

Final Report of the General Education Diversity Task Force

I. Executive Summary

In October 2016, the Provost charged the General Education Diversity Task Force with reviewing the current U.S. Diversity (USD) requirement of the General Education Program (GEP). Under the current GEP, the USD requirement is a zero-credit hour co-requisite, which could be fulfilled by a course that fulfills another requirement (and also meets the USD category objectives) or by a stand-alone course. Under the current system, both 1- and 3-credit hour courses have been approved as meeting USD category objectives. The inclusion of 1-credit courses has been a source of concern, specifically if there are enough contact hours in a single credit hour to cover the USD learning objectives in depth. This, coupled with recent dialogue about diversity and inclusion both on campus and at the national level, motivated review of the current USD requirement. While the Task Force focused on USD, we were also asked to consider the Global Knowledge (GK) requirement of the GEP, another zero-credit hour corequisite under the current GEP.

The General Education Diversity Task Force met regularly during the end of the Fall 2016 semester and throughout the Spring 2017 semester. During this time, the Task Force focused its attention on creating a meaningful diversity education experience for students at NC State. Along these lines, the Task Force’s primary recommendation is to assign three credit hours to the USD category. We also recommend adding three credit hours to the GK category. To avoid increasing the total number of credit hours in the GEP, the Task Force recommends removing three hours each from the Additional Breadth and Interdisciplinary Perspectives categories (see Table 1, Sections II.1 and II.2). Because our recommendations involve changes to other requirements in the GEP, the Task Force also discussed the possibility of a reconsideration of the entire structure of the program, but felt that this did not fall within our purview.

Table 1: Recommended Changes to the GEP

	Current GEP	Recommended Changes: Minimum Required Credit Hours
Mathematical Sciences	6	6
Natural Sciences	7	7
Humanities	6	6
Social Science	6	6
Additional Breadth	3	0
Interdisciplinary Perspectives	5	2
Health & Exercise Studies	2	2
Intro to Writing	4	4
US Diversity	0	3
Global Knowledge	0	3
Total	39	39

While the Task Force feels our recommendations will have an immediate impact on diversity education, we also strongly feel the University should not stop there. To create a truly meaningful diversity education, students should engage in both the scholarship of diversity as well as co-curricular experiences designed to address diversity competency. As such, the Task Force recommends that the University consider adding a co-curricular graduation requirement that specifically addresses diversity in addition to the 3-credit hour scholarly course students will complete as part of the GEP. For such a requirement to be successful, a more in-depth planning process will need to take place, with input from the wider campus community. Some preliminary considerations for implementing a co-curricular requirement are outlined in Section II.3.

II. Overview

The charge to the General Education Diversity Task Force was to review the current U.S. Diversity (USD) requirement of the General Education Program (GEP). Specifically, the Task Force was charged to address the following questions:

1. Should the USD and (Global Knowledge) GK requirements be credit bearing, rather than zero credit co-requisites?
2. If USD and GK are to be credit bearing, what changes should be made to the current GEP to maintain or lower the credit hour requirement for GEP?
3. How can we best reach all students through the GEP to provide a robust, meaningful diversity education?
4. Does it make sense to combine USD and GK into a single cultural diversity category?
5. Can US Diversity be achieved through experiential/co-curricular workshops or other guided experiences rather than, or in addition to, a GEP course?
6. Do we need a uniform first year USD course, or a uniform first year course that includes diversity as a component?
7. If we had a uniform first year USD course, do we also need upper division USD coursework reflecting a particular discipline?
8. How can we incentivize the development of more USD courses?

