning outcomes in general education and emphasized the importance of high impact educational practices (HIPs), which we discuss in more detail in [Part B].

The CCVC later met with Dr. Knefelkamp to discuss national general education reform efforts. Dr. Knefelkamp identified several issues for the committee to consider:

1) CCVC was a learning team raising issues and acquiring knowledge so the community could make the decisions;
2) The work needed to be painstakingly collaborative and emphasize relationship building (She provided an example of a team at another college that held 138 individual meetings with departments);
3) The work of the committee needed to be transparent and faculty had to be regularly updated about its progress; and
4) The presidents and academic affairs leadership needed to be engaged in the process and the conversations.

As a result of this advice, CCVC decided to schedule listening sessions with academic departments, as well as other stakeholders, including admissions, international education, the libraries, and advising. The sheer number of meetings meant that the committee devoted much of its energy during 2014-2015 hosting these sessions. CCVC established a public Moodle site available to all faculty members to display the committee's documents. The committee also worked with faculty leadership on arrangements for a special session of the Joint Faculty Senate in September 2014, with SJU president Michael Hemesath and CSB president Mary Hinton invited to participate in a discussion on liberal learning (due to the unexpected death of a SJU student, the presidents could not attend the session but the senate proceeded with the conversation).

Following Dr. Knefelkamp's presentation, the Joint Faculty Assembly met to discuss questions related to liberal education at CSB/SJU. The session resulted in extensive written feedback, which is summarized below. All of the raw data (the collected notes from the faculty workshop, the minutes from all of the program meetings, and the student surveys) can be found on the CCVC public Moodle site.

Faculty Workshop Data Analysis

The CCVC used the Fall Faculty Workshop, along with other meetings and events, to obtain feedback from the faculty to drive the development of the guiding principles for our general education structure at CSB/SJU. This section of the report will highlight the data collected from faculty during this workshop period.

Table 1. General Themes/Ideas Emerging from the 2014 Faculty Workshop
Learning traits
Flexible, adaptable, innovative, creative
Lifelong learning, curiosity, life of the mind
Openness to new ideas
Connecting the interdisciplinary dots
Skills to Success
Critical thinking
Communication skills
Team and Leadership skills
Individuality and Community
Awareness, Tolerance, and Engagement with varied Groups (Global, Gender, Diversity)
Community Citizens
Autonomy, independence, and self-awareness
Values
Happiness, personal fulfillment, meaning
Moral, Ethical, and Benedictine values
Process
Conversations
Learning from the past
Shared vision and commitment
Cultural shift needed

Funding for planning/executing change
Communication between disciplines/departments/divisions

After Dr. Knefelkamp's presentation, faculty met in small groups to address the following three questions:

1. What do we want CSB/SJU graduates to be like 5, 10, 20 years after they graduate?
2. At yesterday's Community Forum, we were asked, "It is 2020. What distinguishes CSB and SJU from our competitors?" Putting the same question in the context of liberal education and the Common Curriculum, what will be distinctive about our graduates?
3. What do we need to do to get there? How do we create an environment to facilitate change?

Responses to these questions were documented and collected by the CCVC. This resulted in over 19 pages of data. As the data was compiled, several themes or ideas emerged as identified in Table 1. All 19 pages of comments were collated within these themes to better understand the general and common ideas portrayed by over 200 faculty present at the meeting. First and foremost, these themes/ideas revealed a set of traits, skills, and behaviors that should be developed and strengthened in CSB/SJU graduates.

Theme 1: Learning traits

When asked to describe a successful graduate (based on the questions above), one key theme that emerged from the faculty responses are desired sets of learning traits. The most common traits desired of our students by faculty included a creative, flexible, and innovative mind. Innovation and change is what drives industry, lifestyle, and solutions to today's world problems. To drive innovation, individuals must be creative and flexible in their thought processes. Faculty described this flexibility as a CSB/SJU graduate who is willing to "cope and adapt to change," "change themselves and shape change in the world," be able to "reinvent/reimagine themselves in their lives continuously," and be willing to not always take the "most obvious path." These learning traits require "flexibility," "problem-solving skills," and a "willingness to try and to be challenged."

CSB/SJU graduates must also develop the ability and desire to continue learning after their time at CSB/SJU. One faculty group describes CSB/SJU students not as an "end product" or a "finished project" but as individuals with an "explicit commitment to continually enlarge themselves and their awareness of the world." This requires several key learning traits including curiosity, engagement and passion. These three traits will enable graduates to continue the learning process in their communities and society at large. Some faculty describe this as a person with "depth," a "book reader," and one that has "more questions than answers."

CSB/SJU graduates should be open-minded. To some faculty, this means that students become "comfortable with being uncomfortable" to explore "context before framing decisions," and "comfortable encountering perspectives with which they do not agree." This capability to view

an issue from multiple angles and identify all sides of an argument or problem will enable more CSB/SJU graduates to make informed decisions based on consideration of various perspectives.

Many liberal arts institutions require coursework from multiple disciplines. However, faculty more specifically articulated a student's ability to *integrate* this knowledge. From faculty comments, the desire is that CSB/SJU graduates use the knowledge gained from previous disciplinary coursework (including the Common Curriculum) in additional, future courses as well as in their experiences outside CSB/SJU. There is a need to remove students out of "disciplinary silos to encounter and converse productively about complex interdisciplinary questions." As mentioned above, today's problems and issues are complex and require knowledge from multiple disciplines to identify innovative and creative solutions. This requires an ability to integrate disciplinary knowledge.

Combined, these learning traits will enable CSB/SJU graduates to successfully approach knowledge and information openly, willingly, enthusiastically, and from multiple disciplines and angles to result in potentially innovative and creative solutions and ideas. These are traits that can be used not only in the workplace but also in an individual's everyday life.

Theme 2: Skills to Success

In addition to basic learning traits as mentioned above, success from the CSB/SJU experience includes a basic set of key skills as expressed by faculty. Not surprisingly, among the most common skills mentioned in faculty discussions is the development of a student's critical thinking. As defined by faculty, students with effective critical thinking skills can "critically consume information," are "problem solvers and problem identifiers," can "think quantitatively," and are capable asking and identifying answers to questions. In doing so, our students should be able to "evaluate" and "apply" their learned knowledge. This skill, along with the learning traits mentioned above are certainly aligned and allow a student to not only identify the complexity and challenges in today's world but possess the skills to find solutions.

An individual may be an effective thinker but must also be able to communicate these thoughts and ideas clearly and concisely. Faculty repeatedly highlighted two important skills in today's world: individuals must be effective communicators both in writing and speech and "team players." Traits that defined communicative skills as suggested by faculty include an individual that is a good "listener," "expresses views well," "deals with complexity," and is a "competent" and "confident" writer and speaker. In working with others, leadership skills like those just mentioned (confidence, effective listeners) as well as the ability to use "good judgment" and work well with diversity (age, gender, race, etc.…) was stressed.

Theme 3: Individuality and Community

Embedded in the faculty responses to the traits of a successful CSB/SJU graduate was not only a meaningful self-awareness but also his/her role in today's society. Faculty defined self-awareness and individuality as a person with "confidence," capable of "free, intelligent, self-responsible choices," and "self-assessment." It is a person that is "independent, literate and

engaged." Of note and inherent in these capabilities, are the skills and traits mentioned in the first two themes.

As mentioned, faculty not only desire our students to maintain and develop their self-awareness and individuality, but also must be aware and contribute as citizens. This includes an ability to understand and work with others. Those that can successfully do so must be "inclusive," "engaged" "empathetic to diverse populations," "aware of the effects of gender [and race] on the perception of the world," they must "appreciate and even embrace those with different points of view and different cultures," and "realize that we are part of a global community." In sum, it is hoped that our CSB/SJU graduates can be "global [and engaged] citizens."

Theme 4: Values

Embedded within an effective leader that encompasses the learning traits and critical thinking abilities to be successful as a global citizen is an individual that maintains one's values and ethical being. This was the last major characteristic stressed by faculty as a desire for CSB/SJU graduates. Faculty wanted our graduates to be capable of finding "balance" and "happiness" in both their personal and working lives. Other faculty groups added that this happiness and balance may also include the willingness to take risks but to do so in an ethical manner-- to be moral and ethical individuals. Several faculty groups defined this as having "passion," "empathy," "compassion," "global consciousness," and those who are "deeply committed individuals of good character." With these traits, our graduates should be able to "stand up to injustice in challenging situations" and behave ethically in every decision that is made.

Combined, the four themes mentioned above have identified a key set of skills and behaviors that faculty deem important for our graduates. Furthermore, these skill sets may help in developing the guiding principles that will help mold and align the general education program at CSB/SJU.

Theme 5: Process

In addition to the skill sets and behaviors desired for our graduates, faculty also responded primarily to the third question at the faculty workshop on the process required to build an effective general education program. These ideas and comments are included in the last theme entitled "Process." As guiding principles are developed and a plan is established, it is important to recognize the major process mechanisms identified by our faculty.

One priority mentioned by faculty during the process of general education reform is to ensure that open and "sustained" conversations exist about a variety of topics. It was stressed that these conversations should be interdisciplinary and out of the "silos" that make up our departments and divisions. These conversations also require collegiality, and an environment that "facilitates change" and less so the complaining that can quickly occur. In addition, a set of guidelines seemed to be established for these discussions. This includes a recognition and understanding of our past decisions. It is important the decisions are made with the past in mind. Many faculty are also looking for a cultural shift at CSB/SJU that encourages an openness to change and a recognition of new and outside ideas and perceptions.

Topics of discussion that faculty mentioned include identification of "priorities," the "liberal arts" and its meaning, identification of a shared vision and commitment, and a discussion on the needs for a 21st century student. While many of these discussions were held this year in conversations regarding general education and Strategic Direction 2020, it was apparent that many faculty desire conservations to remain a sustained component of the process of general education reform. Fortunately and not surprisingly, this is also a strongly recommended component in the literature on general education reform.

Many faculty mentioned the environment that must be constructed in which change can occur. Mention of a strategic, coherent, and forward-looking plan must be in place. This also includes recognized funding and resources to support the desired changes. It was noted that this plan must not lose sight of the ultimate goal in doing what is best for our students. What do our students need? In addition, several faculty groups discussed the importance of "buy-in" not just from tenured but also our term faculty because many teach courses in the Common Curriculum. Finally, as stressed by many faculty groups, conversations and strategies must be interdisciplinary. We must be "intentionally integrative." Faculty must reach out of their departments and divisions to work together. We must relinquish "turf wars" and instead, identify what is best for students based on the guiding principles that are developed.

As conservations were held to answer these questions, many groups added suggestions for changes and reform in the Common Curriculum. While these suggestions may be helpful, they will not be summarized here. There is a deliberate and intentional path that the CCVC and Senate have chosen to analyze the Common Curriculum and our general education at CSB/SJU. First and foremost, the CCVC was charged with developing a vision for General Education at CSB/SJU. This will be based on a set of guiding principles that have been established based upon the data summarized here, in the data of our discussions with the departments, and in the literature. Therefore, although these suggestions may be important, we must first complete this first step.

A6. Feedback from Departments and Programs

From fall 2014-spring 2015, CCVC invited all academic departments and programs, as well as many other stakeholders (such as Advising, Admissions, the Libraries, etc.) to participate by meeting with CCVC to discuss the Common Curriculum. Over the year, we held about 30 meetings, during which at least one of the CCVC members took notes. These notes have been made public on the CCVC public Moodle site (see Appendix A for a list of CCVC Outreach Activities in 2014-2015).

All of the academic programs were asked the following four questions. Non-academic departments were asked similar kinds of questions depending on their function.

  1) What are the strengths of your department/program? What do you already do well? Remember that these responses will be shared with the community at large, so please use this opportunity to brag a little bit. What do you want people outside your department/program to know about your successes and strengths?

2) What do you wish you could do better, or do more of? What would it take (resources, support, etc.) for you to reach those goals?

3) Leaving aside discipline specific knowledge, in what ways does your department/program best contribute to providing our students with a liberal education for their lives beyond college, as informed and engaged citizens, productive employees, ethical beings, etc.?

4) Are there ways in which you would like to see your department/program contribute to liberal education that so far it has not been able to?

CCVC has also categorized the information we received from the program meetings, using many of the same categories described in the "Faculty Workshop Data Analysis" section of this report because, unsurprisingly, many of the same themes occurred. In the document called "Categorization of Program Meeting Data," we have categorized information gleaned from the program notes, focusing on those issues or themes that show up in the notes of multiple programs. The reader is encouraged to read "Categorization of Program Meeting Data" to see examples of how the programs discuss Themes 1-4 discussed in the above section. Below is a description of additional themes that emerged from the discussions with departments.

Common Curriculum

As the above section notes, this is not the place for a full review of the problems with the current Common Curriculum. However, the participants in the meetings consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the distribution model in use and the lack of coherent philosophy supporting it. Repeatedly, faculty and staff noted that students (and faculty) approach the Common Curriculum requirements as boxes to be checked off.

The dissatisfaction with the distributional structure of the current Common Curriculum seems in part to be the result of a strong desire to work across disciplinary borders. Many people have indicated they would like to team teach or cooperate in other ways across programs and disciplines. The Common Curriculum is seen as an obstacle to interdisciplinary teaching. To take just a few of the examples from "Categorization of Program Meeting Data":

"I wish that we had more cross listed classes or could work on a course with a different discipline."
"Would love to teach with other faculty. Need a common curriculum that makes these kinds of collaborations possible."
"We want to be more engaged in the co-curricular teaching but are not sure in what way."

Later in this report, under the section "Vision & Design Principles," we discuss ideas such as interdisciplinary concentrations, which may help facilitate these connections.

Process and Equity

Another theme from these meetings was the desire to build a new curriculum around answers to questions like, "What do we want our students to be like (years) after graduation?" This leading question from the 2014 Fall Faculty Workshop was repeated many times in our discussions with

faculty and staff. For example, again from the "Categorization of Program Meeting Data," we have the following suggestion, "Think about what type of experience a student needs to be the individual they want to be five years from now. What else is necessary to be that person?" And, again from the same document, we get this criticism, "We have the creativity and ability to think more broadly what the education should look like – but need to move away from disciplinary requirements and silos and meeting curriculum requirements through departments (boxes students in). Faculty in general do not think as much in terms of the goals of a liberal education, more topic-driven, not asking broader questions."

Finally, it was made very clear in our meetings that faculty and staff are attuned to and worried about how the needs of our students are shifting. This includes not only students of color or first-generation students, but of all students. There are concerns that we have not been as good at meeting this challenges as we could be: "There are demographic changes, but the issues that we see are not directly related to stereotypically at risk students. Programs that are put in place should be universal programs – not bridge programs to help students at risk. We want things that are good for everybody. Some of our most at risk students are the high achievers – they got through high school with little or no studying, don't know how to activate those skills. They need to learn how to manage their time, how to get through that volume of work."

In Part B we discuss issues concerning equity in greater detail.

A.7   Feedback from Students

The CCVC committee has two student members, Isabel Tompkins of CSB and Alex Wald of SJU. The two students were given the task of collecting student views on the Common Curriculum. After much discussion with the faculty members of CCVC, the students decided to hold focus groups with each of the Senates. What follows is a synopsis of these focus groups. The documents used to compile the synopsis can be found on the CCVC public Moodle site under "Student Feedback."

The Senators were asked to provide written responses to the following four questions. In addition to the written responses, they also held a meeting where the questions were discussed and minutes of the meetings were taken.

1) What does it mean to be a liberally educated individual?

2) What should all CSB/SJU undergraduate students—irrespective of their majors or career aspirations—be able to know and take away with them?

3) What is the purpose of the Common Curriculum? In your experience, does it proceed in a logical, coherent, and sequential manner?

4) What are the strengths of the current Common Curriculum? What are the weaknesses? What changes would you like to see?

Being liberally educated

Here are a couple of extended passages from the students' explanations of what it means to be an educated person. The eloquence and thoroughness of these responses make them worth quoting in full despite their length.

> "To me being a liberally educated individual means many things. First it is someone who knows how to pay attention and are aware of the people and the world around them. They work hard to hear what other people are saying. They can follow an argument, track logical reasoning, detect illogic, hear the emotions that lie behind both the logic and the illogic, and ultimately empathize with the person who is feeling those emotions. Furthermore, that person is literate across a wide range of genres and media and gains their information for many nonbiased sources. They are someone who can talk with anyone. Moreover, a liberally educated person participates in such conversation not because they like to talk about themselves but because they're genuinely interested in the other person. They also possess strong writing skills and knows the fine craft of putting words on paper. In some ways liberally educated individuals are puzzle solvers. They possess the ability to solve puzzles and problems. They are truth seekers, who understand that knowledge serves values, and they strive to put these two knowledge and values-- into constant dialogue with each other. Above all they practice respect and humility, tolerance and self-criticism and they nurture and empower the people around them."

> "...most importantly, liberally educated individuals are able to connect. They listen, read, write, talk, problem-solve, empower others, see through other people's eyes, walk in other's shoes, and lead. Through this, they connect their lives and personal experiences with others. A liberal arts education empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity and change. It allows us to adapt in an ever changing and progressive world. It allows people to develop a sense of social responsibility, strong intellectual and practical skills, that span all major fields of study, allowing people to become well rounded in the world of studies. They can communicate, problem-solve, conduct analytics, and most importantly apply the knowledge and skills they gain in the real-world setting."

Many other comments picked up many of the themes found in these long passages. For example, many students noted the value of having a broad base of knowledge outside one's major and the value of being able to understand issues from different perspectives.

What all students should learn

Students were very enthusiastic about the importance of learning outside their major. They spoke of the importance of skills, dispositions, and values.

Some of the skills mentioned by the students include being a "good communicator," having good "analytical reading skills and quantitative skills," and being able to understand the perspective of others. Some of the dispositions include, "hard work," taking initiative, paying attention to the world around them, and showing interest in other people and other perspectives. Having an education that is grounded in the Benedictine values came up several times, especially among the

CSB students. The CSB students also noted the importance of studying gender issues, particularly at these institutions.

Some students articulated a clear purpose for general education that faculty could embrace when formulating a vision for the general education program. For example, one student commented: "Upon graduation from CSB/SJU students should leave here with more than just the knowledge of [their] particular career path. Students should be holistically well rounded and able to tackle any situation or job in which they are put into. They should be able to work and communicate within a diverse world while becoming empowered leaders within our society knowing how to be successful within in ever so changing world."

Common Curriculum

In general, students appreciated the idea of a Common Curriculum that forced them out of their "comfort zones" and into classes that they would not choose to take on their own. They appreciate learning different disciplinary and cultural perspectives. They also saw liberal arts training as helpful for future employment: "It is important to have a legitimate liberal arts education to diversify our degrees and standout among potential employers."

However, like the faculty, the students note that "Logical, coherent, and sequential manner does not really apply [to the Common Curriculum] because there is not an order." They also note that there is a lack of connections between the requirements and they would like to see these requirements connect.

One of the more disturbing themes to come out of the focus groups had to do with the Gender and Intercultural designations. Many students talked about taking classes with Gender and IC designations that did not address the designated issues to a significant degree. Students understood the value of these designations and were disappointed when a class did not fulfill them. (CCVC recognizes this is anecdotal information, and that concerns about whether a course delivers what it promises can be addressed through quality assessment. We discuss the importance of assessment in Part B.)

There were several comments about the value of getting the Common Curriculum requirements done in the first couple of years. As the general trends in general education are moving away from this model, we will need to keep in mind that we might need to shift this student perspective and the advising language that supports it.

Finally, the students are very unhappy with the current FAE system. It's clear that many of them see this purely as a "checking off the box" activity and are getting very little out of the experience of attending FAE events. In our discussion of the "Vision & Design Principles," we discuss this concern and explain how it may be addressed by integrating these events into general education courses, with the expectation that students reflect on FAE events in the context of class discussion or in written assignments.

It should also be noted in this report that the CCVC reviewed the data collected by Ken Jones, former Director of the Common Curriculum, on seniors' evaluation of the Common Curriculum. The full report is called "Survey of Student Views on Common Curriculum" and can be found on

the CCVC Moodle page. There are two documents; one is a narrative and the other is an Excel spreadsheet. The full report echoes the same themes as found in the student feedback discussed above. The limitations of this survey point to the need for more deliberate, systematic, and integrated assessment of the Common Curriculum.

A.8 The Strengths of the Common Curriculum

While we believe that we can create and implement a better general education curriculum, we recognize that we are currently doing many things very well and we should build on our strengths (see Appendix B for a list of current Common Curriculum requirements). In particular, the faculty and staff at CSB/SJU are already engaged in many of the high impact practices recommended by groups like the AAC&U and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). High impact practices have been the subject of much research and are known to improve retention rates and student learning (Kuh 2008).

The AAC&U recommends the following ten high impact practices: first year seminars and experiences; common intellectual experiences; learning communities; writing intensive courses; collaborative assignments and projects; undergraduate research; diversity and global learning; service and community based learning; internships; capstone courses and projects (see Appendix F for a list and description of High-Impact Practices). It is worth noting that many of these high impact practices are embedded in the academic life of our students. Practices such as the First Year Seminar, writing intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, and the capstone are found in the CSB/SJU academic curriculum. In addition, other offices and areas within the colleges promote these practices. For example, diversity and global learning is part of the mission of the Office of Education Abroad and the Office of Experiential Learning and Community Engagement facilitates internships and promotes service and community based learning.

We recommend that any new curriculum maintain these high impact practices going forward. (For more details, see Part B of this report.) Again, we should celebrate and build upon our current strengths. While many high impact practices are embedded in the learning experiences we have created for our students, making sure that these practices are part of the general education curriculum will ensure that they reach all students.

Of the ten high impact practices, only two of them are not a prominent part of the learning experience at CSB/SJU: common intellectual experiences and learning communities. It is telling that these two high impact practices are ones that focus on the integration of learning, which is one of the major problems with the Common Curriculum. The committee would recommend keeping these two high impact practices in mind as we move forward in the process of building a new curriculum.

A.9 Areas for Improvement and the Need for Curriculum Revision

Not surprisingly, many of the issues that faculty, staff, and the administration mentioned as problems with the CSB/SJU Common Curriculum are similar to those identified in the national

literature on general education reform and are common among general education programs nationwide. Tanya Furman writes in her article, "Assessment of General Education," in *The Journal of General Education* in 2013: "Often, the general education curriculum is both too broad and too narrow and reflects a loosely constrained menu of course choices. It comprises a broad array of lower-division introductory courses that meander across wide swaths of perspective and content. It is too narrow in that general education courses often encompass restricted faculty interests, satisfy departmental goals of filling seats to justify otherwise underenrolled elective courses, or are taught as elementary disciplinary classes rather than as integrative challenges that inspire students to think across disciplines and perspectives" (pp. 131-132). These deficiencies can be grouped into two major categories: 1) There are issues of alignment between desired learning outcomes and the Common Curriculum design; and 2) There are issues with the structure and support of the Common Curriculum.

The Common Curriculum design does not align with an established vision and learning outcomes

In many discussions, faculty, staff, administration, and students identified a common set of learning traits and skills that they want CSB/SJU graduates to possess. However, the Common Curriculum is not designed to meet these goals. It lacks a vision statement (or underlying philosophy) from which should stem a set of meaningful and assessable learning outcomes and from which coursework should be developed. Instead, many faculty and students currently use the Common Curriculum as a "check box" with little to no sequential integration or measurement of intellectual growth from the First Year Seminar to the final Capstone experience. Numerous faculty have commented on a student's inadequate preparation to produce a meaningful work at this final stage of their undergraduate career, because there are no meaningful and deliberate steps built into the earlier stages of the curriculum in order to reach this final project. Most Common Curriculum requirements are separate entities with little to no connection to each other or to the Capstone. In addition, the Common Curriculum is not well aligned with the major. There is little connection between the Common Curriculum and the major coursework and experiences; they are separate paths that rarely integrate.

As a consequence, the content within the Common Curriculum is not a "common" experience; instead, it is created by the cafeteria-style choices made by students, who are not always well advised about the courses they are taking. In addition, students often enroll in first year curriculum designed for the major in order to fulfill Common Curriculum requirements. This is not always the most appropriate setting or context for effective learning by non-majors. For example, to help develop a scientifically literate citizen, a content-driven course on vital concepts in a specific scientific discipline may not be the best choice but is often what is provided. This has led to situations where "students do not actively engage with their general education classes," according to Marc Lowenstein. Writing in *The Journal Of General Education*, he argues: "Where the requirements are met through a distribution of departmental courses, students enrolled in these courses will include both 'general students' and declared or intended majors. These groups of students will have different motivations and different levels of preparation, and instructors will naturally be likely to be more committed to meeting the needs of their majors—not necessarily because they care more about them but because for majors who will take follow-up courses there is a greater need to 'cover' specific material. In such circumstances the instructors may also spend less time focusing intentionally on their disciplines'

distinctive ways of knowing and relationships to other disciplines, the sort of focus probably more closely related to why the faculty want general students to encounter the disciplines" (2015, p. 120).

The Common Curriculum lacks a successful structure

Several issues pertaining to the administrative structure have also arisen in discussions of the Common Curriculum. First and foremost, a complete assessment strategy that evaluates the whole program from the First Year Seminar to the Ethics Common Seminar is lacking. The effort of Dr. Ken Jones as Director of the Common Curriculum should be hailed for its thorough assessment plan for FYS and initiation of assessment of the Ethics Common Seminar, as well as assessment of the Gender and Intercultural designations (with the assistance of Dr. Chuck Wright). However, Dr. Jones was not assigned full time to the Common Curriculum, and as of now there is no director of the program. Previously, in May 2014, Dr. Wright's reassigned time for assessment was terminated. As a result, the direction of the Common Curriculum is in a period of transition and risks lack of institutional and administrative direction and coordination. In a letter to department chairs in 2013, the chair of APSAC stated, "It is not even clear who is supposed to be in charge of assessing the Common Curriculum after we abandoned the old divisional chair structure. The academic dean admits that as an institution, we have dropped the ball on this." To many faculty, the purpose and function of the Office of Academic Review and Curricular Assessment (OARCA) and the leadership it is supposed to provide for Common Curriculum assessment is not clear. This state of confusion concerning general education assessment runs counter to effective institutional assessment structures described in the published research on this topic. As one article points out, "The incentive for faculty to participate comes in part from being involved in a formal, well-organized process that clearly defines roles and responsibilities for participants" (pp. 338-39). We discuss assessment of the Common Curriculum in more detail later in this report, in Part B.

Second, the siloed nature of our departments has led to numerous structural impediments in the implementation of the Common Curriculum. Silos built due to distance, politics, or simply teaching different material have led to limited communication between departments. This has affected implementation of the curriculum, the hiring and promotion process, staffing of the Common Curriculum, and ultimately has contributed to reliance on term faculty to teach general education courses. These silos and separated decisions also help deconstruct a "home" for the Common Curriculum. In particular, term faculty have limited space and are not placed in a desirable location for interactions with others actively participating in the Common Curriculum. These and other factors have contributed to the problem that no one "owns" the Common Curriculum.

In CCVC discussions with faculty, there were numerous complaints about the impediments to collaborating with other departments. Apart from the Intercultural and Gender designations, the Common Curriculum and teaching structure discourage multidisciplinary instruction and interdepartmental collaboration. Since several of the learning goals for the Common Curriculum are disciplinary based, it is very difficult to get a course approved that combines perspectives across disciplines. So multidisciplinary courses are likely to not count as Common Curriculum courses, which means there is a disincentive to develop them. Another part of the problem is the difficulty of team-teaching due, at least in part, to the 6/6 teaching structure. There can also be

physical constraints to team-teaching (classroom space). At almost every meeting the CCVC had with departments, faculty mentioned the desire to team-teach with colleagues in different departments, but the constraints make it nearly impossible.

Despite these structural and design flaws, the work of committed and talented faculty who have taught courses in the existing curriculum should be acknowledged. The CCVC recognizes the contributions of numerous faculty and staff over the years, but also sees the potential to implement changes to the general education program that will make it a signature feature of a CSB/SJU education. We must avoid the "tendency of many campuses to exhibit cultural stagnation and inertia, an often unwritten way of campus life that undermines change efforts by emphasizing nostalgia for some (dubious) past era, fostering fear and competition over turf among siloed academic units" (Riordan and Sharkley, 2010, p. 200), and instead embrace the possibility of changes that could significantly improve the learning outcomes of our students.

A.10 Opportunities and Imperatives for Change

After surveying the literature and speaking with hundreds of participants in multiple conversations, we believe this is a kairotic moment for undertaking revisions to the general education curriculum at CSB/SJU.

Presidential Leadership for Liberal Arts Education

First, the colleges have two relatively new presidents who have both affirmed their commitment to liberal arts education. In his 2013 State of the University address, Michael Hemesath stated: "The irony of critiques of the liberal arts is that the very changes in the world that might seem to argue for more specialized training--new technologies, previously unknown industries, competition from abroad--actually remind us that the ability to adapt to change in an unpredictable future and to learn new things are among the most important skills we can impart to students, and that is exactly what a great liberal arts education does." And in her inaugural address on September 21, 2014, Mary Hinton proclaimed: "At Saint Ben's we are educating for transformation. We are educating for leadership. We are educating for communities. We are educating global citizens for the democracy here in the United States and leaders equipped to face multiple and complex challenges around the world. We educate students who have a passion for service so that the education that we provide them is then utilized, by them, to empower and lift up their communities. We are unabashedly a liberal arts institution and we commit to illuminating that path." Our presidents are emerging leaders in the national conversation on the value of a liberal arts education, and we need to be confident that our general education curriculum is providing students with the best liberal arts experience available. Implementing innovative reforms could position CSB and SJU as leaders in liberal arts education and curriculum design.

Strategic Directions 2020

Second, our institutions have just completed a strategic plan for 2020, with the revision of the Common Curriculum as a key component. Approved by the CSB and SJU Board of Trustees in

May 2015, SD2020 calls for the liberal arts experience at our colleges to be "characterized by an innovative and integrative curriculum that provides our students with the knowledge, skills, experiences and values to meet their professional and personal goals and shape their civic identity." SD2020 identifies the redesign of our general education program as a critical strategic priority. The plan states: "Develop a new Common Curriculum that is purposeful, sequential, integrative, and cumulative across four years. The new Common Curriculum will more intentionally link departmental and general education. The liberal arts will be foundational to all majors and minors."

Further, SD2020 calls upon faculty to create "interdisciplinary concentrations" that will "leverage our unique academic strengths and distinctions (e.g. our global focus or environmental programs) to broaden opportunities and credentials for students." As we describe later in this report, thematic course clusters can be part of a general education redesign proposal that facilitates integrative and reflective thinking on the part of our students.

HLC Reaccreditation

A third reason for implementing changes to the Common Curriculum is the HLC Reaccreditation process. Every decade, CSB and SJU engage in a self-study and prepare reports to support continued institutional accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The process for renewal of accreditation has begun, with a draft document due May 2016, the revised assurance document completed by August 2017, and a site visit by an HLC evaluation team during fall 2017.

In the report of the Comprehensive Evaluation Visit to St. John's University in 2008 for the Higher Learning Commission, the reviewers pointed out: "The new Common Curriculum has learning outcomes, but a review of them, confirmed by interviews, suggests that many are too broad to measure effectively. Individual courses in the program have participated in assessment, but the team found that the process for assessing general education as a whole to be only in nascent stages" (p. 5) The reviewers obviously came to a similar judgment in its CSB report, since the two institutions share a joint academic curriculum.

As we explain later in this report, a redesign of the general education program can include a worthwhile assessment protocol, with student learning outcomes documented through rubrics and e-portfolios (We explain rubrics and e-portfolios in Part B). While we won't be able to implement all of these potential changes prior to the next site visit, a general education revision plan will demonstrate significant progress on this issue.

SJU Learning Commons

While curricular redesign should not be compelled by infrastructure projects, the construction of a Learning Commons does offer another reason for implementing changes to the Common Curriculum now. According to the institution's own promotional materials, the SJU Learning Commons "is designed for the kind of learning and teaching essential to preparing our students for their future. This exciting building combines flexible classrooms, the latest technology and a variety of informal social learning spaces. It will provide faculty and students with the

environment and the tools to fully engage in collaborative learning and innovative thinking." As we argue later in this report, the general education program at CSB/SJU requires both a director and a "home base." It is critical to make progress on general education reform at the same time the new Learning Commons is constructed, so that any new general education program can be included in the planning.

The Expectations of Employers

Despite skeptical general public discourse about the value of a liberal arts degree, employers recognize the value of a liberal arts education. Since high-impact practices are often embedded in general education curricula, another reason to revise the Common Curriculum is the value that an updated curriculum will provide graduates as they assume their roles as employees and citizens in a global society. In his article, "General Education Reform Process: A National and International Perspective," Terrel L. Rhodes points out that "the needs denoted by employers and business leaders for broadly educated graduates competent in applying their learning to real world problems, has sharpened interest in organization and delivery of general education" (2010, p. 240).

Faculty may be understandably nervous when the business community frames the value of a general education curriculum with economic interests in mind. Yet, the evidence demonstrates that prospective employers value *both* practical skills *and* the habits of mind that make graduates of liberal arts colleges intellectually curious and able to adapt to changing environments. In surveys conducted by Hart Research Associates for the AAC&U, employers indicate that colleges need to enhance their focus in the following areas: 1) written and oral communication, 2) critical thinking and analytical reasoning, 3) the application of knowledge and skills in real-world settings, 4) complex problem solving and analysis, 5) ethical decision making, 6) teamwork skills, 7) innovation and creativity, and 8) concepts and developments in science and technology (Rhodes 2010, p. 3). In recent surveys, 93 percent of employers believe that "critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving abilities are more important than a potential employee's undergraduate major" ("The LEAP Challenge," 19), and nine of ten of those surveyed say it is important to hire college graduates who demonstrate intercultural skills, ethical judgment and clarity, and the capacity to learn new ideas and concepts (Hart Research Associates, 2013). (For additional data on employer attitudes, see .)

Paul L. Gaston sums it up this way: "Never before has there been so great a need for learned and adaptable citizens capable of taking apart and understanding complex problems, of identifying reliability and authority among the many sources of information, of appreciating the quantitative realities that may lie beneath the surface, of thinking creatively about solutions, of communicating *to* others the emerging results of their work, and of working *with* others to bring solutions to practice. In short, what general education can offer is what all students need to live in a complex global society" (emphasis in original, 2010, p. 10).

Although it has been less than ten years since CSB/SJU last revised its general education curriculum, the previous reforms did not originate from the grassroots and the process was not based on best practices as documented in the literature. As our institutions emerge as leaders in

liberal arts education in the 21st Century, it is imperative that we address general education reform for the sake of our students.

Part B: Vision and Design Principles for General Education at CSB/SJU

B.1   The Vision and the Essential Learning Outcomes for General Education at CSB/SJU

This report has noted the importance of developing a clear vision statement for general education at CSB/SJU. Terrel L. Rhodes suggests that "the one-quarter to one-third of an undergraduate degree that is devoted to general education often is wasted if we cannot communicate clearly to ourselves and to our students what the purposes of general education are and should be" (2010, p. 242). Similarly, in his article, "Principles of Strong General Education Programs," Paul L. Gaston argues: "First, strong programs embody and express a clear vision for general education, one grounded in an institutional commitment to the benefits of a liberal education for all students…Strong programs do not emerge by happenstance. They express the deliberate pursuit of a design aimed at that institution's vision of a well-educated graduate" (2010, pp. 17-18). Articulating a vision for general education, then, must be the next step in the process of Common Curriculum reform.

The CCVC presents the following working draft of a vision statement as a place to begin discussion and deliberation. The vision statement was drawn from the discussions we had with faculty at the faculty workshop and our department meetings. We stress that this is a *working draft*, meant to help guide the discussion of the learning outcomes discussed in more detail below. Once the learning outcomes have been adopted, we fully expect that we will revisit and revise this vision statement.

> *The CSB/SJU General Education Program reflects our commitment to prepare our graduates for a complex, changing, and interconnected world. Grounded in the liberal arts and Benedictine values, our general education program encourages students to make connections between their lives, their studies, and their communities. Our general education program provides students with high-level transferable skills, including critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, communication, team and leadership skills and promotes desirable learning traits such as curiosity, creativity, and openness to new ideas. We produce graduates who have the ability to continually reimagine and reinvent both themselves and the world.*

We hope that the vision statement will offer a useful starting point for discussions about the philosophy underlying our general education curriculum as we begin discussion of the learning goals. Another helpful document is the AAC&U's set of "Essential Learning Outcomes" (referred to as the ELOs) which was developed as part of a larger initiative, Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP). These can serve as the starting point for campus conversations about learning outcomes for the general education program. AAC&U launched LEAP in 2005 to generate public discussion about the core learning outcomes required for students in the 21st Century, and the ELOs emerged from a multi-year dialogue with hundreds of colleges and universities about what students needed to learn. The ELOs are grouped into four main

categories: knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world (through study of the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, languages and the arts); intellectual and practical skills (including inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, and teamwork and problem solving); personal and social responsibility (including civic knowledge and engagement, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, and foundations and skills for lifelong learning); and integrative learning (including synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies) (see Appendix E for a description of the Essential Learning Outcomes).

B.2   The General Education Maps and Markers (GEMs) Design Principles and Guidelines for General Education

In preparation for the 2015 AAC&U Summer Institute on General Education & Assessment, CCVC members reviewed design principles for general education as described in the publication, *General Education Maps and Markers* (2015). Part of the national project, General Education Maps and Markers (GEMs), these design principles are: Proficiency, Agency and Self-Direction, Integrative Learning and Problem-Based Inquiry, Equity, and Transparency & Assessment. Given their importance in the national conversation on general education reform and redesign, we summarize the AAC&U design principles here, and then we present our own principles based on our overall review of the literature and what we believe will work best for CSB/SJU. All quotes describing the AAC&U design principles are taken from the *General Education Maps and Markers* publication (cited as "GEMs").

The General Education Maps and Markers (GEMs) Design Principles:

Proficiency

Definition: " Colleges and universities should provide clear statements of desired learning outcomes for all students." General education should "provide programs, curricula, and experiences that lead to the development of demonstrable, portable proficiencies aligned to widely valued areas of twenty-first century knowledge and skill" (GEMs 2015, p. 3)

Questions to Consider:
- Are there clear statements of desired learning outcomes for all students at your college or university? Are these expectations frequently explored with students?
- Does each course or experience that contributes to general education clearly explain the cross-cutting or transferable proficiencies it helps students develop? Are the assignments transparently connected to the expected proficiencies?
- Do faculty and staff work intentionally and collaboratively on the design of assignments that effectively help students practice, develop, and demonstrate the cross-cutting proficiencies that the institution has articulated both for the degree and for general education?
- Does faculty training and development, including for contingent faculty, focus on helping all students achieve proficiencies and designing assignments and assessments that allow students to demonstrate their proficiency levels? (All questions from GEMs 2015, p. 14)

Initial Steps:
- Draft a vision for general education at CSB/SJU.
- Revise the learning outcomes for the general education program.
- Use the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) and the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) as reference points and guidance to design programs to ensure that students develop 21st Century proficiencies.

Agency and Self-Direction

Definition: "General education should play a critical role in helping all students understand, pursue, and develop the proficiencies needed for work, life, and responsible citizenship. Students should be active participants in creating an educational plan in which they identify and produce high-quality work on significant questions relevant to their interests and aims" (GEMs 2015, p. 3).

Questions to Consider:
- Are general education programs, curricula, courses, and related experiences designed in ways that clearly articulate for students how and where they can develop and demonstrate proficiencies?
- Are general education programs, curricula, courses, and related experiences designed in ways that help students integrate and apply their learning to complex questions?
- Are new digital tools and resources used to provide students with multiple opportunities to participate in active learning environments as part of their education?
- Can each student demonstrate and explain his or her own best or Signature Work (see definition under Design Principle #4 in section B.3 of this report, and in Appendix G).
- Are e-portfolios and digital profiles used to enable students to integrate and document their reflections, Signature Work projects, and other demonstrations of proficiency and work in various settings? (GEMs 2015, pp. 15-16)

Initial Steps:
- Develop e-portfolios so students understand and appreciate the value of the general education learning outcomes and how they have met them.
- Provide students with opportunities to develop Signature Work.