Each element of the charge is addressed here:

1. Should the USD and GK requirements be credit bearing, rather than zero credit co-requisites?

The Task Force unanimously felt that the USD requirement should be credit bearing, with a minimum of three credit hours required. Adding formal credit hours to the USD category addresses each of the following concerns regarding the current requirement:

- When the current requirement was developed as a co-requisite, the intention was for students to experience issues of diversity within the context of another discipline. In practice, however, the nature of the co-requisite has been a source of confusion for students and academic advisors.
- Many students take a separate course to meet USD requirements, implicitly adding hours to the total GEP (26% of current USD courses only fulfil this requirement; see Table 2).
- Some in the campus community have expressed concerns that not allocating credit hours to this category communicates that the University does not value diversity as much as it values the other categories.

Table 2: Courses on the USD List by Other Category Fulfilled

Category	Current Number of Courses (%)	Percent of Students That Use These Courses to Fulfill the USD Requirement	
		Fall	Spring
Co-Req only	28 (26%)	16.68%	11.74%
HUM	43 (40%)	11.55%	11.87%
HUM, IP	2 (2%)	0.06%	0.25%
HUM,GK	0(0%)	0.34%	1.10%
SS	14 (13%)	16.97%	14.97%
SS, GK	1 (1%)	0.25%	0.32%
VPA	10 (9%)	0.90%	1.20%
IP	7 (7%)	4.71%	6.45%
IP, GK	1 (1%)	0.00%	0.00%
HES	1 (1%)	0.00%	0.06%
GK	0(0%)	0.19%	0.38%
Total	107 (100%)	51.66%	48.34%

* Based on average number of students per semester over the period from Fall 2012 through Spring 2016. Values are based on students using the course to fulfill the US Diversity requirement, not simply enrollment counts for the course. These values represent a snapshot of student enrollment based on complex analysis of dynamic student-level data.

A majority of the Task Force also supported adding three credit hours for the GK requirement, however this support was not unanimous. Members of the Task Force who were hesitant felt that any decision regarding GK should only be made after undertaking more direct study of the GK requirement, as the focus of this group was more specifically drawn to the USD requirement. Members who supported adding hours for GK felt that the reasons for adding credit hours to USD applied to GK as well.

2. If USD and GK are to be credit bearing, what changes should be made to the current GEP to maintain or lower the credit hour requirement for GEP?

If six credit hours are added to the GEP (three for USD and three for GK), then a minimum of six credit hours should be removed to maintain the current 39 total hours. Looking at the categories of the current GEP, there are two that inherently address disciplines represented by other categories: Additional Breadth and Interdisciplinary Perspectives. Most of the courses included in Additional Breadth are already on other GEP course lists, with the exception of the Visual and Performing Arts

(VPA) courses. The Task Force recommends that the VPA courses should be added to another course list (e.g., Humanities, which could be renamed Humanities and the Arts) so that they are not dropped from the GEP entirely. Removing three credit hours from Interdisciplinary Perspectives (IP) would leave two hours for this category, so students would still benefit from taking an IP course.

Removing credit hours from these categories is not without drawbacks, however. Under the current GEP, students select their Additional Breadth course from “either the Humanities/Social Sciences/Visual and Performing Arts course lists or Mathematics/Natural Sciences/Engineering course lists depending on the Major”

(oucc.dasa.ncsu.edu/general-education-program-gep/gep-category-requirements).

Removing the Additional Breadth requirement thus has an unequal impact on students. Those with majors in the mathematical, scientific, or engineering disciplines will take one less humanities or social science course (though it should be noted that approximately 81% of courses currently on the USD list come from Humanities and Social Science [see Table 3], so students in these majors would still be exposed to the process and nature of these disciplines through the new USD and GK requirements). Students with non math, science, or engineering majors will take one less mathematical or natural sciences course, resulting in a one-course decrease in breadth requirements for students not majoring in math, science, or engineering.