Integrative Learning and Problem-Based Inquiry

Definition: "Students should develop and demonstrate proficiency through a combination and integration of curricular, cocurricular, and community-based learning, as well as prior learning experiences…Students should demonstrate proficiencies through inquiry into unscripted problems that are relevant to students' interests and aims and where a full understanding of the problem requires insights from multiple areas of study" (GEMs 2015, p. 17).

Questions to Consider:
- Do students formally reflect on how proficiencies are progressively developed and demonstrated in different settings—for example, between and among courses and in

cocurricular activities, communities of practice and action, virtual networks, internships, service learning experiences, and prior experiences?
- Are faculty members mindful of and able to help students productively connect with multiple communities, within and beyond higher education, to achieve their learning goals?
- Does the general education program clearly map and guide students along integrative curricular, cocurricular, and experiential pathways that progressively develop proficiencies?
- Is faculty development building the capacity of faculty to work across disciplines? (GEMs 2015, pp. 17-18)

Initial Steps:
- Develop curricular maps to indicate where proficiencies can be achieved in the CSB/SJU general education curriculum.
- Design "interdisciplinary concentrations" or thematic clusters of courses that address topics and problems from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Incorporate high-impact practices into these clusters so students have multiple opportunities to practice critical skills at different levels. Integrate the clusters/concentrations with the revised general education curriculum.
- Incorporate FAE into general education course design so students have opportunities to reflect on these experiences.
- Devote some FDRC grant resources to support faculty working on thematic clusters.

Equity

Definition: "General education programs should be equity-minded in design and implementation…General education programs should advance practices and policies that are aimed at achieving the full spectrum of learning outcomes for all students regardless of their backgrounds" (GEMs 2015, p. 19).

Questions to Consider:
- Do curricular materials and assignments take into account students' identities, lived experiences, and needs?
- Is there ongoing examination of campus environments and attention to whether all students feel welcomed, supported, and helped in achieving their goals?
- Do organizational policies and structures support equitable change, including faculty and staff development, to eliminate practices and structural barriers that work against equity? (GEMs 2015, pp. 19-20)

Initial Steps:
- Ensure that high-impact practices such as internships, study abroad, and undergraduate research are available to all students.
- Provide faculty development and training so instructors can meet the needs of a changing student population.
- Monitor student progress through the general education program, and identify areas of weakness.

Transparency & Assessment

Definition: "Students, faculty members, and other stakeholders should understand what proficiencies are being developed in any general education program, course, or activity, and how these proficiencies can be demonstrated at key milestones in students' progress toward the degree" (GEMs 2015, p. 21)

Questions to Consider:
- Are there shared, rubric-based assessments, such as the use of VALUE rubrics, to provide a means for responding to students' individual levels of development to ensure quality and achieve equity?
- Are there faculty development opportunities regarding assessment that include a focus on the role of digital tools and learning environments in assessment?
- Does the institution widely share these reports, get feedback on them, and use them in faculty and program development and dialogue with students and other stakeholders to improve results? (GEMs 2015, p. 21)

Initial Steps:
- Assign a Director of Assessment to oversee assessment of the general education program.
- Create a culture of assessment that is meaningful to faculty and students, with assessment data used to for program improvement and to help students achieve the learning outcomes.

We have incorporated these five AAC&U design principles into a set of vision and design principles for general education revisions at CSB/SJU, which we describe in the following section.

B.3 Recommendations for Vision and Design Principles Based on a Survey of the National Scholarship on General Education Reform (The "What" of General Education Reform)

Design Principle #1: Make High-Impact Practices Purposeful and Integrative.

Models should continue to utilize and improve high-impact educational practices, but do so in a way that is purposeful and integrative, providing students with multiple opportunities to improve their skills.

Earlier in this report we summarized the high-impact educational practices promoted by AAC&U: First Year Seminar and Experiences, Common Intellectual Experiences, Learning Communities, Writing-Intensive Courses, Collaborative Assignments and Projects, Undergraduate Research, Diversity and Global Learning, Service Learning and Community-Based Learning, Internships, and Capstone Courses and Projects. According to reports conducted by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) students typically participate in fewer

than two of the high-impact educational practices. AAC&U has done its own studies and found that, on average, students engage in between 1 and 2 (1.3) HIP. (Schneider, *Liberal Education*, 2015, p. 10). Although data on CSB/SJU students is not available, we expect that the number is much higher here, as many of these practices are already embedded in our curriculum.

But student exposure to some of these practices, such as writing-intensive courses or courses with collaborative assignments, is often assumed and not assured. This is a situation that is typical of curricula based on a distributional/elective model. Derek Bok confirms this in his book, *Higher Education in America*: "For example, faculties assume that students will develop oral communication skills and acquire an adequate civic education simply by completing the four-year undergraduate program, or that competence in moral reasoning or expository writing can be attained in a single course, or that the capabilities (along with other aims, such as development of 'global awareness' or quantitative skills) will be achieved if the faculty is urged to incorporate the necessary material into their existing courses" (2013, p. 174). These assumptions need to be challenged.

In addition to offering high-impact practices, we need to make certain that students have multiple, repeated opportunities to practice them. Research also shows that high-impact practices are most desirable when eight key elements are featured:
- Performance expectations set at appropriately high levels
- Significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time
- Interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters
- Experiences with diversity
- Frequent, timely, and constructive feedback
- Periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning
- Opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications
- Public demonstration of competence (Kuh and O'Donnell 2013, p. 10)

As noted earlier, one of the strengths of the CSB/SJU Common Curriculum is its heavy reliance on high-impact practices. We feel the HIPs should also be a feature of a revised curriculum design, with assurances that students have encounter these practices in their coursework throughout their years in college. Reform efforts should also focus on enhancing the two HIPs not currently emphasized in the Common Curriculum—Common Intellectual Experiences and Learning Communities. In the feedback provided to CCVC, faculty requested more opportunities to include these kind of learning experiences in their coursework.

Design Principle #2: Consider Alternatives to the Distribution Model.

Models should consider alternatives to the distribution or "cafeteria style" model of General Education.

The Irvine Group, a collection of former university and college presidents and chancellors, released a report summarizing their review of reforms in the 1980s, stating: "Over the past decade, undergraduate renewal has relied on curricular patterns that have not worked well. Outmoded distribution requirements, for example, where students select courses from broad

academic fields have failed to accomplish what is intended. These courses amount to electives, not general education. For too many undergraduates, their educations do not fit into a coherent whole, and the distribution of courses is more frequently the result of campus political considerations than of educational ones" (cited in White 1994, p. 171). Although the Irvine Group reached its conclusions a quarter of a century ago, many general education programs— including ours-- still adhere to a distribution model "organized mainly as an a la carte menu of disconnected survey courses" that "falls far short of its intended horizon-expanding purposes…students too often find that their broad or general learning is fragmented, incoherent, and frustrating" (Schneider, "Foreword," 2015, p. v).

We agree that a "check the box" system, which students are eager to finish quickly in their first two years of college, "too often results in uncoordinated coursework that does not directly address student's interests and needs, does very little to develop proficiencies necessary either for work or for citizenship, and is unclear about results" (*General Education Maps and Markers*, 2015, p. 6). Therefore, we encourage modelers to construct a curriculum that moves away from this approach if possible.

Design Principle #3: Follow Learning Outcomes Endorsed by the Joint Faculty Senate.

Authors of models are expected to demonstrate how their curriculum designs fulfill the learning outcomes discussed by the faculty and approved by the Joint Faculty Senate. At the 2014 Fall Faculty Workshop, we asked participants to describe the features of a CSB/SJU graduate. In their own reform process, authors Roseanne M. Mirabella and Mary M. Balkun asked a similar question: "Rather than focusing on content, we decided to focus on student outcomes, posing the question that would guide our work over the course of seven years: 'What do we want our students to become?' This broad question permitted faculty to engage in conversations about general education and the purpose of a liberal arts education without raising concerns about departmental courses or hires" (2011, p. 217).

At Alverno College, "the general education program is better seen less as a distribution system of content arranged as a compromise among competing academic interests, and more as a way to arrange the teaching and assessment of student learning outcomes that we think are crucial" (Riordan and Sharkley 2010, p. 203). We think the same type of conversation is possible at CSB/SJU, and we expect those who design curriculum models will be guided by the learning outcomes approved by the faculty.

Design Principle #4: Focus on "Connections."

Curriculum designs should make the General Education program more coherent, intentional, and cumulative.

At the 2014 Fall Faculty Workshop, Lee Knefelkamp pointed out that students often perceive general education as a "collecting of dots" experience rather than a "connecting the dots" experience. In a candid assessment of the undergraduate general education requirements at his

own university, professor Mark Bauerlin framed it this way: "Let's be honest about how it appears to 19-year-olds. They see such an 'array' [of general education courses] as merely a bunch of random, disconnected courses outside their major. The courses they finish don't cohere into a 'core' or a 'common experience.' They're just a bunch of heterogeneous hoops to pass through" (quoted in Gaston 2015, p. 12). While the current Common Curriculum is focused on *course collecting*, the new general education program should be focused on *making connections*.

In the literature on reform, it is widely argued that a general education curriculum should be coherent and integrative. For example, Paul Gaston writes in 2015: "Students must be able to understand how its different elements fit together, how they contribute to degree-level learning outcomes, and how they offer preparation for further study and career advancement. As general education enables students to demonstrate assessable proficiencies, cumulative understanding, and improved discernment, students will stop thinking of their general education requirements as something to 'get out of the way' and perceive them instead as a means to achieving genuine intellectual growth" (p. 17) Bobby Fong concurs, arguing in his essay, "Liberal Education in the 21st Century": "…liberal education is not achieved by taking any number of classes, but rather by intentionally patterning courses of study that link and synthesize ways of knowing and doing" (2004, p. 12).

A curriculum that places students on intentional pathways to growth will prepare them better for meeting the challenges they will face after they graduate. "A further accomplishment, which every institution would surely hope for, would be that students experience those discrete classes not as isolated and unrelated experiences but as integral parts of a coherent whole," writes Marc Lowenstein. "Students who achieve this can understand the ways in which these parts complement, contrast with, and support each other and how they all contribute to a meaningful understanding of the world. These students will also be more intentionally aware of the transferrable skills their institutions want them to develop but which are often lost sight of amid a focus on content in their courses. The integrated overview and enhanced intentionality, furthermore, create the best possible platform for a lifetime of learning since they provide a context for new experiences and ideas as they are encountered" (2015, p. 121).

There are a number of possible ways "connections" can be made in the general education curriculum:

a) Make General Education Coherent by Scaffolding Courses.

Curricular pathways should be established that are intentional, sequential, and scaffolded to allow students to enhance their skills as they progress through the curriculum.

The Common Curriculum has two "bookend" experiences—FYS and the Ethics Common Seminar. What happens in between is often random, with little intentionality or developmental logic. Instead, courses should be arranged in purposeful, sequential pathways that allow for repeated practice of core skills and proficiencies.

General education programs like the Common Curriculum are often arranged as a collection of single course experiences, but the literature discourages this approach. "The underlying approach

to general education learning reflected in the inoculation model of the last century—if students need to write, take a writing course; if students need ethical reasoning, take a philosophy course; if students need global understanding, take a course with an international focus—is no longer adequate," Terrel L. Rhodes writes in *General Education and Liberal Learning* in 2010. "The research on cognitive development, deep learning, and mastery supports the value of intentional approaches to learning that are iterative, recurring, incremental, and progressively more challenging as students move through their educational careers. There are benefits to approaches that provide students with multiple opportunities to apply their learning to new, unscripted problems, and that are scaffolded in ways that allow students to develop their skills and abilities in intentional ways" (p. 5).

In the Common Curriculum, we assume students practice writing, discussion, and oral communication skills beyond FYS but nothing in the design of the curriculum assures proficiency in these skills. This is the same situation Portland State University faced before they redesigned their general education curriculum. "When our students reach the upper-division level, we expect them to have been prepared through their lower-division work to be able to frame questions, identify and examine relevant original source materials, and produce a paper, project, or experiment which demonstrates advanced academic ability," writes Charles R. White. "Yet, our upper division courses are filled with nonmajors seeking to fulfill the distribution requirements but often without sufficient background to grasp the material and meet the performance standards expected. While many of our students do remarkably well, we faculty often express dissatisfaction with the performance of our students. Students, on the other hand, express dissatisfaction, frustration, fear, and occasional anger that they seem to have missed something important along the way and are not always able to meet the expectations placed upon them" (1993, p. 169).

If the curriculum was scaffolded so that students had repeated, multiple opportunities to practice skills and habits of mind, at carefully sequenced and ratcheted levels of challenge, then students could be better prepared for advanced coursework. This point is emphasized by Ann S. Ferren in her article, "Intentionality," in 2010: "Strong programs…emphasize above all student understanding of the scaffold of learning built through a sequence of related courses and cumulative experiences" (p. 29). Karen Maitland Schilling and Dwight Smith suggest: "Increasingly, faculty members are recognizing the importance of 'scaffolding' in the design of curricula. Teachers of writing have long argued that the complex skills and competencies required by a new century develop only through incremental emphasis, but we have come to realize that all essential learning develops most fully through work that is cumulative, integrative, and reflective…Dated notions of specific outcomes attached to 'my course' for 'my students' have in strong programs given way to emphases on partnering to achieve a cumulative impact" (2010, p. 34). The research demonstrates that students benefit from programs that scaffold learning opportunities over time. After initial exposure to a particular learning objective or proficiency, students have additional opportunities for practice, reflection, revision, feedback, and improvement. This may require that students complete coursework that addresses each learning outcome more than once.

More explicit connections should be made between general education requirements and the major. General education should be integrated with the majors.

General education and the major are often seen as separate programs. Instead, revised curriculum designs should seek ways to integrate general education and the major. General education courses "must prime the student for the learning major programs offer. Similarly, the major must act in concert with general education by placing value on general education proficiencies and by enabling students to continue to develop those proficiencies" (Gaston 2015, p. 17). That way, general education programs are not solely responsible for the development of student skills.

Explicit connection between general education courses and the major is consistent with the previous point of intentionality and sequential learning. As students "develop in stages and move from lower to higher levels of intellectual development," they accumulate deeper knowledge and master skills that require them "to connect and transfer learning from one assignment, course, or experience to others in a learning progression. Therefore, some ability to synthesize learning across disciplines, across general education and the major, and between the curriculum and the cocurriculum is needed" (Sopper 2015, p. 143).

Also, when general education learning outcomes are connected to majors, students begin to appreciate the relevance and importance of their general education coursework. Peggy Maki explains in 2010: "Orienting students to general education outcomes and continuing to connect students to these outcomes in their major programs of study contribute to students' ownership of this core learning, as well as to their deepened understanding of the relevance of general education" (p. 46).

However, a "connection" should not be assumed simply because a department offers a course that serves both as an introductory course to the major and as a disciplinary designation in a general education curriculum. Increasingly, scholars of general education have questioned this approach. In his article, "Tensions and Models in General Education Planning," Robert R. Newton argues: "The curriculum is drawn from the disciplines because the disciplines contain the knowledge future citizens will require. But rather than, for example, giving students a rigorous introduction to basic chemistry, a general education course should develop an understanding of what chemistry is, how it interprets and shapes the modern world, and what critical challenges it poses to humanity. The objective is not to train a scientist but to educate graduates with the scientific literacy essential to be effective citizens" (2000, p. 175). Many outside programs have policies that prevent departments from counting introductory courses to the major as general education requirements. For example, at Temple University, general education courses may not be *required* introductions to a specific major or minor. (At Temple, a Gen Ed course may be accepted by a major or minor to fulfill elective requirements.) General education models should consider ways to integrate general education and the major but may need to reconsider the logic of disciplinary requirements, especially those met by introductory courses to a major.

Connections should be made across disciplines, especially through "interdisciplinary concentrations" or thematic clusters.

SD2020 calls for the development of "interdisciplinary concentrations" of courses linked thematically by topic across a variety of disciplines. The literature often refers to these course groupings as "thematic clusters," and they are promoted as effective ways to enhance interdisciplinary learning. For example, Charles R. White writes: "The research supports an interdisciplinary, thematic approach, more tightly structured clusters of courses, and an interdisciplinary core, use of mentored clusters, extension throughout the four years, linkage of the program to articulated goals" (1994, p. 191).

Generally clusters function as groups of 3-4 courses that focus on a single topic approached from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. At Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU), a private liberal arts university in Lincoln, Nebraska, faculty recently replaced many of the old distribution requirements in their general education program with an integrated core in which students complete two course "threads." Part of their "Archways" program, each thread is a series of three courses linked by a common theme of significance. For example, at NWU there is a "global warming" thread that includes courses in Biology, English, and Political Science. "While the individual courses are still based in discrete disciplines, the connections between these disciplines are made explicit as students approach the same issue in each class with a different set of perspectives and problem-solving tools" ("An Integrative Approach," 2013, par. 2).

Santa Clara University (SCU) has "Pathways," which include thematically linked courses across the university's curriculum. The process begins at the end of the sophomore year. Twenty-four Pathways are offered, on topics ranging from Sustainability, Applied Ethics, the Digital Age, Beauty, and Democracy. Students complete a selection of four Pathway courses, with no more than two from the same discipline. At SCU, Pathway courses can overlap with other general education requirements or requirements for the major or minor. In addition, students are asked to complete a reflective essay on their own, demonstrating how they have integrated ideas from the various courses ("Encouraging Integrative Learning," 2013).

CCVC sees thematic clusters as a way of connecting disciplines with the general education curriculum in ways that encourage and support interdisciplinary cooperation. The instructors of these courses can work together to set objectives for the clusters that advance student understanding of a particular issue, question or topic. Surprisingly, this is often overlooked, even in programs that have clusters in their curricula. A general education task force at Penn State University recently conducted a benchmarking activity to determine how a range of institutions used "themes" in their general education programs. Although their search was not exhaustive, they only discovered one program (at Appalachian State University) that appeared to mandate that faculty teaching within a theme had to work together to ensure integration among courses (a feature we believe is critical to the success of the clusters).

While clusters offer the opportunity for team-teaching, this would not be necessary for them to be successful, as long as faculty development funds were available so instructors of courses in the cluster had opportunities to work with each other to plan the design and integration of the clusters. Clearly, the development of "interdisciplinary concentrations" at CSB/SJU is an opportunity to make our general education program distinctive.

d) Demonstrate Integrative Learning Through "Signature Work."

Students can demonstrate Integrative Learning and Problem-Based Inquiry through "Signature Work."

The focal point of AAC&U's LEAP Challenge is the "Signature Work" project. With Signature Work, each student accomplishes a project on a significant problem over the course of a semester or longer. Signature Work can be a research project, a capstone experience, a service learning project, or another form.

These are the characteristics of Signature Work projects:

- The work requires student agency and independence: students choose the topic, form the project, and complete much of the work independently.
- The work occurs over the course of a semester or a longer period of time.
- The work must address "big problems"—real-world problems that matter to the student and to society.
- There is a reflection component in the work.
- There is the expectation of significant writing.
- Students work closely with a faculty mentor.
- The work is interdisciplinary.
- The work should demonstrate cumulative and integrative learning across specialized and general studies.
- It can take many forms: major research project, internship, creative project, etc.
- Many students use e-portfolios to present and explain the work.

As noted earlier, the Common Curriculum already utilizes many high-impact practices such as experiential learning. Beyond the general education requirements, students participate in capstone courses and have internships. However, AAC&U's goal is to make Signature Work "essential and expected, rather than available and optional." Also, AAC&U envisions Signature Work as more purposefully integrative and interdisciplinary, and involving substantial writing and reflection.

One interesting possibility is to make Signature Work projects a feature of the new "interdisciplinary concentrations" mentioned above and required by SD 2020. These clusters of courses could be arranged so students are expected to produce a significant written essay that incorporates each of the disciplinary perspectives covered in the cluster. Each student might then be expected to deliver a public presentation of the results of the project, demonstrating how she or he integrated the various perspectives as they examined a significant problem. The work could

then be part of the student's e-portfolio. (For an example of how Signature Work could be incorporated into a general education curriculum, see [Appendix G](#), "Sample Guided Pathway with Signature Work.")

e) Improve Connections with Activities Outside the Classroom.

Improved connections should be encouraged between events and activities outside the classroom and the General Education program, including reflection on Fine Arts Experiences in general education courses.

Often, the general education curriculum is designed in isolation without considering its linkage to the co-curriculum, but this contravenes the advice of the literature. In their article, "Learning Outside the Box: Making Connections Between Co-Curricular Activities and the Curriculum," Myra Wilhite and Liz Banset describe the importance of linking the co-curriculum to the curriculum: "Students have much to gain from the integration of co-curricular activities into the curriculum. In out-of-class experiences, students tend to take greater responsibility for their own learning; they learn from one another as well as their instructors. In addition, co- curricular activities promote personal growth, physical and mental health, academic achievement, social and cultural awareness, and help students formulate short- and long-range goals" (1998-99, par. 7). There are diverse co-curricular activities and services at CSB/SJU, including athletics, counseling, career services, student activities, campus recreation, intercultural and international student services, campus ministry, upward bound, orientation, health promotion, campus conduct, student human rights, the Institute for Women's Leadership, and the Men's Development Institute, as well as numerous academic events.

Even within the curriculum, the Fine Arts Experience (FAE) requirements are not always integrated into coursework. There are not enough opportunities for students to discuss their FAE experiences and make connections with course material. Students resent requirements without purpose, as indicated in the student feedback received. If students had to reflect on these experiences in the context of a course, it is likely they would understand their relevance and importance.

While there are numerous strengths of CSB/SJU co-curricular programming, there needs to be more purposeful and intentional integration of all activities in the general education curriculum, including the speakers, conferences, and other academic events that occur outside of the classroom. In the feedback provided to CCVC, students expressed interest in having these activities better integrated in their coursework.

Design Principle #5: Consider Equity in Curricular Design.

While the composite academic profile of new entering CSB and SJU students has been stable in recent years, many of the social, cultural, and economic characteristics of our new students have changed, according to an environmental scan completed by the CSB/SJU Strategic Directions Council in preparation for SD 2020. According to the report, the most notable change has occurred in enrollment of students of color. In fall 2013, students of color comprised 18% of all

new students at CSB and 16% of new students at SJU, the highest number and proportion ever at each institution. Since fall 2009, the number of new students of color has nearly doubled at CSB, and increased by two-thirds at SJU (Strategic Directions 2020 Environmental Scan, p. 12).

As noted in the Strategic Directions 2020 Environmental Scan, new students of color at CSB and SJU "are significantly more likely than their peers to come from families without a college experience. In fall 2013, 42% of all new entering students of color came from families where neither parent had any education beyond high school. Only 40% of all new students of color indicated that at least one of their parents had earned a bachelor's degree, compared to 80% of new white students. In part a reflection of lower levels of family educational attainment, students of color at CSB and SJU also are highly overrepresented among lower income students. There are wide gaps in entering test scores, as well. The average ACT composite score for new students of color at CSB and SJU in fall 2013 was 22.5, compared to 26.1 among white students" (p. 12).

While the composition of our student body is changing, we have not made corresponding changes in our general education requirements. This is unfortunate, given the intersection of equity-related issues and general education pedagogy and delivery. As the AAC&U contends, "General education programs should advance practices and policies that are aimed at achieving the full spectrum of learning outcomes for all students regardless of their backgrounds" (GEMs p. 3). Keith Witham and his colleagues point out, "we cannot address equity in higher education separately from core educational design. Rather we must make equity a key framework for any reform—one that is explicitly and deliberately wedded to the goals for educational excellence and student achievement" (2015, p. 1). In particular, we must "consider the ways in which the content of our general education curriculum empowers students who have experiences marginalization and instills in all students the knowledge, values, and ideals that are crucial to counteract the economic and racial polarization that threatens our nation" (2015, p. 1).

For example, research shows that racial and ethnic minorities, as well as first-generation college students, often do not participate in as many high-impact educational practices as majority students (Finley and McNair 2013). Data on the participation and success rates of CSB/SJU students of color and first-generation students, especially in relation to HIPs, FYS, and the Common Curriculum, needs to be generated. Fortunately, the colleges have made a commitment in the strategic plan to provide opportunities to historically underserved students. SD 2020 states: "Secure new resources to ensure that students of all means are able to participate in study abroad, internships, student research, service learning and co-curricular activities." In addition to resources, we need to consider how curriculum design can affect the participation and performance of these students.

Design Principle #6: Establish an Assessment Plan.

Models should have an assessment plan to demonstrate that students have achieved the learning outcomes.

CSB/SJU has made efforts to assess our general education requirements. Results from the 2013 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement indicate that, when compared to students at institutions in the same Carnegie classification, our First-Year students' average

evaluation of the collaborative learning environment and the quality of interactions were significantly higher. On the other hand, when compared to their peers at similar institutions within the same Carnegie class, the average of our Fourth-Year students' evaluation of effective teaching practices was significantly lower. The CLA has been administered at CSB/SJU every year since 2007-2008. In the 2009-2010, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 administrations, our institutional value-added scores were lower than our peer CLA institutions. In the 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and 2010-2011 administrations, our institutional value-added scores were higher than our peer CLA-comparison institutions. In addition, continuous progress is being made, though assessment workshops and faculty and staff research, to measure student learning in the experiential, gender, and intercultural courses of the Common Curriculum.

However, the process for assessment of the Common Curriculum needs to be reconsidered. In the report of the Comprehensive Evaluation Visit to St. John's University, October 13-15, 2008, for the Higher Learning Commission, the evaluators recognized the difficulty of assessing the Common Curriculum learning goals: "While the new Common Curriculum has learning outcomes, based on interviews and a review of the outcomes, the team believes that many of them are too broad to be measured effectively. The team recommends that the institution develop a process for assessing the Common Curriculum in a way that more clearly measures student learning and then use that information to improve student learning" (p. 15, the same quote is in CSB report). As models of curricular reform are developed, efforts should be taken to ensure that they are supported by sound assessment practices. Some faculty have adverse reactions to assessment efforts, but as Jeremy D. Penn points out in his article, "The Case for Assessing Complex General Education Learning Outcomes," "Demands for accountability are not always unreasonable" (2011, p. 12).

Fortunately, much work has already been done to make the assessment of general education learning outcomes more reasonable. For example, the AAC&U has collaborated with faculty from over 100 member institutions to create **VALUE Rubrics** (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) that enable instructors to measure and document student accomplishment on 16 learning outcomes: inquiry and analysis, critical thinking, writing, integrative learning, oral communication, information literacy, problem solving, teamwork, intercultural knowledge, civic engagement, creative thinking, quantitative literacy, lifelong learning, ethical reasoning, global learning, and reading. The VALUE rubrics help institutions assess accomplishments across stages that are developmentally more challenging as the students progress through the curriculum. "VALUE represents, in my view, a real breakthrough in the assessment of college student learning," writes John Sullivan. "Such a system of learning outcomes assessment can provide continuous improvement in student and institutional performance, while at the same time providing the evidence of student learning that those who finance and subsidize American higher education—families, government, and charitable donors—deserve" (2015, par.). For an example of one of these rubrics, see Appendix K.

While attending the 2015 AAC&U Institute, CCVC members were introduced to **e-portfolios** as a tool used by many institutions to collect assessment data and to enable students to compile the work they have done to meet the learning outcomes of a general education program (Chen 2015). E-portfolios are "digital repositories of student learning artifacts selected by the students themselves" (Peden 27). While new to us, the use of e-portfolios is a national trend that offers

student opportunities to integrate the learning they have achieved over their college career, in multiple disciplines and in the cocurriculum. Ryan McLawhon and Loraine H. Phillips describe the benefits of e-portfolios in *The Journal of General Education* in 2013: "Aside from reforming the curriculum and undergraduate experience, the use of e-portfolios is also an option for looking at across-discipline learning outcomes in general education. With e-portfolios, students have the opportunity to reflect on their work, and instructors can assess whether certain general education learning outcomes have been demonstrated based on the students' work" (p. 206). Writing in *Liberal Education* in 2015, Wilson Peden emphasizes the value of e-portfolios in promoting reflective thinking on the part of students about how they will or have fulfilled the general education learning outcomes: "As they select representative learning artifacts, students must think deeply about the college's learning outcomes, the degree to which they have achieved these learning outcomes, and which assignments are representative of these achievements…Like capstone projects, e-portfolios facilitate integrative thinking, prompting students to draw together strands of learning from a range of disciplines and from the cocurriculum" (p. 27).

We are similarly enthusiastic about the potential of e-portfolios but agree with the literature that the emphasis should not be on presenting student accomplishments to employers. Rather, students should use e-portfolios as "tools for personal reflection in their learning" (Peden 2015, p. 28). With the proper training beginning in FYS, students could learn to archive work, select work samples, and begin the process of reflecting on their work in a way that demonstrates they are intentional and reflective about their learning and self-aware of the transformation facilitated by the general education program.

Design Principle #7: Re-Brand General Education at CSB/SJU.

Models should consider the re-branding of general education and the "Common Curriculum."

At the same time or following adoption of a curricular model, a name should be given to the general education program that better describes its features, components, or purposes. Currently, although its name suggests common experiences, the "Common Curriculum" is largely a distribution model and students can move through it in very different ways. Also, as currently named, the Common Curriculum may be a recruiting liability. Admissions staff told CCVC that prospective students and their parents often perceive the "Common Curriculum" to be ordinary (and potentially irrelevant). The current "branding" of the Common Curriculum encourages questions about how quickly the requirements can be completed or how many college preparatory courses can substitute for general education requirements. The term *Common* Curriculum suggests that our program is like every other general education curriculum.

Admittedly, the terms used in the general education literature are not inspiring either. Eric R. White reports this problem in 2013: "Starting with the words that have been used to identify that part of the curriculum beyond the major, the challenges are obvious. The term *general education* is so vague that it defies definition and actually invites criticism. *Liberal studies*, as an alternative, has proved unworkable in an era when new meanings that are less than positive have been applied to the word *liberal*. Even the terms *core* and *distributional* provide little insight into the nature of this part of the curriculum. *Breadth versus depth* also shortchanges general education, since depth has become the endgame and breadth has been reduced to superficiality"

(p. 139). Still, we believe our general education program could have a name that is more accurate and that communicates distinctiveness.

Design Principle #8: Ensure Students Can Graduate in Four Years.

Finally, one of the assumptions we are making is that proposed design changes to the general education program do not make it impossible for students to graduate in four years. Model designers should keep in mind that the general education program will not be able to accomplish everything—this is why the program must be integrated with the majors, so that the burden of providing high-impact practices does not fall solely upon the general education program.

B.4 Case Studies of Success

Some colleges and universities have adapted the ELOs and added features to showcase program distinctiveness. For example, Clark University's general education program embraces the ELOs but adds a fifth learning outcome: "Capacities of Effective Practice: □Including creativity and imagination, self-directedness, resilience and persistence, and the abilities to collaborate with others across differences and to manage complexity and uncertainty." According to the program's webpage, "These are demonstrated by application of knowledge and skills to issues of consequence and by emerging membership in larger communities of scholarship and practice."

In the general education literature, Portland State University is often cited for having an innovative program, in part because they were one of the first institutions to move away from distribution requirements when they adopted reforms in 1993. According to Charles R. White, PSU adopted the following as the statement of purpose for general education: "The purpose of the general education program at Portland State University is to facilitate the acquisition of the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes which will form a foundation for lifelong learning among its students. This foundation includes the capacity and the propensity to engage in inquiry and critical thinking, to use various forms of communication for learning and expression, to gain an awareness of the broader human experience and its environment, and appreciate the responsibilities of persons to themselves, to each other, and to community" (1994, p. 177). From that vision statement, PSU developed the several learning goals, each with attendant strategies (see Appendix J for the text of the "Purpose and Goals for General Education at Portland State University").

Derek Bok presents another list in his widely cited book, *Our Underachieving Colleges*. Acknowledging that "any useful discussion of undergraduate education must begin by making clear what it is that colleges are trying to achieve" (p. 58), Bok proposes several aims that he considers especially important—the ability to communicate, critical thinking, moral reasoning, preparing citizens, living with diversity, living in a more global society, pursuing a breadth of interests, and preparing for work (pp. 67-81). Although he complains that universities are often fixated on the general education curriculum, Bok's categories could be incorporated into both the learning goals of a general education program and individual majors.

In reviewing the learning goals at other institutions, CCVC members were impressed with the general education program at Alverno College, which also has been lauded for their innovative curriculum. Alverno's core curriculum is based on eight abilities: communication, problem solving, analysis, valuing, social interaction, effective citizenship, developing a global perspective, and aesthetic engagement. After developing the eight abilities as the learning outcomes in the curriculum, Alverno faculty asked how the abilities might look at different levels of a student's progression through college. Based on the desire to think developmentally about student learning, the Alverno faculty articulated six levels of learning for each of the eight abilities (a description of the eight abilities and the corresponding levels is included in Appendix I).

Again, we must emphasize that the goal is not to import another program. These examples are provided to generate ideas that might inform our own revision of the Common Curriculum learning goals. As our timeline indicates, we will host campus conversations and workshops on the learning goals, with CCVC drafting revised general education learning goals for consideration during the spring semester of 2016. Once the faculty approves the vision and revised learning outcomes for general education, CCVC will invite colleagues to submit targeted suggestions for improving the general education program on these campuses. In addition, CCVC will invite campus teams to propose curriculum models based on the learning outcomes and the vision and design principles established in this report (pending an endorsement from the Joint Faculty Senate). The next section of the report describes this plan in detail.

Part C: Making It Happen

C.1   CCVC and Faculty Governance

The need for general education reform at CSB/SJU is supported in the previous sections of this report. Most importantly, input from CSB/SJU faculty, stakeholders, and mission statements have provided the groundwork to begin discussions regarding the needs and outcomes of a revised general education program at CSB/SJU. In addition, an extensive amount of current literature on general education, data from the needs expressed by employers in industry and corporations, and discussions with AAC&U faculty and other institutions undergoing reform at the 2015 AAC&U Institute for General Education and Assessment have helped to mold a proposal for a plan and timeline for the revision of our Common Curriculum.

If the steps and timeline below are followed and resources are provided, the goal is to have a general education curriculum model approved by the end of the spring semester in May 2017. This would include JFS endorsement of process principles and vision & design principles and possible faculty endorsement of the essential learning outcomes by the spring semester of this academic year.

CCVC will send a call for targeted suggestions and curriculum models during the spring semester 2016 with models presented to the faculty at the end of fall semester, 2016. After discussion and revisions of these models, a final model will be voted on in May 2017. Depending on the model chosen by faculty, a timeline for implementation will still need to be developed. A more detailed timeline towards an accepted, revised common curriculum is described below.

As mentioned previously, it is desirable to dedicate a special task force (CCVC) with the role of shepherding the process forward. Thus, CCVC proposes that the JFS give us a new charge (text below). Standing committees will still need to become involved at various stages of the process. CCC may need to consider policy considerations, such as whether introductory courses to a major should count toward general education requirements. APSAC will need to review the assessment protocols. APBC will need to consider the budgetary implications of proposed models. The R&T committees will need to discuss whether participation in the general education program should be more explicitly rewarded in third-year review, tenure and promotion decisions. CCVC will remain a process committee of the JFS, while the other standing committees do their work.

C.2   Proposed New Charge for CCVC

With the presentation of this report to the faculty, CCVC completes its current charge. We propose a new charge:

> The JFS authorizes the Common Curriculum Visioning Committee (CCVC) to continue its work in providing direction and strategy for potentially implementing changes to the Common Curriculum. The committee shall:

1) Using the process and design principles in this report, shepherd the general education revision process so that the checkpoints on the timeline approved by the JFS are followed;

2) Develop subcommittees to be charged with addressing various aspects of the process;

3) Organize and host workshops, reading groups and outreach events during appropriate phases of the process;

4) Based on community feedback, draft a vision statement and revised learning outcomes for general education to be considered by the Joint Faculty Senate;

5) Maintain an electronic site to keep the community informed of developments and to make documents publicly available;

6) Develop and circulate a call for Targeted Suggestions and a Statement of Intent to Create a Curricular Design Team;

7) Participate, if feasible and appropriate, in the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) 2016 conference on "General Education & Assessment: From My Work to Our Work" in February 2016 and the CSB/SJU "Illuminating the Liberal Arts" conference in July 2016; and

8) Work with JFA leadership during spring 2016 and summer 2016 for possible inclusion of general education themes at the 2016 Fall Faculty Workshop.

The Common Curriculum Visioning Committee will regularly update the Joint Faculty Senate about the status of its work. Progress on these steps assumes adequate membership on CCVC and the resources needed to carry out the work.

C.3   Proposed Timeline with Checkpoints

Based on our review of the timelines used in other general education reform efforts, we propose the following timeline for Common Curriculum revisions at CSB/SJU [Note: The previous two years are included in the timeline so readers can have a sense for the progression of activities]:

2013-2014: Prequel (CCPR)

- Review assessment data on the Common Curriculum
- Host faculty forums to generate feedback on the Common Curriculum
- Begin research on trends in general education
- Work with OARCA to review reform strategies

2014-2015: Year One (CCVC)

- Plan and organize the Fall Faculty Workshop on liberal learning
- Work with consultant/speaker Dr. Lee Knefelkamp on strategies for reform
- Solicit feedback from faculty at fall workshop on the aims of a liberal education at CSB/SJU
- Work with faculty leadership to include liberal learning on Joint Faculty Senate agenda
- Work with faculty leadership to generate feedback on liberal learning themes for SD2020
- Work with the Strategic Directions Council to incorporate general education revision into the strategic plan
- Continue review of national scholarship and trends in general education reform
- Establish Moodle page and post documents
- Meet with departments and programs to discuss their roles in the general education program
- Attend the AAC&U Summer Institute on General Education & Assessment
- Draft a report with process recommendations based on a review of the literature

2015-2016: Year Two

Fall Semester 2015:

Current Committee:
- Present preview of report at the Fall Faculty Workshop
- Make report and supporting documents publicly available
- Present final report to the Joint Faculty Senate
- Secure a new charge from the Joint Faculty Senate
- Joint Faculty Senate Endorsement of process principles, vision & design principles and the timeline

New committee:
- Expand membership of CCVC to 20-30 members (In addition to current members and additional faculty who wish to serve we recommend that this committee also include a member of the Common Curriculum Committee, APSAC, APBC, and additional individuals from multiple disciplines who have an interest in general education reform. The committee should also include CSB and SJU students, as well as representatives from Student Development, Academic Affairs, Academic Advising, the Registrar's Office, the Libraries, the Office of Experiential Learning and Community Engagement, and the Office of Education Abroad)
- Develop steering committee, and subcommittees (Model Development and Communication & Outreach) and assign members to subcommittees.
- Public discussion of the report and principles for general education at CSB/SJU, as well as a working, provisional vision statement for general education.
- Begin public discussion of learning outcomes (forums, reading clubs, town hall meetings, etc. may be necessary during the fall semester and early spring semester to evaluate, modify, and adjust the Essential Learning Outcomes. These discussions will include invitations to all faculty, academic administration, and additional stakeholders. Guided by

faculty feedback and the literature, the CCVC will shepherd discussions to allow for transparent and faculty-wide agreement on the design principles, essential learning outcomes and vision for general education reform)

Spring semester 2016:

- Continue public discussion of learning outcomes (reading groups, workshops, sessions)
- Endorsement by the Joint Faculty Senate of a set of Essential Learning Outcomes
- CCVC and interested faculty attend the AAC&U conference on "General Education & Assessment: From My Work to Our Work" (February 18-20, 2016)
- Following the endorsement of essential learning outcomes, The committee will invite colleagues to submit "targeted suggestions" for curricular reform, and also invite colleagues to design and submit proposals for a revised general education curriculum (either as individuals or as teams).