Table 3: Courses on the USD List by College and Credit Hours

College	1 Credit	3 Credits	Total
H&SS	0 (0%)	84 (78.5%)	84 (78.5%)
H&SS/UC	0 (0%)	3 (2.8%)	3 (2.8%)
UC	4 (3.74%)	9 (8.41%)	13 (12.15%)
CALS	3 (2.8%)	0 (0%)	3 (2.8%)
CNR	0 (0%)	2 (1.87%)	2 (1.87%)
CED	0 (0%)	1 (0.93%)	1 (0.93%)
PCOM	1 (0.93%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.93%)
Total	8 (7.48%)	99 (92.52%)	107

While the IP category will not be completely removed by the suggested changes, it will be substantially reduced. Since the beginning of the GEP, a significant investment has been made in developing courses for the IP category; reducing the number of hours in this category will likely reduce demand for these courses and limit students’ exposure to the IP learning objectives. IP classes represent an opportunity for students to experience knowledge across disciplinary silos, which may be more authentic to their life experiences.

In this regard, there are those who feel the GEP should in fact become more interdisciplinary in nature, highlighting skills, competencies, or habits of mind that are necessary for students to be successful and productive citizens. Such a change involves rethinking the overall purpose and organization of the GEP. Currently, the GEP is discipline based and some members of the Task Force

felt this promotes siloed thinking over real world skills that are increasingly interdisciplinary in nature. Reorganizing the GEP to highlight the competencies and habits of mind that are necessary to be successful in work and life could better prepare our students for life after graduation.

The Task Force felt strongly that such a substantial redesign of the GEP, while it has potential benefits to students, should not be implemented without extensive further study and planning. The campus community would need to reach an agreement on what competencies are most necessary for our students in college and beyond. Examples could include, but are not limited to: critical thinking, quantitative literacy, information literacy, financial literacy, health and well-being, ethics, citizenship, diversity, and cultural competence. Resources would need to be invested in adapting or expanding existing courses as well as developing new courses intentionally designed to address these competencies. This approach would not be trivial to implement, but may have a more meaningful impact for our students than simply tweaking the current GEP requirements. Several institutions have redesigned their general education programs to offer optional pathways that address such competencies. For example, Northern Illinois University offers *Progressive Learning in Undergraduate Studies (PLUS) Pathways* where students can focus on creativity, global connections, social justice and diversity, or learning (as just a few examples; www.niu.edu/gened/). Students at VirginiaTech can complete a *Pathways Minor* that focuses on interdisciplinary themes such as sustainability or innovation (www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/1AboutPathways/options.html). The University of Maryland has *I-Series* courses that focus on Imagination, Intellect, Inspiration, and Innovation (www.gened.umd.edu/elements/elements-requirements-overview.html).

The Task Force discussed a second substantial change to the GEP that could be adopted in a relatively short time period. This option involves across the board reductions in the number of required credit hours for each GEP category, resulting in a total of 30 credits hours for the GEP (see Table 4), which is the minimum required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Table 4: Possible Reduced Credit Hour Option for the GEP

	Current GEP	Reduced Credit Hour Option
Mathematical Sciences	6	3
Natural Sciences	7	4
Humanities	6	3
Social Science	6	3
Additional Breadth	3	3
Interdisciplinary Perspectives	5	2
Health & Exercise Studies	2	2
Intro to Writing	4	4
US Diversity	0	3
Global Knowledge	0	3
Total	39	30

Reducing the total number of credit hours in the GEP presents an opportunity for some programs to add free electives, which the Student Senate called for in a resolution proposed during the 2014-2015 academic year. Again, implementing such a change would require more in-depth consultation with each college about the impacts of the proposed changes on current major requirements. For example, a reduction of 6 credit hours in the Mathematical and Natural Sciences areas would not be noticed by most science curricula, since these are covered by major requirements that would not change.

3. How can we best reach all students through the GEP to provide a robust, meaningful diversity education?

The Task Force focused the majority of its discussions on this aspect of the charge, as we felt this was the primary motivation for the appointment of the Task Force. There are two aspects that each need to be addressed in order to provide a robust, meaningful diversity education:

- *Scholarship of diversity.* Students need to study the historical, structural, and cultural forces that led to our current society. This is best addressed through formal coursework and was the Task Force's primary motivation for adding a credit hour requirement for the USD category.
- *Diversity competence.* Students need to know how to live and work in a diverse environment. This is necessary during their time on the NC State campus as well as for their future careers. This could be addressed through formal coursework, but it could also be addressed through co-curricular activities.