Typically, general education task forces work in isolation and are expected to draft a revised curriculum and present it to the faculty. But this approach can end in failure, especially when the rest of the community has not participated in the curriculum design process. During our research, and in consultation with experts at the AAC&U 2015 Summer Institute on General Education and Assessment, we learned about another approach: the task force can guide the community through the reform process while it invites both "targeted suggestions" and "curriculum proposals" from individuals and teams at large.

With targeted suggestions, individual faculty members can submit design ideas without having to draft an entire curriculum. This encourages broader participation in the process and allows campus participants to submit ideas related to their areas of expertise. These ideas can be collected and presented to design teams for consideration as they craft proposals. These targeted suggestions can be collected into one document and presented to the faculty as a whole for further discussion.

The general education task force can place a call to the entire community for curriculum design proposals, which are guided by the design principles and learning outcomes endorsed by the Joint Faculty Senate. The general education task force manages the process and holds a variety of workshops, brown bag lunches, and other events to promote campus conversations and provide teams with the training and resources to develop sound proposals. Design teams can present proposals to the faculty to receive additional feedback. (If the Joint Faculty Senate approves the proposed timeline in this report, CCVC will send a call for targeted suggestions following the adoption of revised learning outcomes, as well as an invitation for campus curriculum design teams to form. The specific details of the process will be announced at that time.)

CCVC team members who attended the AAC&U 2015 Summer Institute on General Education and Assessment met individually with experts Dr. Paul Gaston, Dr. Lee Knefelkamp, and Dr. Debra Humphreys to discuss this idea. In addition, peers from other campuses vetted and approved this approach in a session at the Institute where the

CSB/SJU team presented a proposed reform plan. Finally, this approach is documented in the scholarship on general education reform (for example, Stephanie Roach provides details in her article, "No One Should Go It Alone: Engaging Constituents in General Education Reform"). CCVC believes a similar process can engage the campus community at CSB/SJU and culminate with innovative proposals.

- By the end of spring semester 2016, the CCVC will ask for a statement of intent by those who plan to develop a curriculum model. This will allow the CCVC to monitor and help those involved in model development, and to ensure that teams encounter multiple points of view from the beginning of the design process. The groups will have until November/December of 2016 to construct a model based on the vision, essential learning outcomes, and guiding principles as supported by the Joint Faculty Senate. Should individuals not want to design an entire curriculum but have ideas for particular aspects of or changes to the curriculum, targeted suggestions will allow individuals or groups to submit suggestions for those developing models. These suggestions will be due at the beginning of the fall semester 2016 but early submissions are encouraged to allow for potential inclusion in models as teams develop them. [Note: Timeline can be adjusted if additional work is required to revise the learning outcomes]
- CCVC and interested faculty attend the "Illuminating the Liberal Arts" conference at CSB (Summer 2016) if it is helpful to the work required in designing models.

2016-2017: Year Three

Fall semester 2016:

- All targeted suggestions are posted on website and made available to teams.
- CCVC hosts workshops on curriculum model development.
- Initial presentation of draft models. (It is expected that the working teams will present their models in November/December of 2016 to the campus community. CCVC will conduct surveys and discussions to collect feedback by the faculty and additional stakeholders.)
- APBC will conduct cost analysis of the models.
- The Registrar's Office will review feasibility of programming and scheduling any new requirements or changes to existing requirements.
- CCVC will guide model development and work with model developers to ensure that the models being designed are supporting the guiding principles and learning outcomes.

Spring semester 2017:

- Model revision (As a result of feedback and sharing of ideas, revision of the models will be likely. It is also predicted that some models may even merge due to similarities.)
- Model presentation and faculty vote (It is anticipated that the final models will be presented and voted on by the end of the spring semester 2017).
- CSB/SJU sends a team to the AAC&U Summer Institute on General Education & Assessment to focus on implementation strategies.

2017-2019: Year Four and Five: Curricular Development

This involves the transition from faculty vote to implementation of a revised general education curriculum. The details would be developed by a second CSB/SJU team to attend the AAC&U Summer Institute on General Education & Assessment, likely during the summer of 2017. Items that would need to be considered include:

- By this point, hire a Director or Dean of General Education.
- Create a general education implementation steering team responsible for planning, directing and monitoring implementation of the revised general education curriculum. All academic units whose function relate to the delivery of general education will be included.
- Continued conversations between curriculum designers, general education implementation steering team, and the Common Curriculum Committee to ensure community understanding of the new general education program.
- Development of the requisite courses, focusing at first on those needed for incoming students in fall 2019.
- Faculty development to assist with course revision, the creation of new courses, and the clustering of existing courses.
- Training programs and workshops to facilitate pedagogy and course development during the transition.
- Develop approval process so Common Curriculum Committee is not inundated with work.
- Assessment plans are integrated into the planning process.
- APBC will assist in determining transition costs.
- Work with appropriate offices, such as Communications & Marketing, on public relations related to the new curriculum.

2019-2020: Year Six: First Year of Revised General Education Curriculum

If this timeline is followed, a new general education curriculum will be in place prior to the goal of 2020 set in the strategic plan. We realize that it takes time to agree on a vision, revise learning outcomes, and design a new general education curriculum. Our research into the experience of other colleges and universities who have successfully adopted general education reforms reveals that it is a multi-year process. For example, the revision process took six years at Montana State University, which replaced a cafeteria-style core curriculum with a curriculum focused on student learning, inquiry, and research. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln spent four years from initial research to the beginning of implementation. Susan M. Awbrey writes in *The Journal of General Education*, "It is estimated that successful, deep-level systemic change takes three to five years. Nevertheless, it is this deeper change that fosters future growth and development, and can open the institution to continuous learning and development" (2005, p. 18). We have outlined a somewhat aggressive timeline above, but feel it is feasible given the groundwork already established by this committee. The Joint Faculty Senate can decide to modify the timeline if certain aspects (such as revision of the learning goals) require more time, or if other events (such as the Provost's search or the implementation of other features of the

strategic plan) demand faculty attention and time. However, CCVC would not recommend too many delays, since it is also important to maintain momentum on this important task.

C.4 Characteristics of Success

Successful general education programs require more than lofty vision statements and well-designed curriculum models. There must be ongoing support of faculty development and teaching, an administrative structure that ensures leadership for the program, ongoing assessment and evaluation of the program, and institutional commitment to ensure that the general education program thrives and that students are well-served by it. There are several features of successful general education programs. For example, the faculty at Alverno College credit the success of their innovative general education program on four key features: "1) The extensive time set aside for collaboration on teaching and learning; 2. The extensive commitment to the support of teaching, through financial resources, technology, and other means; 3. The pervasive norm of publicly discussing teaching activities and designs…and finally 4. The ability-based curriculum, which serves as a common foundation and language" (Riordan and Sharkey 2010, p. 212). We have modified the Alverno characteristics slightly in the context of CSB/SJU and make the following recommendations:

1) Provide time for collaboration on teaching and learning.

General education requires collaboration and the sharing of ideas, particularly if some courses are grouped into thematic clusters and if we expect students to learn developmentally as they progress through the program. Alverno College created time on Friday afternoons (no classes are scheduled) for faculty to meet and work on issues of teaching, learning, and assessment. The Alverno faculty also hold three 'institutes' each year, in August, January, and May (Riordan and Sharkey 2010, pp. 207-208). There is a yearning for this kind of collaboration and conversation at CSB/SJU, as faculty mentioned it in their feedback from the 2013 JFA forums, the 2014 fall faculty workshop, the CCVC meetings with departments, and the faculty feedback during SD2020 campus conversations. While it may be prohibitive to adopt a schedule similar to that of Alverno, as a starting point it would be worthwhile for the Calendar Committee to look into the possibility of a faculty "in service" day during the academic year when these topics can be raised and discussed.

In addition, CCVC finds it distressing that institutional support for the **Learning Enhancement Service (LES)** at CSB/SJU has waned. Many institutions commited to teaching have a vibrant center to support and promote effective pedagogy. For example, the Center for Innovation in the Liberal Arts (CILA) at St. Olaf College provides support for faculty conversation and collaboration about learning, teaching and scholarship. In addition, these centers can assist with the transition and implementation of general education reform. At the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning serves as a resource for teaching, provides workshops and web resources on research-based teaching and learning practices, and funds projects for faculty research. "Thus, the center became an important foundation for the general education reform effort." Lori J. Carrell, the director, noted, "The center helped with the cultural transformation on campus and readied the campus for change" (Kuh and O'Donnell

2013, p. 42). In another example, after Hampshire College established a new center for teaching and learning, "identifying areas of focus, designing and carrying out programs, and figuring out how to evaluate our efforts has been tremendously stimulating" (D'Avanzo 2009, p. 22).

2. Make a commitment to the support of teaching through financial resources, technology, and other means.

If general education reform is going to work, it will require budgetary resources to make it successful. As Tim Riordan and Stephen Sharkley explain in their article, "Hand in Hand: The Role of Culture, Faculty, Identity, and Mission in Sustaining General Education Reform," "*If student learning is to be at the heart of an institution's mission, we have learned, recognition of that work and allocation of resources in support of it must be of the highest priority*" (2010, p. 214, emphasis in original).

First, there should be ongoing **faculty development** to improve general education pedagogy. Faculty will likely need to retool existing courses and design new courses to ensure that their students are meeting the revised learning outcomes of a new general education curriculum. In addition, to ensure equity and to maintain and improve retention rates among students of color and first generation college students, faculty will need training to adapt to the shifting demographics of our student population. In their article, "Utilizing Change Theory to Promote General Education Reform: Practical Applications," Stephen C. Zerwas and J. Worth Pickering contend, "Ongoing efforts to provide training and professional development for instructors will be required" (2010, p. 235). Fortunately, the colleges have committed attention and resources to faculty development, as promised in SD 2020, which states: "Develop and implement a Professional Development program that strengthens the faculty and staff's ability to meet the needs of the student body."

The experiences at other colleges prove this is a wise investment, even as institutions face budgetary pressures. For example, despite "the pressures of budget cuts in a lean economic year," the provost at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro "approved funding for faculty development grants to assist faculty in retooling their syllabi to address the revised learning goals and to achieve a successful course recertification" as part of a successful general education reform effort (Rountree, Tolbert, and Zerwas, 2010, p. 34). There is evidence that such investments pay off. Citing the research of Jerry G. Gaff, the *Journal of General Education* reports "at universities across the country, faculty have responded to development programs with a good deal of enthusiasm. Increased collaboration across disciplines, enhanced pedagogical effectiveness, and improved student satisfaction with their learning experiences in general education courses have been among the reported results (White 1994, p. 200).

In addition to faculty development, student-faculty **ratios and class sizes** should be maintained at low levels to ensure quality delivery of high-impact educational practices and learning outcomes. In his book, *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be*, Andrew Delbanco points out what faculty teaching at small, residential liberal arts colleges already know, that "a small class can help students learn how to qualify their initial responses to hard questions. It can help them learn the difference between informed insights and mere opinionating. It can provide the pleasurable chastisement of discovering that others see the world differently, and that their

experience is not replicable by, or even reconcilable with, one's own. At its best, a small class is an exercise in deliberative democracy, in which the teacher is neither oracle nor lawgiver but a kind of provocateur" (2012, pp. 58-59). Discussing the effective delivery of general education, Charles R. White observes that, "small interactive classes do result in increased community, engagement with learning, and faculty-student interaction" (1994, p. 191). At CSB/SJU, the recent increase in the First Year Seminar class size from 16 to 18 is worrisome. Further, there is concern that institutional commitment to the current 12:1 faculty-student ratio is wavering. While we realize that external constraints will make some difficult choices inevitable, we hope that the structure and resources for the general education program will be strong.

In addition to financial resources, commitment to the general education program should be rewarded. For example, general education scholarship and participation should be given high value during **Rank &Tenure review**. As Karen Maitland Schilling and Dwight Smith write: "An institutional commitment to explicit general education outcomes would suggest that high-quality faculty participation in general education would receive favorable attention in the promotion and tenure process" (2010, p. 36). Junior faculty are sometimes reluctant to teach FYS because they worry that results of the student opinion surveys from these classes will not be as favorable as the results they get when they teach disciplinary courses. Faculty should be rewarded for taking the risks needed to generate meaningful student learning experiences. Paul L. Gaston and Jerry G. Gaff put it this way: "Hence a further requisite is a closer alignment between the value the institution attaches to general education and the rewards it offers to those who teach within it. At the very least, effective teaching within the general education must not function as an impediment to acquiring tenure, promotion, or increases in compensation" (2009, pp. 27-28).

Although there are costs to maintaining a vibrant general education program, the research demonstates that these investments can have positive effects on student **retention**. Changes in general education requirements have an effect on student retention, as fifty-eight percent of the institutions that adopted comprehensive reform of general education reported retention gains (Gaff 1991, 95). Moreover, these reforms are likely to have positive effects on those students who are most likely to be at risk. High-impact practices found in good general education programs are "things that make learning so engaging that students want to come back," says Ken O'Donnell, senior director of student engagement and academic initiatives and partnerships in the Office of the Chancellor at CSU-East Bay. "And that desire to return seems to be boosted the most with people who are most at risk. When they see, as they go along, how college learning can be applied to life and the real world, then they don't have those nagging questions, 'Why am I taking this course?'" (Kuh and O'Donnell, 2013, p. 25).

3. Provide leadership and a home for the general education program and evaluate the learning outcomes through ongoing assessment.

Based on our review of the literature we believe the general education program at CSB/SJU needs a **director and a "home base."** In their article, "The Ecology of General Education Reform," Gordon Arnold and Janet T. Civian argue that leadership of general education directors is "instrumental in keeping the institution's general education program vital. Institutions without a director at the helm often experienced slow but steady retrenchment of their programs. The

challenge is to devise a leadership position that faculty will view as legitimate. Future success of general education programs may depend on improvements in this area" (1997, par. 33).

Colleges and universities that have successfully reformed their general education programs have hired full-time directors to administer newly designed programs. Prior to changes in its general education program, Portland State University had no general education director. However, after its general education task force reviewed "trends in the reform of general education, it became apparent that the long-term success of the program would require a clear administrative point of responsibility, authority, and support." The task force recommended, "*a person be designated to be the administrator of the general education program and that this be that person's primary administrative responsibility. We further recommend that this person be assisted and advised by a General Education Faculty Advisory Committee, which will have the responsibility for overseeing and proposing changes in the program as it evolves*" (emphasis in original, White 1997, p. 201).

With significant reforms to its general education program, Temple University provided the resources for a director , support staff, and office space, as described by Christopher Dennis, Terry Halbert, and Julie Phillips in their article, "Change and Curricular Physics: Leadership in the Process of Reforming General Education." The authors recount the decisions that immediately revitalized their general education program: "The provost made the director [of general education] a full time administrator, moved an additional faculty member into position as full time administrator (co-director), and authorized the hire of a full time assistant director. The provost also…provided the program with its own office space. This enhancement of general education program staffing and the provision of separate space were communicated broadly and became part of the new president's strategy to depict the program as revitalized with the necessary resources to succeed" (2010, p. 74).

Although both Portland State University and Temple University are larger institutions, the need for a full-time director of general education at CSB/SJU is apparent. Recent years "have seen institution-wide general education programs revised to be more purposeful and more coherent," writes Frederick T. Janzow, John B. Hinni, and Jacqueline R. Johnson. "Campus leaders have recognized that they need someone attending to these matters solely or primarily. Variously called coordinator, director, or dean of general education, these new administrators help to sustain the common vision and secure the connections and support of the individuals, offices, and resources that are needed for the curriculum to achieve its purposes" (1997, p. 504). In addition to regular duties overseeing the program, a full-time director would have the time to establish stronger connections between Academic Affairs, general education, and other divisions and programs, with student development programming connected more explicitly to general education. The director could assist Admissions in explaining how our general education program is distinctive and/or why it is essential for students. The director could work with Academic Advising to articulate the purposes of the general education program and provide students with clear pathways for success.

There also needs to be ongoing and better **assessment** of the courses in the general education program at CSB/SJU. Currently, assessment of general education courses is left up to individual departments, with varying degrees of quality and consistency. This was pointed out in the report

of the Comprehensive Evaluation Visit to St. John's University for the Higher Learning Commission, cited previously. Earlier in this report, we discussed the potential of VALUE rubrics, signature work and e-portfolios to provide meaningful evidence of student achievements. We believe a point person needs to be in charge of coordinating these practices and collecting the results, as APSAC is often overworked and focused on reviewing departmental assessment data.

4. Ensure continued quality with a curriculum that serves as a common foundation and language.

According to its web page, the Association for General and Liberal Studies values education practiced as a commitment to a set of ongoing activities: "making *institutional choices* about the most important goals for student learning and defining the learning in terms of desired outcomes; developing a shared faculty *commitment to actions* such as high impact, active learning strategies and faculty development designed to increase student achievement; making *informed judgments* about student achievement and the impact of various general education program support processes; and ensuring *continuous improvements* in the educational program." With a coherent general education curriculum that places students on developmentally appropriate pathways to success from the First Year Seminar to the Ethics Seminar and Capstone, CSB/SJU can emerge as leaders in general education reform, design, and delivery.

C.5   Conclusion

In this report, CCVC has made the case for revisions to the Common Curriculum by documenting the many conversations over the past two years and citing the relevant literature on general education reform. While there are many strengths to the Common Curriculum, including its heavy use of high-impact practices, a revised general education program could make the curriculum more purposeful, reflective, integrative, and sequential. Changes to the Common Curriculum required by SD 2020 could have profound effects on CSB/SJU graduates as they prepare for lives of work, personal fulfillment, and citizenship in the 21st Century.

In our work, we have been buoyed by the tremendous enthusiasm for curricular change voiced by faculty in public forums, meetings with departments, and individual comments submitted as part of the SD 2020 process. We recognize that the prospect of curriculum reform may generate opposition from departments and individuals with vested interests in the status quo. But if the conversation is focused on what is best for students and is supported with evidence from the growing scholarship on general education reform, it can energize the campus. General education reform "can forge community across disciplinary and generational boundaries. Lively debate about general education often invigorates a campus, bringing faculty together as members of their guild to discuss their educational mission" (Arnold and Civian 1997, par. 22).

As the conversation proceeds, there will always be uncertainties that can't be fully anticipated or resolved until we actually adopt and try a revised curriculum. We may not find the "perfect" plan. "Criticizing a faculty for not agreeing on a single 'ideal' model of general education is akin to condemning the United States Congress for not enacting a universally agreeable tax code," writes Derek Bok in *Higher Education in America*. "There are simply too many issues to resolve,

many of which are matters on which thoughtful educators have disagreed for generations" (2013, p. 175). In their article, "Hand in Hand: The Role of Culture, Faculty, Identity, and Mission in Sustaining General Education Reform," Tim Riordan and Stephen Sharkley agree that faculty should seek improvements in their general education programs without the paralysis of perfection: "In curriculum reform, perhaps especially in reform of general education, there will always be unanswered questions and perceived obstacles that lead us to hesitate before moving forward. At some point, however, the only way to determine the quality of a reform is to try it and learn from our practice" (2010, p. 204). This report has presented numerous ideas that could be shaped into a curriculum with vast improvements over what we have now.

In this report, we have crafted principles to guide the process of curricular reform, as well as principles to guide campus teams as they design curricular models. We look forward to the campus conversations on developing a general education curriculum that best serves the needs and expectations of our students.

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Appendix A: CCVC Outreach Activities 2014-2015

Note: This list only includes outreach activities to the larger CSB/SJU community. Regular CCVC meetings are not listed here, but typically occurred every two weeks.