There are two student populations that need to experience a robust, meaningful diversity education: students who start their first year on NC State's campus and students who transfer here. Transfer students who have earned an Associate's Degree from a North Carolina Community College are considered as having met the general education requirements at any UNC system university, per the North Carolina Comprehensive Articulation Agreement. As such, the Task Force recommends that a graduation requirement addressing diversity competence be fulfilled by all students earning an undergraduate degree from NC State. Exactly how to implement this requirement warrants further consideration by the campus community. Questions that need to be addressed include:

- *What co-curricular experiences should be approved as fulfilling this requirement?* Meaningful learning objectives, that could be reasonably met and measured, should be developed and candidate experiences should be subject to an approval process. Possible options to consider include:
 - 1-credit hour courses (such as orientation classes)
 - Workshops, such as those offered by the OIED, Women's Center, GLBT Center, Multicultural Student Affairs, CSLEPS, Honors, Scholars, New Student Programs, and University Housing (which is in the process of developing *Diversity within the Residential Curriculum*)
 - Undergraduate research projects or internship experiences
 - Service projects, for example through service learning or practica courses, Alternative Spring Break, or community service or volunteer organizations
 - Trips or a curriculum developed by University Housing. Starting in Fall 2017, first year students will be required to live on campus; University Housing is using this opportunity to develop a curriculum that includes several learning objectives pertaining to diversity. Alternative Spring Break and other service trips have also been organized through University Housing in the past. While this curriculum is not

finalized yet, it presents another possible opportunity for students to fulfill a diversity co-curricular requirement.

There are many existing workshops, programs, and courses that could be appropriate for addressing diversity competency. The University has an opportunity to leverage these resources in a way that will better reach a wider population of students.

- *How many contact hours are necessary for an experience (or experiences) to fulfill this requirement?* The Task Force feels this requirement should involve more than a single hour long workshop. Students could be encouraged to participate in different experiences each year of their academic career, accumulating the designated number of hours necessary to fulfill this co-curricular requirement.
- *Should a formal reflection on these experiences be required?* Requiring reflection on the experience can deepen its impact on students, making the experience more meaningful. The amount and scope of the feedback, as well as a mechanism for evaluating and tracking this feedback, will need to be considered. It is possible that students will still benefit substantially from such a co-curricular requirement, even if it is not feasible to require a formal reflection on the experience.
- *How will this be tracked?* This was a major concern of the Task Force when discussing a co-curricular requirement, as we do not want this to become an additional burden for academic advisors. However mechanisms may already exist or could be developed to make this possible. For example, there have been recent discussions about a developing a co-curricular transcript that could be adapted for tracking a co-curricular diversity requirement.

While developing and enforcing a co-curricular graduation requirement that addresses diversity competency would certainly require substantial planning and resources, it presents an opportunity for NC State to do something innovative and meaningful with respect to diversity education. A handful of other institutions have started to include co-curricular elements in their general education programs. For example Virginia Tech students may include study abroad, undergraduate research, service learning, internships, or other co-curricular experiences in addition to coursework when fulfilling their general education requirements (www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/1AboutPathways/options.html). These experiences may not focus on diversity, or any particular theme, however. The Task Force strongly recommends that the University, in consultation with the broader campus community, develop a co-curricular graduation requirement focused on diversity and inclusion.

4. Does it make sense to combine USD and GK into a single cultural diversity category?

The Task Force unanimously agreed that the objectives of the USD and GK categories are distinct from each other and are both important for students to learn. As such, there was no support for combining these into a single category.

5. Can US Diversity be achieved through experiential/co-curricular workshops or other guided experiences rather than, or in addition to, a GEP course?