Date	Outreach/Activity
8-20-14	Fall Faculty Workshop on Liberal Learning
8-20-14	CCVC Meeting with Dr. Lee Knefelkamp
9-2-14	Session on Liberal Learning with Joint Faculty Senate
9-26-14	CCVC meeting with the Environmental Studies Department
10-2-14	CCVC meeting with Student Development
10-15-14	CCVC meeting with Academic Advising
10-15-14	CCVC meeting with the Political Science Department
10-20-14	CCVC meeting with the Computer Science Department
10-21-14	CCVC meeting with the Exercise Science and Sports Studies Department
10-27-14	CCVC meeting with the Nursing Department
10-27-14	CCVC meeting with the Hispanic Studies Department
10-27-14	CCVC meeting with the Accounting Department
11-6-14	CCVC meeting with the Biology Department
11-6-14	CCVC meeting with the Global Business Leadership Department
11-13-14	CCVC meeting with the Chemistry Department
11-19-14	CCVC meeting with the Languages and Cultures Department
11-21-14	CCVC meeting with the Nutrition Department
12-3-14	CCVC meeting with the Communication Department
12-3-14	CCVC meeting with Admissions
12-8-14	CCVC meeting with the Economics Department
12-10-14	CCVC meeting with the Music Department
1-22-15	CCVC meeting with the English Department
1-28-15	CCVC meeting with the Education Department
1-29-15	Invitation to the JFA for participants to be part of the team attending the 2015 AAC&U Summer Institute on General Education & Assessment
2-6-15	CCVC meeting with the Theology Department
2-9-15	CCVC meeting with the Art Department
2-16-15	CCVC meeting with the Philosophy Department
2-19-15	CCVC meeting with the Physics Department
3-12-15	CCVC meeting with the Librarians
3-12-15	CCVC meeting with the Center for Global Engagement
3-24-15	CCVC meeting with Experiential Learning and Community Engagement
3-15	CCVC meeting with the St. John's Student Senate
3-27-15	CCVC meeting with the St. Bens Student Senate
4-16-15	CCVC meeting with the Sociology Department

Appendix B: Current CSB/SJU Common Curriculum Learning Goals and Requirements

A Solid Academic Foundation

It is the purpose of the Common Curriculum to provide all students with a solid academic foundation and the fundamental tools necessary to continue developing their intellectual ability and inquiry though a broad liberal arts education. The Common Curriculum is completed by fulfilling the requirements designated in each of the areas/departments below:

Cross-disciplinary Course Requirements

- **First-Year Seminar (FYS):** 2 sequential courses
  Designed to help students further develop skills in critical thinking, speaking and writing.
- **Ethics Common Seminar (ES):** 1 junior/senior level course ETHS390.
  Designed to help students develop the ability to recognize ethical issues, examine them from multiple perspectives and articulate reasoned arguments that support and facilitate responsible decision-making.
- **Experiential Learning:** Students will demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply academic knowledge and skills gained from activities that extend beyond the traditional classroom.
- **Gender:** 1 course
  Designed to expose students to gender issues; may also satisfy another Common Curriculum requirement depending on designation.
- **Intercultural Course:** 1 course
  Designed to help all students develop a greater understanding of diversity while recognizing that individual values are shaped by one's unique background.

Disciplinary Course Requirements

- **Fine Arts (FA):** 4 credits
  Art, Music, Theater
- **Fine Arts Experience (FAE):** no credit (Attendance at a total of 8 designated fine arts events {2 visual/6 performing})
- **Humanities (HM):** 2 courses from different disciplines
  Communication, Education, Gender and Women's Studies, History, Peace Studies, Philosophy, Theater or Literature in any language or in translation
- **Mathematics (MT):** 1 course
- **Natural Sciences (NS):** 1 course
  Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science**,** Courses of the College, Environmental Studies, Geology, Nutrition, Physics
- **Social Sciences (SS):** 1 course
  Communication, Economics, Peace Studies, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology
  NOTE: Social Science (**SS**) requirement must be completed through coursework outside the major department.
- **Theology:** 2 courses
  THEO 111 **(TH)** and THEO 300 level **(TU)**

Global Language Proficiency

- Successful completion of language course of 211 or higher or proficiency examination.

Common Curriculum Learning Goals:

First Year Seminar

This two-semester course addresses the Undergraduate Learning Goals that call for the development of clear thinking and communication skills, while helping students establish patterns of life-long learning and integrating knowledge of self and the world.

Students will improve their writing by:

- Composing multiple papers in both semesters
- Writing a major research paper in the second semester
- Revising all papers after peer and instructor review
- Learning to improve organization and mechanics, discover their own voice, and develop a sense of audience

Students will improve their discussion skills by:

- Participating in discussion based classes
- Receiving explicit instruction on discussion techniques
- Practicing leading discussions
- Receiving periodic feedback on their discussion skills

Students will improve their public speaking ability by:
- Practicing public speaking over the year
- Practicing and presenting a formal oral presentation on their research paper
- Receiving peer and instructor feedback

Students will improve their critical thinking by:

- Engaging in class discussions that focus on examination of arguments and evidence
- Reading and evaluating increasingly challenging texts
- Receiving feedback on essays that focus on critical thinking
- Carefully examining multiple points of view in their research papers

Students will improve their understanding of information literacy by:

- Completing a variety of small research tasks connected with librarian presentations
- Learning how to conduct refined searches and evaluate a variety of sources in the research paper
- Gaining an understanding of plagiarism and learning academic standards for citations

Students will learn some disciplinary content that integrates self and society by:

- Reading to prepare for class, discussing material, applying critical thinking skills to discussion, writing papers, and completing the research paper

Ethics Common Seminar

This course provides a capstone to the liberal arts experience by encouraging students to explore competing ethical approaches, and wrestling with difficult ethical issues. This experience prepares students for a life-long exploration of fundamental questions.

Students will:

- Identify ethical issues inherent in situations common in modern life
- Articulate multiple perspectives on contested ethical issues
- Articulate coherent arguments, grounded in ethical and other scholarly perspectives, in support of their own normative judgments about contested ethical issues
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of the conceptual foundations of the ethical and other scholarly perspectives addressed in the course

Divisional Requirements

CSB and SJU require that students take courses in the Fine Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. While each of these areas stimulate growth in particular ways, collectively they immerse students in different approaches to understanding and the creation of value. This background generates a more flexible, creative quest for solutions to new problems that distinguishes liberally educated people from those with narrow, technical training.

Fine Arts

The Fine Arts requirement helps students deepen their understanding of an area of the arts, and develop the ability to apply analytic skills to aesthetic judgment.

Students will:

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the historical, theoretical or applied aspect of one of the fine arts
- Identify and describe a range of contrasting styles within one of the fine arts
- Experience the creative process through performance/artistic production and or through observation of demonstrations, workshops, live performances, etc.
- Apply analytical skills in exercising artistic discrimination and aesthetic judgment
- Describe how the arts reflect and influence the individual and society

Fine Arts Experience

The Fine Arts Experience insures an early immersion in a range of fine arts, establishing a base that students can build on throughout their lives.

Students will:

- Be exposed to a wide variety of artistic expression through attending fine arts presentations on campus and reflecting upon those experiences
- Learn appropriate audience decorum for these events and have opportunities to demonstrate this behavior
- Better understand and appreciate the visual and performing arts as an expression of the human condition.

Humanities

Study in the Humanities introduces us to new people, places, perspectives and ideas through a careful exploration of texts about and by those "others." As they explore new worlds, students also examine universal issues like identity, community, values, and meaning.

Students will:

- Engage with texts using the analytic, critical, sympathetic, and/or speculative methods of one of the Humanities disciplines.
- Demonstrate critical thinking and effective communication through writing about and discussion of the examined texts.

Natural Science

The Natural Sciences introduce students to a systematic, empirical study of our world, while enhancing analytic skills and precise communication.

Students will:

- Conduct a scientific investigation as part of a lab or field work to answer a given question
- Solve or analyze challenging problems using qualitative and/or quantitative sources of information
- Communicate clearly and concisely the methods, results, and conclusions of a scientific investigation
- Evaluate information, ideas and scientific claims using appropriate criteria.

Social Science

The Social Sciences apply scientific methods to the study of human beings, social forces, and institutions. Students learn a way of examining the world, practice careful analytic thinking, and develop deeper insights into their own experience.

Students will:
- Demonstrate understanding of basic facts and theories of a social science discipline
- Acquire knowledge that enables them to make responsible social, civic and personal choices.
- Make critical social science arguments supported by evidence appropriate to an introductory level.

Departmental Requirements

Our vision of a liberal education also includes courses in several specific disciplines. Each contributes in unique ways while helping to produce graduates with skills that will enable them to compete in a changing world.

Global Language

The study of a world language fosters communication skills while helping students understand cultural patterns other than their own and gaining a broader outlook on historical and contemporary issues. The precise requirements differ by area as follows.

Modern European Languages

Students will:
- Demonstrate a minimum proficiency level of Intermediate-Low, as defined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, in at least two of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Such a level means that students have a functional command of the target language that allows them to communicate limited basic needs and ideas, and negotiate simple situations
- Demonstrate awareness of a variety of cultural contexts in which the target language is used, and have a functional command of the basic rules of social interaction in that language

Classical Languages

Students will:
- Have a functional command of the target language that allows them to read ancient texts of moderate difficulty with the aid of a dictionary
- Demonstrate awareness of the cultural contexts being studied

Asian Languages

Students will:
- Demonstrate a minimum proficiency level of novice-high for speaking, and novice-mid for reading and writing. Such levels mean that students have a functional command of the target language that allows them to communicate basic needs
- Demonstrate awareness of the cultural contexts being studied

English (for non-native speakers)

Students will:
- Demonstrate a minimum proficiency level of Advanced, as defined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, in at least three of the four language skills
- Demonstrate the academic English language skills sufficient to complete college-level work

Mathematics

The Mathematics requirement gives students experience with the power and limitations of mathematical reasoning as an approach to solving problems in other disciplines and in everyday life.

1. Students will apply appropriate techniques to solve mathematical problems.
2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the mathematical concepts which underlie the techniques they use.
3. Students will apply appropriate mathematical techniques to investigate problems from other disciplines or everyday life.

Theology (first course)

Taken together, the two Theology courses make a significant contribution to a graduate's understanding of the core values of the founding institutions. More specifically, the first course provides a basic knowledge of the Christian tradition, and an understanding of the Benedictine approach within that tradition.

1. Students will demonstrate an ability to think critically and historically about some of the principal sources (especially Sacred Scripture), doctrines, and themes that shape Christian theology.
2. Students will demonstrate an ability to explain differing viewpoints on at least one contemporary theological issue.
3. Students will demonstrate an ability to apply at least one aspect of the Benedictine tradition to at least one of the issues addressed in the course.

Theology Course (second, upper division course)

This course builds on its predecessor, developing a critical awareness of religious ideas and rigorously applying those insights to contemporary issues.
Students will:
- Articulate a basic knowledge and theological understanding of a specific religious topic or theme
- Demonstrate a critical theological understanding of religious texts, images, artifacts, ideas, and/or practices in their historical and/or cultural contexts
- Analyze contemporary issues facing religion and society based on their theological knowledge

Designated Courses

Designated courses focus on particular areas critical to the CSB/SJU mission, but can be combined with other courses taken for other purposes.

Experiential Learning

The Experiential Learning requirement asks students to practice their ability to learn independently by taking a prior knowledge/skill, applying it in a more fluid learning environment that they have designed, and then reflecting on how the entire experience deepened their understanding.
Students will:
- Demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply knowledge and skills gained from one or more courses in activities that extend beyond the traditional classroom
- Demonstrate specific ways in which the experiential-learning activities deepen their understanding of the knowledge and skills gained through traditional course work

Gender (GE) Learning Goals

As two single sex educational institutions founded by Benedictine men and women, CSB and SJU have been shaped by different gender perspectives and experiences. The Gender requirement honors that tradition and prepares our students for an effective role in the world by helping them to understand how gender shapes the experience of both

men and women. By studying the role of gender in a particular course content, they will be better able to "define what binds together and what separates the various segments of humanity."
Students will:

1. Use gender as a primary lens of analysis for examining course content
2. Identify the gendered perspectives and experiences as they manifest themselves within course content. Students must identify at least two gendered perspectives across the gender spectrum (feminine, masculine, trans, queer, etc.)
3. Articulate how gender intersects with at least one of the following: race, class, ethnicity, nationality, or sexuality
4. Demonstrate ability to analyze individual or local experiences of gender in light of relevant broader structural and/or theoretical contexts

Intercultural Learning
The Intercultural requirement helps prepare students for the increasingly diverse world they inhabit in two fundamental ways. First, it creates an understanding that we are all products of a particular culture, and that our perspective on the world grows from that background. Second, it enables our students to learn enough about another culture to realize that there is always diversity beneath the stereotypes. Armed with these two insights, our graduates are able to work more effectively with others at home and abroad.
Students will:
- Demonstrate a level of understanding of another culture, including the awareness that it is neither monolithic nor static
- Demonstrate an understanding that their perspective on the world is shaped in certain ways by their particular background
- Demonstrate an awareness that when we encounter another culture, we filter the new experience through established perspectives, making it more difficult to uncover our common humanity and the reasons for our differences

 *The Joint Faculty Assembly approved these requirements incrementally. The major portion came between September 2006 and April 2007. Experiential Learning was added in January 2009, followed by the Intercultural requirement in May 2009.
 Last updated by Ken Jones, April 26, 2013 (updates to TH,GE, and MT learning goals made 8/13/15 by L Schmitz)

Appendix C: LEAP Principles of Excellence

Developed by AAC&U, the Principles of Excellence offer both challenging standards and flexible guidance for an era of educational reform and renewal. These Principles can be used to guide change in any college, university, or community college. They are intended to influence practice across the disciplines as well as in general education programs.

- Principle One: Aim High – and Make Excellence Inclusive
  o Make the essential learning outcomes a framework for the entire educational experience, connecting school, college, work, and life
- Principle Two: Give Students a Compass
  o Focus each student's plan of study on achieving the essential learning outcomes – and assess progress
- Principle Three: Teach the Arts of Inquiry and Innovation
  o Immerse all students in analysis, discovering, problem solving, and communication, beginning in school and advancing in college
- Principle Four: Engage the Big Questions
  o Teach through the curriculum to far-reaching issues – contemporary and enduring – in science and society, cultures and values, global interdependence, the changing economy, and human dignity and freedom
- Principle Five: Connect Knowledge with Choices and Action
  o Prepare students for citizenship and work through engaged and guided learning on "real-world" problems
- Principle Six: Foster Civic, Intercultural, and Ethical Learning
  o Emphasize personal and social responsibility, in every field of study
- Principle Seven: Assess Students' Ability to Apply Learning to Complex Problems
  o Use assessment to deepen learning and establish a culture of shared purpose and continuous improvement

Appendix D: Sample General Education Vision Statements from other Institutions

University of Southern Maine (combines vision statement with learning outcomes): "General education at USM is a coherent, integrative and rigorous liberal education that will enable our graduates to be world-minded, intentional, life-long learners. General education engages the academic community in substantive learning experiences that both illuminate and transcend the perspectives of various disciplines, and systematically fosters the values and dispositions, knowledge, and skills essential for students to demonstrate: 1. Informed understandings of interrelationships between human cultures and the natural world; 2. Analytical, contextual, and integrative thinking about complex issues; 3. Effective communication using multiple forms of expression; 4. Critical reflection upon, and informed action in, their roles as participants in multiple communities; and 5. Ethical action to contribute to the social and environmental welfare of local and global communities."

Appalachian State University separates its mission and vision statements: "The Mission: Our General Education curriculum aligns with the University's Strategic Plan directive to create a transformational educational experience by: facilitating interdisciplinary and integrative approaches to teaching and learning; enhancing academic quality and improving student retention and success; and engaging students in diverse experiences to increase their intercultural competence and cultivate engaged global citizenship. Appalachian's General Education curriculum also aligns with national best practices that empower students, regardless of their chosen major, with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and a strong sense of values, ethics, and civic engagement for responsible global citizenship. We respond to the demands of the 21st century for broadly educated, informed, and engaged citizens. We prepare college graduates with higher levels of learning and knowledge as well as strong intellectual and practical skills to navigate this more demanding environment successfully and responsibly. The Vision: To empower students with the habits of mind essential for making positive contributions as engaged citizens in an interconnected world."

Wilkes University: "The general education curriculum at Wilkes University provides a liberal arts foundation for life-long intellectual development and personal growth, engenders a sense of values and civic responsibility, and prepares all students to meet the opportunities and challenges of a diverse and continually changing world. The general education curriculum fosters the development of communication, intellectual and technical skills, and introduces Wilkes students to a broad range of disciplinary perspectives, and provides the opportunity to develop problem solving and critical thinking skills, and an awareness of the world beyond the classroom."

Penn State University: "Enable students to acquire the skills, knowledge, and experiences for living and working in interconnected and globalized contexts, so they can contribute to making life better for others, themselves, and the larger world."

Montana State University: "The mission of the Montana State University core curriculum is to prepare students to use multiple perspectives in making informed, critical and ethical judgments in their personal, public and professional lives."

Washington State University: "WSU fosters educational outcomes that include knowledge of human cultures, of the arts, and of the natural and physical world. Students develop their intellectual and practical skills through integrated learning experiences that prepare them to be responsible local and global citizens and leaders. They reach this through a broad liberal education, specialization in a major, and community and field-based experiences that explore the world's major questions."

University of North Carolina at Greensboro: "The faculty and staff of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro are dedicated to student learning and believe that the best evidence of this commitment is the caliber of UNCG graduates. A UNCG graduate should combine specialized education in a major with the skills, knowledge, and understanding necessary to be a lifelong learner, an ethical and independent decision maker, a critical and creative thinker, a clear and effective communicator, and a responsible citizen."

Temple University: "Ultimately, general education is about equipping our students to make connections between what they learn, their lives, and their communities. It aims to produce engaged citizens, capable of participating fully in a richly diverse world."

Appendix E: LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes

These essential learning goals (ELOs) were established by the AAC&U as an important initial step in their LEAP campaign. It is important to notice that most of the ideals expressed by the faculty, students, and other stakeholders in our academic community are included in these ELOs.

Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world
- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages and the arts

Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring.

Intellectual and practical skills including
- inquiry and analysis,
- critical and creative thinking,
- written and oral communication,
- quantitative literacy,
- information literacy,
- teamwork and problem solving.

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance.

Personal and social responsibility, including
- civic knowledge and engagement-local and global
- intercultural knowledge and competence
- ethical reasoning and action
- foundations and skills for lifelong learning
- gender

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges.

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 problems.

Appendix F: AAC&U High-Impact Educational Practices

The following pages describe high-impact practices as defined by AAC&U.

High-Impact Educational Practices

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects

Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.

LEAP

Table 1

Relationships between Selected High-Impact Activities, Deep Learning, and Self-Reported Gains

	Deep Learning	Gains: General	Gains: Personal	Gains: Practical
First-Year				
Learning Communities	+++	++	++	++
Service Learning	+++	++	+++	+++
Senior				
Study Abroad	++	+	+	++
Student–Faculty Research	+++	++	++	++
Internships	++	++	++	++
Service Learning	+++	++	+++	+++
Senior Culminating Experience	+++	++	++	++

+ p<0.001, ++ p<0.001 & Unstd B > 0.10, +++ p<0.001 & Unstd B > 0.30

Table 2

Relationships between Selected High-Impact Activities and Clusters of Effective Educational Practices

	Level of Academic Challenge	Active and Collaborative Learning	Student–Faculty Interaction	Supportive Campus Environment
First-Year				
Learning Communities	+++	+++	+++	++
Service Learning	+++	+++	+++	+++
Senior				
Study Abroad	++	++	++	++
Student–Faculty Research	+++	+++	+++	++
Internships	++	+++	+++	++
Service Learning	+++	+++	+++	+++
Senior Culminating Experience	++	+++	+++	++

+ p<0.001, ++ p<0.001 & Unstd B > 0.10, +++ p<0.001 & Unstd B > 0.30

Source: *Ensuring Quality & Taking High-Impact Practices to Scale* by George D. Kuh and Ken O'Donnell, with Case Studies by Sally Reed. (Washington, DC: AAC&U, 2013). For information and more resources and research from LEAP, see www.aacu.org/leap.