As stated above, the Task Force does feel that co-curricular experiences are a necessary part of meaningful diversity education. We feel that such experiences in isolation are insufficient and should be in addition to, rather than in place of, formal coursework on the scholarship of diversity.

6. Do we need a uniform first year USD course, or a uniform first year course that includes diversity as a component?

At the current time, the Task Force did not feel that the US diversity course requirement should be restricted to a uniform course on diversity. However, development of such a course should be considered if a competency based redesign of the GEP is undertaken. A common course on diversity should address several aspects of diversity (e.g. religion, gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexual orientation, disability, age) rather than just focusing on one. It should be relevant for first time college students as well as transfer students (though perhaps separate courses would be warranted for these different audiences).

There are existing courses that address both the scholarship of diversity as well as diversity competence. For example, ECD 225 (Foundations of Cultural Competence) was developed as part of NC State's *At Home in the World* Initiative (ncsu.edu/sa/ahitw/index.html) and has consistently received positive reviews from students. Courses such as this could possibly be scaled-up to accommodate a wider audience, or they could serve as a model for development of small set of USD courses. Having an intentionally designed set of USD courses, rather than a single common course, would allow students to still have a choice when fulfilling the diversity requirement.

In exploring the possibility of a common USD course, the Task Force reviewed DiversityEdu, a collection of online videos (similar to AlcoholEdu) that "respond to the changing campus climate by countering diversity resistance and tying inclusive culture to personal success" (diversityedu.com/). DiversityEdu includes courses for students as well as faculty. While the Task Force felt that the courses were very well designed, we were not in favor of adopting these as a stand alone requirement (particularly for students). It is possible that DiversityEdu could be used as a springboard, with students viewing the content in small sessions over the course of a semester, to be followed by guided discussion in a common course. Or it is possible that DiversityEdu could complement *Diversity within the Residential Curriculum* being developed by University Housing. Students retain access to the DiversityEdu videos, so they could return and view it during later diversity courses or experiences, if desired. For the immediate future, however, it may be wise for the University to see how current diversity initiatives develop before adopting a program like DiversityEdu.

7. If we had a uniform first year USD course, do we also need upper division USD coursework reflecting a particular discipline?

Students should engage in the scholarship of diversity and experiences designed to address diversity competency at multiple points during their academic career. It is also important that students see diversity incorporated throughout their curriculum, both as part of the GEP and incorporated into the major field of study. Ideally, students should be exposed to issues of diversity in more than one place and from more than one point of view.

8. How can we incentivize the development of more USD courses?

Development of new or expansion of current USD courses could be facilitated through incentives such as course development grants or course releases. The University could also support diversity education by expanding existing programs or developing new programs that encourage inclusion of diversity content in upper division or major courses. For example, *Don't Cancel that Class* is an

existing initiative led by the Women's Center where trained educators offer customizable and interactive workshops on issues of diversity that can be delivered within a single class period (oied.ncsu.edu/Womens-Center/dont-cancel-that-class/). Organizations or individual faculty with an expertise in diversity could be encouraged to collaborate with faculty from across the University to develop lessons on diversity in particular disciplines. While such opportunities may not fulfill a specific GEP or graduation requirement, they would contribute to the overall robustness of diversity education at NC State.

III. Summary

The University has many options to consider to improve diversity education at NC State. In the short term, the Task Force recommends that three credit hours each be added to the GEP for the USD and GK categories, while reducing six hours from other categories to maintain the current total of 39 credit hours. As an investment in the future, the Task Force recommends that the University consider a broader reduction in hours for the GEP (possibly allowing for free electives in curricula that have few or none) or a holistic restructuring of the GEP categories to focus on adding co-curricular skills, competencies, or habits of mind that are necessary for students to succeed at NC State and in their future careers. Finally, in addition to the formal coursework requirements of the GEP, the Task Force recommends that the University add a co-curricular graduation requirement that addresses diversity competency.