Appendix G: Sample Guided Pathway with Signature Work

The following pages describe the Signature work as defined by AAC&U.

The LEAP Challenge:
Signature Work for All Students

The LEAP Challenge invites colleges and universities to make Signature Work a goal for all students—and the expected standard of quality learning in college.

WHAT IS SIGNATURE WORK?

In Signature Work, a student uses his or her cumulative learning to pursue a significant project related to a problem she or he defines. In the project conducted throughout at least one semester, the student takes the lead and produces work that expresses insights and learning gained from the inquiry and demonstrates the skills and knowledge she or he has acquired. Faculty and mentors provide support and guidance.

Signature Work might be pursued in a capstone course or in research conducted across thematically linked courses, or in another field-based activity or internship. It might include practicums, community service, or other experiential learning. It always should include substantial writing, multiple kinds of reflection on learning, and visible results. Many students may choose to use e-portfolios to display their Signature Work products and learning outcomes.

"I learned the absolute most from my research project...with the professor as well as [from] my capstone experience because both of those fostered independent learning."

— *Student participant in LEAP focus group*

SIGNATURE WORK'S ESSENTIAL ROLE

A twenty-first-century education prepares students to work with unscripted problems. Today's graduates will participate in an economy fueled by successful innovation—and engage with diverse communities that urgently need solutions to intractable problems. Our graduates will have to secure environmental sustainability, find ways to maintain human dignity and equity in an increasingly polarized nation, and manage a world rife with conflict. They will need to balance family and career in a climate that increasingly devalues personal privacy and presents obstacles to flourishing.

Negotiating this world demands an education that explores issues from multiple perspectives and across disciplines—and that helps students apply what they learn to real-world situations. Signature Work is a powerful way to help students integrate various elements of their education and apply their learning in meaningful ways.

Understanding Signature Work

TAPPING MOTIVATION

In Signature Work, each student addresses one or more problems that matter to the student and to society. A problem may be related to a contemporary issue that needs a practical solution, or to an enduring concept, such as freedom, integrity, or justice.

Through Signature Work, students immerse themselves in exploration, choosing the questions they want to study and preparing to explain the significance of their work to others. This process helps students develop the capacities—e.g., investigation, evidence-based reasoning, and the ability to collaborate constructively—to grapple with problems where the "right answer" is still unknown and where any answer may be actively contested.

Of course, colleges can and should assess a student's Signature Work for evidence of his or her proficiency on key learning outcomes. But the value of Signature Work goes far beyond assessment. It taps students' own motivations, kindling imagination and providing opportunities for in-depth learning that go well beyond the traditional compilation of course credits, grades, and credentials.

> "The premium on lifelong learning just keeps going up…and the importance of static knowledge is going down. …Students have to have knowledge and know how to use it. … All learning should revolve around projects."
>
> — *David Rattray, Executive Vice President, Education and Workforce Development, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce*

Signature Work also plays a central role in preparing students to navigate through ongoing and often disruptive change. The world is evolving quickly. And in today's economy, graduates are likely to move to new jobs, or even new careers, multiple times. These transitions will require new skills or even personal reinvention. More than ever before, students' ability to tap their own inner resources—their sense of purpose, ethical compass, and resilience—will be important components of success in work and life.

BUILDING SKILLS EMPLOYERS REQUIRE

Signature Work can help every student get more out of higher education—and be better prepared for work and life. It helps students integrate their major area of study with other disciplines and apply all they have learned to real-world situations.

Signature Work also builds the skills employers most value: 91 percent of employers say that critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving abilities are *more important* than a potential employee's undergraduate major. Nearly all employers surveyed (90 percent) give hiring preference to college graduates with skills that enable them to contribute to innovation in the workplace.*

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SIGNATURE WORK IN ACTION

Signature Work is underway at colleges and universities across the country. The names and approaches differ, but the concept of students taking the lead on complex learning is the same. Selected examples include

- The Integrated Concentration in Science (iCons) at the **University of Massachusetts Amherst (MA)** is a set of interdisciplinary, problem-based courses for students majoring in fields across the sciences, engineering, and public health. Students take one course each of their first three years and complete a yearlong independent research project during their senior year. iCons courses use a case study model, with case studies focused on the evolving role of science in addressing unsolved social or health problems.

- **LaGuardia Community College (NY)** engages students with learning communities anchored by development of individual electronic portfolios. Students use the e-portfolios to display their best work as well as to track and reflect on their own progress in achieving their academic, work, and life goals. LaGuardia's curricular pathways also provide opportunities to engage with and apply learning in the diverse neighborhoods surrounding the college.

- **The College of Wooster (OH)** requires every student to complete an in-depth senior research project called Independent Study. The entire curriculum builds students' capacity for this project, so by senior year, students are able to research effectively.

- **Cornell University (NY)** recently announced the launch of Engaged Cornell, an effort to make community engagement a hallmark of its undergraduate program. Over the next 10 years, across all its colleges, Cornell aims to expand curricula that incorporate learning experiences in communities, guided by a set of cross-disciplinary learning outcomes and good practices for community partnerships. By 2025, the initiative aims to provide opportunity for every student to participate in community-engagement, at home or around the world.

SIGNATURE WORK, PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS AND FLOURISHING

EMPLOYERS VALUE PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

87%

Percentage of employers who say they would be more likely to consider hiring a candidate if she or he had completed an advanced, comprehensive senior project.

*Hart Research Associates. *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success* (AAC&U, 2015).

EXPERIENCES THAT LEAD TO FLOURISHING

$2.4x$

College graduates are 2.4 times as likely to be **engaged at work** if they had an internship or job that allowed them to apply their classroom learning, were active in cocurricular activities, and worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete.

Only 6 percent of graduates report having all of these experiences. Only 32 percent report working on a project that took at least a semester to complete.**

**Gallup. *Great Jobs, Great Lives: The 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index Report* (2014).

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Sample Guided Pathway with Signature Work

Preparing students to do Signature Work will require thoughtful redesign of curricular pathways. This example of a general education pathway is rich with problem-based learning. It can be integrated with any well-designed major. Students taking this pathway would develop core intellectual skills and knowledge through exploration of big questions, and they would be required to apply their learning in their own Signature Work.

FIRST-YEAR INQUIRY and COLLEGE WRITING

CREATIVE & ARTISTIC INQUIRY

CROSS-CULTURAL and GLOBAL STUDIES

CULTURAL/ HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

SCIENCE EXPLORATIONS

QUANTITATIVE REASONING

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

E-PORTFOLIO SHOWS STUDENT'S

▲ Diversity and global learning courses

☆ High-Impact Practices (HIPs)

◆ Courses related to major field

☐ Writing intensive

Intensive in quantitative analysis

Both writing intensive and intensive in quantitative analysis

"It is high time to break free of the old 'breadth first, depth second' model for college learning. Instead, we need guided pathways to integrative and adaptive learning. We must ensure that all students are given opportunities to tackle complex questions—from first to final year." — *Carol Geary Schneider, President, AAC&U*

THEMATIC COURSE CLUSTERS
Three or more courses across multiple disciplines, including the major field. A student examines questions important to him/her and to society.

SECOND-YEAR INQUIRY SEMINAR*
Cross-disciplinary questions and student signature project

THEMATIC COURSE 1

THEMATIC COURSE 2

THEMATIC COURSE 3

SIGNATURE WORK
A student's best work, which can take many forms (e.g., capstone; internship; field work; research; community-based research)

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING AND PROFICIENCIES OVER TIME

*For students in two-year degree programs, this work is Signature Work. For students in four-year degree programs, it is preparation for Signature Work. Transfer students may take the second-year inquiry seminar at the original institution or following transfer.

Appendix H: The Degree Qualifications Profile Overview

These qualifications are expected to be met by students by the end of their undergraduate career at the Bachelor's level. These qualifications or competencies describe ways that students demonstrate their proficiency of the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes as highlighted in Appendix A. The DQPs presented here are from The Degree Qualifications Profile published by the Lumina Foundation. A full copy of the Lumina Foundation DQP publication can be found at http://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/dqp.pdf.

Specialized Knowledge:
- Defines and explains the structure, styles and practices of the field of study using its tools, technologies, methods and specialized terms.
- Investigates a familiar but complex problem in the field of study by assembling, arranging and reformulating ideas, concepts, designs and techniques.
- Frames, clarifies and evaluates a complex challenge that bridges the field of study and one other field, using theories, tools, methods and scholarship from those fields to produce independently or collaboratively an investigative, creative or practical work illuminating that challenge.
- Constructs a summative project, paper, performance or application that draws on current research, scholarship and techniques in the field of study.

Broad and Integrative knowledge:
- Describes and evaluates the ways in which at least two fields of study define, address, and interpret the importance for society of a problem in science, the arts, society, human services, economic life or technology. Explains how the methods of inquiry in these fields can address the challenge and proposes an approach to the problem that draws on these fields.
- Produces an investigative, creative or practical work that draws on specific theories, tools and methods from at least two core fields of study.
- Defines and frames a problem important to the major field of study, justifies the significance of the challenge or problem in a wider societal context, explains how methods from the primary field of study and one or more core fields of study can be used to address the problem, and develops an approach that draws on both the major and core fields.

Intellectual Skills:
Analytic inquiry
- Differentiates and evaluates theories and approaches to selected complex problems within the chosen field of study and at least one other field.
Use of Information resources
- Locates, evaluates, incorporates, and properly cites multiple information resources in different media or different languages in projects, papers or performances.
- Generates information through independent or collaborative inquiry and uses that information in a project, paper or performance.

Engaging diverse perspectives
- Constructs a written project, laboratory report, exhibit, performance or community service design expressing an alternate cultural, political or technological vision and explains how this vision differs from current realities.
- Frames a controversy or problem within the field of study in terms of at least two political, cultural, historical or technological forces, explores and evaluates competing perspectives on the controversy or problem, and presents a reasoned analysis of the issue, either orally or in writing, that demonstrates consideration of the competing views.

Ethical reasoning
- Analyzes competing claims from a recent discovery, scientific contention or technical practice with respect to benefits and harms to those affected, articulates the ethical dilemmas inherent in the tension of benefits and harms, and either (a) arrives at a clearly expressed reconciliation of that tension that is informed by ethical principles or (b) explains why such a reconciliation cannot be accomplished.
- Identifies and elaborates key ethical issues present in at least one prominent social or cultural problem, articulates the ways in which at least two differing ethical perspectives influence decision making concerning those problems, and develops and defends an approach to address the ethical issue productively.

Quantitative fluency
- Translates verbal problems into mathematical algorithms so as to construct valid arguments using the accepted symbolic system of mathematical reasoning and presents the resulting calculations, estimates, risk analyses or quantitative evaluations of public information in papers, projects or multimedia presentations.
- Constructs mathematical expressions where appropriate for issues initially described in non-quantitative terms.

Communicative fluency
- Constructs sustained, coherent arguments, narratives or explications of issues, problems or technical issues and processes, in writing and at least one other medium, to general and specific audiences.
- Conducts an inquiry concerning information, conditions, technologies or practices in the field of study that makes substantive use of non-English-language sources.
- Negotiates with one or more collaborators to advance an oral argument or articulate an approach to resolving a social, personal or ethical dilemma.

Applied and collaborative learning:
- Prepares and presents a project, paper, exhibit, performance or other appropriate demonstration linking knowledge or skills acquired in work, community or research activities with knowledge acquired in one or more fields of study, explains how those elements are structured, and employs appropriate citations to demonstrate the relationship of the product to literature in the field.
- Negotiates a strategy for group research or performance, documents the strategy so that others may understand it, implements the strategy, and communicates the results.
- Writes a design, review or illustrative application for an analysis or case study in a scientific, technical, economic, business, health, education or communications context.

- Completes a substantial project that evaluates a significant question in the student's field of study, including an analytic narrative of the effects of learning outside the classroom on the research or practical skills employed in executing the project.

Civic and global learning:
- Explains diverse positions, including those representing different cultural, economic and geographic interests, on a contested public issue, and evaluates the issue in light of both those interests and evidence drawn from journalism and scholarship.
- Develops and justifies a position on a public issue and relates this position to alternate views held by the public or within the policy environment.
- Collaborates with others in developing and implementing an approach to a civic issue, evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the process, and, where applicable, describes the result.
- Identifies a significant issue affecting countries, continents or cultures, presents quantitative evidence of that challenge through tables and graphs, and evaluates the activities of either non-governmental organizations or cooperative inter-governmental.

Appendix I: Alverno College "Core Abilities"

The Alverno curriculum model is based on competencies or what is referred to as core capabilities. These are meant to help you develop necessary skill sets through ongoing assessment and feedback. Students demonstrate what they have learned until the skill is mastered. To enable mastery of this skill set, these abilities throughout the curriculum. This scaffolding is seen with the numbered steps highlighted under each ability below. For example, in a first year course, students would expect to meet steps 1 or 2. In order to graduate from Alverno, students are required to reach at least level 4. In some departments, they may require higher levels.

- **Communication:** makes meaning of the world by connecting people, ideas, books, media and technology. You must demonstrate and master the ability to speak, read, write and listen clearly, in person and through electronic media.
- **Analysis:** develops critical and independent thinking. You must demonstrate and master the ability to use experience, knowledge, reason and belief to form carefully considered judgments.
- **Problem-Solving:** helps define problems and integrate resources to reach decisions, make recommendations or implement action plans. You must demonstrate and master the ability to determine what is wrong and how to fix it, working alone or in groups.
- **Valuing:** approaches moral issues by understanding the dimensions of personal decisions and accepting responsibility for consequences. You must demonstrate and master the ability to recognize different value systems, including your own; appreciate moral dimensions of your decisions and accept responsibility for them.
- **Social Interaction:** facilitates results in group efforts by eliciting the views of others to help formulate conclusions. You must demonstrate and master the ability to elicit other views, mediate disagreements and help reach conclusions in group settings
- **Developing a Global Perspective:** requires understanding of -- and respect for -- the economic, social and biological interdependence of global life. You must demonstrate and master the ability to appreciate economic, social and ecological connections that link the world's nations and people.
- **Effective Citizenship:** involves making informed choices and developing strategies for collaborative involvement in community issues. You must demonstrate and master the ability to act with an informed awareness of issues and participate in civic life through volunteer activities and leadership.
- **Aesthetic Engagement:** integrates the intuitive dimensions of participation in the arts with broader social, cultural and theoretical frameworks. You must demonstrate and master the ability to engage with the arts and draw meaning and value from artistic expression.

They designed assessment tools that focused on performance-based assessments. Importantly, the institution came to see design of assessment "as an integral part of teaching, no an addition to it."

Structure: Each faculty member serves in a disciplinary department as well as in an ability. There is a department chair for each ability. To facilitate meeting times, the institution established a common meeting time and hold three institutes (August, January, and May) to support development, research, and scholarship in these ability areas.

More is included in the documented below.

Alverno
COLLEGE

ABILITY-BASED LEARNING PROGRAM

Since the early 1970s, the Alverno College faculty have been developing and implementing ability-based undergraduate education. More recently, educators at every level — elementary, secondary, undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional — have become involved in an effort to redefine education in terms of abilities needed for effectiveness in the worlds of work, family, and civic community.

One of the greatest challenges to faculty in shaping an ability-based program is the tendency to think of the development of abilities in contrast to a mastery of subject matter or content, as if one precludes the other. Through our practice, we have learned that it is impossible to teach for abilities without a subject matter context. The distinctive feature of an ability-based approach is that we make explicit the expectation that *students should be able to do something with what they know*.

Few educators would argue with the proposition that a close reading of a philosophic text should have an impact on the thinking of students beyond merely grasping the meaning. The encounter with complex ideas should help develop the students' ability to reason and question and help them one day to think and act effectively in contexts removed from the original concern of the text. By making such expectations explicit and by clarifying steps one can take to develop cognitive and affective habits, we assist students in learning how to learn.

Ability-Based Learning Outcomes

The specific abilities identified by our faculty as central to our approach to liberal arts and professional education are

Communication
Analysis
Problem Solving
Valuing in Decision-Making
Social Interaction
Developing a Global Perspective
Effective Citizenship
Aesthetic Engagement

These are the most visible features of our learning program. However, it would be a fundamental misperception to see students' development and demonstration of these eight abilities as the primary outcome or end of an Alverno education. Our ultimate goal is the development of each student as an educated, mature adult with such personal characteristics as

- a sense of responsibility for her own learning and the ability and desire to continue learning independently

- self-knowledge and the ability to assess her own performance critically and accurately

- an understanding of how to apply her knowledge and abilities in many different contexts

Essentially, our goal for students is independent lifelong learning, and the development and demonstration of specific abilities in disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts are a means to that end. For example, our formal requirement that students develop specific abilities in one course context and then apply them to the subject matter of other courses encourages *every* student in the college to transfer learning independently because the explicit expectation makes *every* student aware of the possibility.

Individual Abilities as Frameworks for Learning

In the educational program described above, individual abilities cannot be separated from each other or from the individual who performs them. There can be no effective social interaction, for example, without the ability to speak clearly and persuasively; one cannot engage aesthetically with works of art without a sensitivity to the values that underlie judgment.

But we make conceptual distinctions among the abilities in order to teach for them. Each ability provides a framework or a plan for students to work effectively with the subject matter of their courses. As students gain experience, they begin to draw upon various abilities they have learned and combine them in more complex ways.

Teaching and Assessing Student Abilities

In order to make these complex abilities teachable, we have articulated each one as a series of developmental levels corresponding to student progress across her college career, from general education (levels one through four) to specialized work in the majors and supporting areas of study (levels five and six). For each level of ability we have devised criteria for the ability being performed.

These criteria serve two purposes. They provide a student with a tangible goal for her learning, and they give the faculty a standard for judging and certifying that she has demonstrated the ability. These college-wide criteria are generic in the sense that they are not tied to specific courses. Each faculty member writes explicit performance criteria in language appropriate to the context of specific courses. But the common understanding on the part of faculty helps to ensure that the student recognizes that the same basic ability has relevance in multiple course contexts and that she is refining her ability through multiple applications.

As a context for evaluating student demonstration of abilities, we have developed the concept of student assessment as a multidimensional process of judging the individual in action. Assessment is multidimensional, both in the sense that students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate specific abilities, and that individual assessments engage students in multiple ways — as writers, as speakers, as creators of artifacts.

In both course-based assessments and integrative assessments that focus student learning from several courses, we elicit samples of performance representing the expected learning outcomes of a course or program. Faculty and other trained assessors observe and judge a student's performance based on explicit criteria. Their diagnostic feedback, as well as the reflective practice of self assessment by each student, helps to create a continuous process that improves learning and integrates it with assessment.

General Education

Each department emphasizes the abilities most closely related to its studies and takes responsibility for providing learning and assessment opportunities for those abilities. In beginning courses, students develop and demonstrate levels one and two of the abilities. They continue to advance through the levels within a coherent arrangement of courses. The distribution of learning and assessment opportunities among all general education courses in the humanities, fine arts, natural and behavioral sciences as well as the introductory courses in majors and supporting areas of study, assures students of multiple opportunities to demonstrate all eight abilities through level four. And since each course beyond the introductory level carries ability prerequisites as well as course prerequisites, students are assured of taking each course when they are ready to develop the levels of abilities emphasized there.

Specialization

Each department has specified the integrated knowledge/performance expectations of advanced level undergraduate specialization in its major and has related those to the appropriate general abilities of the entire college curriculum. For example, English faculty have determined that one of the outcomes they expect for their majors is to "communicate an understanding of literary criticism, question its assumptions, and use its frameworks to analyze and evaluate works." The department has made explicit connections between this outcome and communication, analysis, valuing, and aesthetic response abilities at the advanced levels.

For a major in chemistry, students must "use different models of chemistry to analyze and synthesize chemical data and to critique the data, strategies, and models of chemistry." The primary focus of these outcomes is level six of analysis — independent application of theory. But a student must also draw upon her valuing ability to critique the underlying assumptions of the theoretical models, and she must be able to communicate her analysis and criticism effectively in different modes. In essence, students at the advanced level must be able to engage all of their abilities to be effective.

This brief overview represents a curriculum in the process of ongoing development. Over the years we continue to revise our sense of the meaning of the abilities. Our insights grow from our experience of teaching them and studying how our students develop them. We expect that our ability-based curriculum will always be a "work in progress" and that we will be able to serve as models of lifelong learners for our students.

The Individual Levels for each capability are highlighted below:

1. Communication: Speaking, Writing, Listening, Reading, Quantitative Literacy, Computer Literacy

Beginning Levels: Uses self assessment to identify and evaluate communication performance

Level 1—Recognizes own strengths and weaknesses in different modes of communication

Level 2—Recognizes the processes involved in each mode of communication and the interactions among them

Intermediate Levels: Communicates using discipline concepts and frameworks with growing understanding

Level 3—Uses communication processes purposefully to make meaning in different disciplinary contexts

Level 4—Connects discrete modes of communication and integrates them effectively within the frameworks of a discipline

Advanced Levels in Areas of Specialization: Performs clearly and sensitively in increasingly more creative and engaging presentations

Level 5—Selects, adapts, and combines communication strategies in relation to disciplinary/professional frameworks and theories

Level 6—Uses strategies, theories, and technologies that reflect engagement in a discipline or profession

2. Analysis

Beginning Levels: Observes individual parts of phenomena and their relationships to one another

Level 1—Observes accurately

Level 2—Draws reasonable inferences from observations

Intermediate Levels: Uses disciplinary concepts and frameworks with growing understanding

Level 3—Perceives and makes relationships

Level 4—Analyzes structure and organization

Advanced Levels in Areas of Specialization: Consciously and purposefully applies disciplinary frameworks to analyze complex phenomena

Level 5—Refines understanding of frameworks and identifies criteria for determining what frameworks are suitable for explaining a phenomenon

Level 6—Independently applies frameworks from major and minor discipline to analyze complex issues

3. Problem Solving

Beginning Levels: Articulates problem solving process and understands how a discipline framework is used to solve a problem

Level 1—Articulates problem solving process by making explicit the steps taken to approach a problem

Level 2—Practices using elements of disciplinary problem solving processes to approach problems

Intermediate Levels: Takes thoughtful responsibility for process and proposed solutions to problems

Level 3—Performs all phases or steps within a disciplinary problem solving process, including evaluation and real or simulated implementation

Level 4—Independently analyzes, selects, uses, and evaluates various approaches to develop solutions

Advanced Levels in Areas of Specialization: Uses problem solving strategies in a wide variety of professional situations

Level 5—Demonstrates capacity to transfer understanding of group processes into effective performance in collaborative problem solving

Level 6—Applies methods and frameworks of profession/discipline(s): integrating them with personal values and perspectives; adapting them to the specific field setting; demonstrating independence and creativity in structuring and carrying out problem solving activities

4. Valuing in Decision-Making

Beginning Levels: Explores the valuing process

Level 1—Identifies own and others' values and some key emotions they evoke

Level 2—Connects own values to behavior and articulates the affective, cognitive, spiritual and behavioral dimensions of this process

Intermediate Levels: More precisely analyzes the role of groups, cultures, and societies in the construction of values and their expression in moral systems or ethical frameworks

Level 3—Analyzes reciprocal relationship between own values and their social contexts and explores how that relationship plays out

Level 4—Uses the perspectives and concepts of particular disciplines to inform moral judgments and decisions

Advanced Levels in Areas of Specialization: Explores and applies value systems and ethical codes at the heart of the field

Level 5—Uses valuing frameworks of a major field of study or profession to engage significant issues in personal, professional, and civic contexts

Level 6—Consistently examines and cultivates own value systems in order to take initiative as a responsible self in the world

5. Social Interaction

Beginning Levels: Learns frameworks and self assessment skills to support interpersonal and task-oriented group interactions

Level 1—Recognizes analytic frameworks as an avenue to becoming aware of own behaviors in interactions and to participating fully in those interactions

Level 2—Gains insight into the affective and practical ramifications of interactions in their social and cultural context

Intermediate Levels: Uses analytic frameworks and self awareness to engage with others in increasingly effective interaction across a range of situations

Level 3—Increases effectiveness in group and interpersonal interaction based on careful analysis and awareness of self and others in social and cultural contexts

Level 4—Displays and continues to practice increasingly effective interactions in group and interpersonal situations reflecting cognitive understanding of social and cultural contexts and awareness of affective components of own and others' behavior

Advanced Levels in Areas of Specialization: Integrates discipline-specific frameworks with social interaction models to function effectively with diverse stakeholders in professional roles

Level 5—Consistently and with increasing autonomy demonstrates effective professional interaction using multiple disciplinary frameworks to interpret behavior and monitor own interaction choices

Level 6—Uses leadership abilities to facilitate achievement of professional goals in effective interpersonal and group interactions

7. Effective Citizenship

Beginning Levels: Identifies significant community issues and assesses ability to act on them

Level 1—Develops self assessment skills and begins to identify frameworks to describe community experience

Level 2—Uses discipline concepts to describe what makes an issue an issue and to develop skills necessary to gather information, make sound judgments, and participate in the decision making process

Intermediate Levels: Works within both organizational and community contexts to apply developing citizenship skills

Level 3—Examines and evaluates individual and organizational charateristics, skills and strategies to accomplish mutual goals in and among organizations in communities

Level 4—Develops both a strategy for action and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of plans

Advanced Levels in Areas of Specialization: Takes a leadership role in addressing organizational and community issues

Level 5—Works effectively in the civic or professional realm and works effectively with others to develop their ability to participate

Level 6—Tests developing theory, anticipating problems that are likely to emerge, and devising ways to deal with them

6. Developing a Global Perspective

Beginning Levels: Identifies what shapes own opinions and judgments with regard to global issues, and uses course concepts to broaden own perspective

Level 1—Articulates current knowledge about the world's diversity and identifies strategies for further developing knowledge

Level 2—Applies course concepts to make informed inferences about global issues

Intermediate Levels: Uses frameworks from multiple disciplines to deepen understanding of global issues from a variety of perspectives

Level 3—Uses disciplinary concepts and frameworks to identify implications of the world's diversity and global interconnections

Level 4—Uses disciplinary frameworks to take a perspective markedly different from her own on a topic with global dimensions

Advanced Levels in Areas of Specialization: Uses selected discipline theories to analyze the interrelation of complex global systems

Level 5—Uses theory from major discipline to generate pragmatic approaches to specific global issues

Level 6—Creatively and independently proposes theoretical and pragmatic approaches to specific global concerns

8. Aesthetic Engagement

Beginning Levels: Develops an openness to the arts

Level 1—Makes informed artistic and interpretive choices

Level 2—Articulates rationale for artistic choices and interpretations

Intermediate Levels: Refines artistic and interpretive choices by integrating own aesthetic experiences with a broader context of disciplinary theory and cultural and social awareness

Level 3—Revises choices by integrating disciplinary contexts

Level 4—Develops awareness of creative and interpretive processes

Advanced Levels in Areas of Specialization: Creates works of art and/or interpretive strategies and theories that synthesize personal preferences and disciplinary concepts

Level 5—Develops and expresses personal aesthetic vision

Level 6—Integrates aesthetic vision into academic, professional, and personal life

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Appendix J: Purpose and Goals for General Education at Portland State University

Purpose

The purpose of the general education program at Portland State University is to facilitate the acquisition of the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes which will form a foundation for lifelong learning among its students. This foundation includes the capacity and the propensity to engage in inquiry and critical thinking, to use various forms of communication for learning and expression, to gain an awareness of the broader human experience and its environment, and appreciate the responsibilities of persons to themselves, to each other, and to community.

Goals

Goal 1. Inquiry and Critical Thinking
To provide an integrated educational experience that will be supportive of and complement programs and majors and which will contribute to ongoing, lifelong inquiry and learning after completing undergraduate education at Portland State University.

Strategies

1. Assist development of critical reasoning and the ability to engage in inquiry.
2. Assist development of the capability to evaluate differing theories, modes of inquiry, systems of knowledge, and knowledge claims.
3. Achieve an intelligent acquaintance with a range of modes and styles of inquiry and social construction.
4. Assist development of the ability to understand and critically evaluate information presented in the form of graphics and other visual media.
5. Assist development of the ability to use writing as a way of thinking, of discovering ideas, and of making meaning as well as expressing it.
6. Assist development of the ability to critically evaluate numerical information.
7. Enhance student familiarity with science and scientific inquiry.
8. Enhance student familiarity with and capabilities to employ current technologies to facilitate learning and inquiry.

9. Enhance awareness of and appreciation for the interconnections among the specialized areas of knowledge encompassed by disciplines and programs.
10. Provide awareness of choices among academic disciplines and programs.
11. Provide students with an opportunity to explore applications of their chosen fields of study.

Goal 2. Communication

To provide an integrated educational experience that will have as a primary focus enhancement of the ability to communicate what has been learned.

Strategies

1. Enhance student ability to express what is intended in several forms of written and oral communication.
2. Assist students to develop the ability to create and use graphics and other forms of visual communication.
3. Enhance student ability to communicate quantitative concepts.
4. Develop student ability to employ current technologies to assist communication.

Goal 3. Human Experience

To provide an integrated education that will increase understanding of the human experience. This includes emphasis upon scientific, social, multicultural, environmental, and artistic components to that experience and the full realization of human potential as individuals and communities.

Strategies

1. Enhance awareness and appreciation of societal diversity in the local, national, and global communities.
2. Explore the evolution of human civilization from differing disciplinary and cultural perspectives.
3. Explore the course and implications of scientific and technological change.
4. Develop an appreciation of the aesthetic and intellectual components of the human experience in literature and the arts.
5. Explore the relationship between physical, intellectual, emotional, and social well-being including the means by which self-actualization is developed and maintained throughout life.
6. Explore and appreciate the aesthetics of artistic expression and the contributions of the fine and performing arts and of human movement/sport/play to the quality of life.
7. Develop the capacity to adapt to life challenges and to foster human development (including intellectual, physical, social and emotional dimensions) amongst self and others throughout the life span.

Goal 4. Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility

Provide an integrated educational experience that develops an appreciation for and understanding of the relationships among personal, societal, and global well-being and the personal implications of such issues as the basis of ethical judgment, societal diversity, and the expectations of social responsibility.

Strategies

1. Appreciate the impact of life choices on personal, social, and environmental health.
2. Gain an understanding of ethical dilemmas confronted by individuals, groups, and communities and the foundations upon which resolution might be possible.
3. Practice and test one's capacities to engage the ethical, interactive, and organizational challenges of the present era.
4. Explore the personal implications and responsibilities in creating an ethical and safe familial environment, neighborhood, work environment, society, and global community.
5. Explore and appreciate the role of diversity in achieving environmental, social, and personal health.
6. Gain familiarity with the values, foundations, and responsibilities of democratic society.

Appendix K: Sample VALUE Rubric

PROBLEM SOLVING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

Definition

Problem solving is the process of designing, evaluating and implementing a strategy to answer an open-ended question or achieve a desired goal.

Framing Language

Problem-solving covers a wide range of activities that may vary significantly across disciplines. Activities that encompass problem-solving by students may involve problems that range from well-defined to ambiguous in a simulated or laboratory context, or in real-world settings. This rubric distills the common elements of most problem-solving contexts and is designed to function across all disciplines. It is broad-based enough to allow for individual differences among learners, yet is concise and descriptive in its scope to determine how well students have maximized their respective abilities to practice thinking through problems in order to reach solutions.

This rubric is designed to measure the quality of a **process**, rather than the quality of an **end-product**. As a result, work samples or collections of work will need to include some evidence of the individual's thinking about a problem-solving task (e.g., reflections on the process from problem to proposed solution; steps in a problem-based learning assignment; record of think-aloud protocol while solving a problem). The final product of an assignment that required problem resolution is insufficient without insight into the student's problem-solving process. Because the focus is on institutional level assessment, scoring team projects, such as those developed in capstone courses, may be appropriate as well.

Glossary

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- Contextual Factors: Constraints (such as limits on cost), resources, attitudes (such as biases) and desired additional knowledge which affect how the problem can be best solved in the real world or simulated setting.
- Critique: Involves analysis and synthesis of a full range of perspectives.
- Feasible: Workable, in consideration of time-frame, functionality, available resources, necessary buy-in, and limits of the assignment or task.
- "Off the shelf" solution: A simplistic option that is familiar from everyday experience but not tailored to the problem at hand (e.g. holding a bake sale to "save" an underfunded public library).
- Solution: An appropriate response to a challenge or a problem.
- Strategy: A plan of action or an approach designed to arrive at a solution. (If the problem is a river that needs to be crossed, there could be a construction-oriented, cooperative (build a bridge with your community) approach and a personally oriented, physical (swim across alone) approach. An approach that partially applies would be a personal, physical approach for someone who doesn't know how to swim.
- Support: Specific rationale, evidence, etc. for solution or selection of solution.

PROBLEM SOLVING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

Definition

Problem solving is the process of designing, evaluating, and implementing a strategy to answer an open-ended question or achieve a desired goal.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.
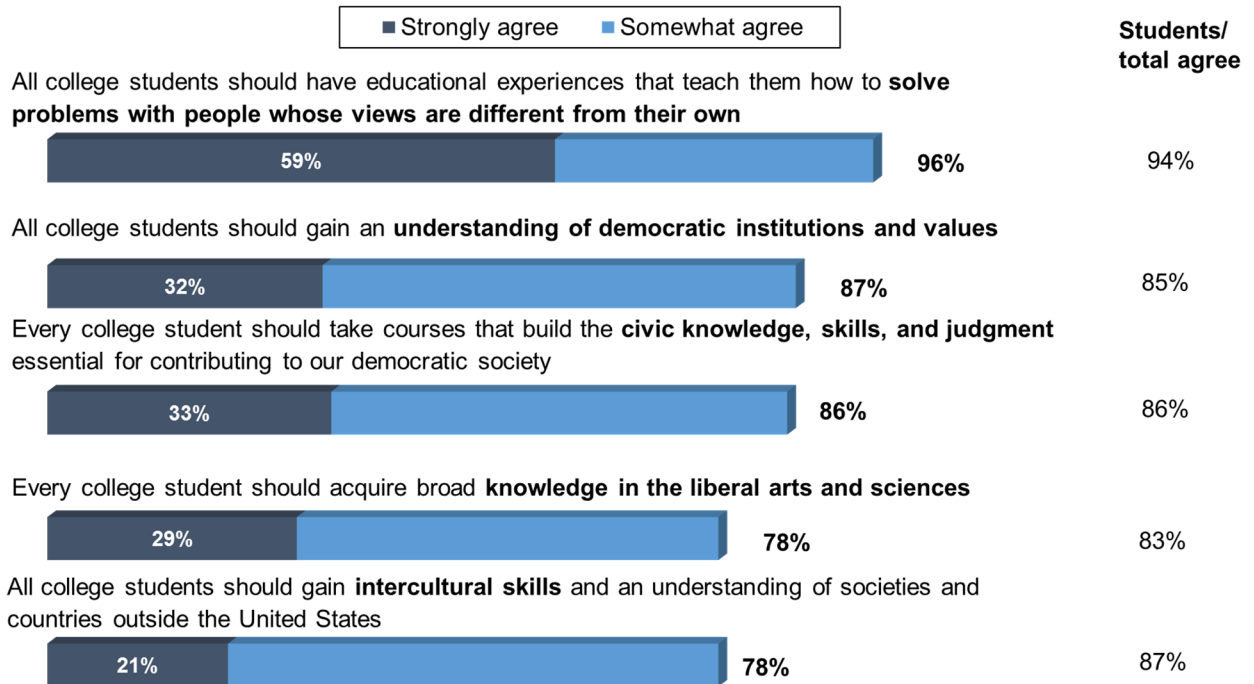
	Capstone 4	Milestones 3	Milestones 2	Benchmark 1
Define Problem	Demonstrates the ability to construct a clear and insightful problem statement with evidence of all relevant contextual factors.	Demonstrates the ability to construct a problem statement with evidence of most relevant contextual factors, and problem statement is adequately detailed.	Begins to demonstrate the ability to construct a problem statement with evidence of most relevant contextual factors, but problem statement is superficial.	Demonstrates a limited ability in identifying a problem statement or related contextual factors.
Identify Strategies	Identifies multiple approaches for solving the problem that apply within a specific context.	Identifies multiple approaches for solving the problem, only some of which apply within a specific context.	Identifies only a single approach for solving the problem that does apply within a specific context.	Identifies one or more approaches for solving the problem that do not apply within a specific context.
Propose Solutions/Hypotheses	Proposes one or more solutions/hypotheses that indicates a deep comprehension of the problem. Solution/hypotheses are sensitive to contextual factors as well as all of the following: ethical, logical, and cultural dimensions of the problem.	Proposes one or more solutions/hypotheses that indicates comprehension of the problem. Solutions/hypotheses are sensitive to contextual factors as well as the one of the following: ethical, logical, or cultural dimensions of the problem.	Proposes one solution/hypothesis that is "off the shelf" rather than individually designed to address the specific contextual factors of the problem.	Proposes a solution/hypothesis that is difficult to evaluate because it is vague or only indirectly addresses the problem statement.
Evaluate Potential Solutions	Evaluation of solutions is deep and elegant (for example, contains thorough and insightful explanation) and includes, deeply and thoroughly, all of the following: considers history of problem, reviews logic/reasoning, examines feasibility of solution, and weighs impacts of solution.	Evaluation of solutions is adequate (for example, contains thorough explanation) and includes the following: considers history of problem, reviews logic/reasoning, examines feasibility of solution, and weighs impacts of solution.	Evaluation of solutions is brief (for example, explanation lacks depth) and includes the following: considers history of problem, reviews logic/reasoning, examines feasibility of solution, and weighs impacts of solution.	Evaluation of solutions is superficial (for example, contains cursory, surface level explanation) and includes the following: considers history of problem, reviews logic/reasoning, examines feasibility of solution, and weighs impacts of solution.
Implement Solution	Implements the solution in a manner that addresses thoroughly and deeply multiple contextual factors of the problem.	Implements the solution in a manner that addresses multiple contextual factors of the problem in a surface manner.	Implements the solution in a manner that addresses the problem statement but ignores relevant contextual factors.	Implements the solution in a manner that does not directly address the problem statement.
Evaluate Outcomes	Reviews results relative to the problem defined with thorough, specific considerations of need for further work.	Reviews results relative to the problem defined with some consideration of need for further work.	Reviews results in terms of the problem defined with little, if any, consideration of need for further work.	Reviews results superficially in terms of the problem defined with no consideration of need for further work

Appendix L: Employer Opinions on Learning Outcomes

Key findings from survey among 400 employers and 613 college students conducted in November and December 2014
For The Association of American Colleges and Universities by Hart Research Associates
www.aacu.org/leap/public-opinion-research

This information was presented by Debra Humphreys in her talk "Communicating Effectively About the Value(s) of General Education (Part 1—Understanding Competing Messages and Environment)" at the Institute on General Education and Assessment in June, 2015

Employers' agreement with statements about college learning aims regardless of student's chosen field of study

		Students/ total agree
■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree		

All college students should have educational experiences that teach them how to **solve problems with people whose views are different from their own**

| 59% | 96% | 94% |

All college students should gain an **understanding of democratic institutions and values**

| 32% | 87% | 85% |

Every college student should take courses that build the **civic knowledge, skills, and judgment** essential for contributing to our democratic society

| 33% | 86% | 86% |

Every college student should acquire broad **knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences**

| 29% | 78% | 83% |

All college students should gain **intercultural skills** and an understanding of societies and countries outside the United States

| 21% | 78% | 87% |

*Proportions of employers rating each skill/knowledge area
as very important for recent college graduates to have**

Students:
very important
for success
<u>in workplace</u>*

Oral communication	**85%**	78%
Working effectively with others in teams	**83%**	77%
Written communication	**82%**	75%
Ethical judgment and decision-making	**81%**	74%
Critical/analytical thinking	**81%**	79%
Applying knowledge/ skills to real world	**80%**	79%