University of Idaho's General Education Curriculum:
an Overview of the "Gen Ed Flagship" of the State of Idaho
Catalog Years 2012-13 +

26 February 2014

With its unique role and mission as a comprehensive, research, and land-grant institution, and with the particular students the university serves, the University of Idaho has had a **long tradition** of providing an innovative, liberal General Education. As stated in the Morrill Act of 1862, land grant institutions are "to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life." This distinctive curriculum began further evolving in the mid-1980s, through discussions orchestrated by Dean Galen Rowe and Provost Bob Coonrod, and supported by a NEH grant. In the late 1990s, spearheaded by Bill Voxman and a FIPSE grant, the university created the Core Discovery model for the General Education.

Recent changes in the General Education curriculum were initiated by the General Education Steering Committee (August 2010), reflective of "**high impact, best practices**" (as developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, AAC&U). In turn, these changes were reviewed and approved by the University Committee on General Education, University Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate, and University Faculty. These new requirements were implemented with the 2011-12 Catalog Year (for ISEM 101) and 2012-13 Catalog Year (for ISEM 301, American Diversity, and Senior Experience). See **Section J** of the General Catalog. This is a curriculum **approved through university faculty governance** and **sponsored by all eight baccalaureate-granting colleges**.

Currently each semester, over 180 University of Idaho faculty members, from all eight baccalaureate-granting colleges, are offering over 240 General Education courses, impacting over 8,000 students.

The result is a U of I General Education curriculum which emphasizes a **multi-year, broad liberal education.** It is a conceptually and pedagogically integrated curriculum which begins for first-year students with the ISEM 101 Integrated Seminars. Between a student's first and third years the curriculum bridges into the five skills and perspectives curricular components of Communication, Science, Math, Humanities and Social Science, and American Diversity and International. The curriculum is reiterated with the ISEM 301 Great Issues seminars, and then culminates with the Senior Experience. Infused throughout the curriculum are the shared **Learning Outcomes** of the University of Idaho, which are reflective of the unique mission of the university, and consistent with the Essential Learning Outcomes of LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise, see http://www.aacu.org/leap/). It is a curriculum which **complements and is in consort with a student's major field of study**. The General Education

curriculum represents over 27% of a student's baccalaureate degree (with a 33-36 credit minimum). With this configuration of "high-impact, best practices," the University of Idaho's General Education curriculum is indeed the "**Gen Ed flagship**" of the state of Idaho.

We know the job descriptions of **1/3** of all first-year students have yet to be written. In our rapidly-changing world, students need the ability to understand how knowledge is generated and created, and are able to adapt to the new knowledge and opportunities as they arise, as well as have the ability to effectively communicate and collaborate with increasing diverse communities and ways of knowing. Students are prepared to use multiple and interdisciplinary strategies, in an integrative manner, to explore and address real-world issues and challenges. A General Education helps instill in students the personal and civic responsibilities of good citizenship. The General Education curriculum thus seeks to **retain students** in college, as well as **prepare graduates as adaptive, life-long learners**.

The graduating class of 2016 (entering first-year students Catalog 2012-13, numbering some **1,600 students**) is currently moving through this new curriculum. We estimate first-year students for 2014-15 to be at least 1,800.

The University of Idaho's General Education curriculum requirements include the following **six components as identified in the 2014-15 College Catalog**:

J-3-a. **Communication** (5-7 cr.). Public Speaking and Written English. Sponsored by the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences, students take English 102 and one additional communication course for 5 credits. The purpose of this requirement is to develop the ability to organize one's thoughts, to express them simply and clearly, to observe the standards and conventions of language usage, and to suit tone to audience. The requirement is proficiency in written English equal to that needed for the completion of UI course Engl 102 and the completion of one additional course in this category.

> **Public Speaking.** Students who receive a passing grade in Comm 101, Fundamentals of Public Speaking, are expected to develop and demonstrate the ability to make oral presentations in one-on-one settings, small groups, and large groups. Students should be able to demonstrate basic competency in (1) organization and preparation, (2) oral language use and presentation, and (3) addressing audience needs and interests.
>
> **Written English.** Students who receive a passing grade in any of the six English classes included in the general education are expected to develop and demonstrate competencies in their writing in (1) organization and development, (2) sentence variety and word choice, and (3) language usage conventions.

J-3-b. **Natural** and **Applied Science** (8 cr. which include two accompanying labs OR 7 cr. which includes a CORS course and one course with lab). Sponsored by the College of Science, students select two science courses and labs, or an Integrated Science (CORS) course and one additional science course with a lab for 7-8 credits. The purpose of this requirement is to develop a better understanding of the physical and biological world by learning some of the principles that explain the natural phenomena of the universe, the experimental method used to derive those principles, and their applications. Study in this area is

undertaken as part of the general education requirements in order to promote scientific literacy, that is, the ability to read and understand the science issues being debated in society. Scientific literacy is essential if citizens are to make informed judgments on the wide range of issues that affect their everyday lives. Students receiving passing grades in the natural and applied science courses of the general education curriculum will demonstrate competency in the following areas: (1) knowledge of scientific principles; (2) the ability to write clearly and concisely using the style appropriate to the sciences; (3) the ability to interpret scientific data; (4) the ability to analyse experimental design critically; and (5) the development of laboratory skills.

J-3-c. **Math**, **Statistics or Computer Science** (3 cr.). Sponsored by the College of Science, students take for 3-4 credits. These courses develop analytical, quantitative, and problem solving skills by involving students in doing mathematics, statistics, or computer science and by focusing on understanding the concepts of these disciplines. Students receiving passing grades in mathematics, statistics, or computer science will have the ability to recognize, analyse, and solve problems.

J-3-d. **Humanities** (6 cr) and **Social Sciences** (6 cr.). * Sponsored primarily by the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences, students take six credits chosen from the approved humanities courses listed in the General Catalog, and six credits chosen from the approved social sciences courses listed in the General Catalog.

The purpose of these liberal arts courses is to provide students with critical tools for understanding the human experience and providing the means for students to respond to the world around them. Humanities courses enable students to reflect upon their lives and ask fundamental questions of value, purpose, and meaning in a rigorous and systematic interpretative manner, with the goal of fostering understanding of culture and inspiring a citizenry that is more literate, respectful of diverse viewpoints, and intellectually inquisitive. Social science courses enable students to apply rigorous analytic skills for the purpose of explaining the dynamic interaction among history, institutions, society and ideas that shape the behaviors of individuals, communities and societies. With these skills students can critically address the social issues of our contemporary world.

J-3-e. **American Diversity** (one course) and **International** Courses (one course, 1-4 credits). * Sponsored primarily by the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences, students take one course each from the approved American Diversity and International courses listed in the General Catalog. If a student takes a Great Issues Seminar (ISEM 301), Humanities, or Social Science course that also appears on the list of approved American Diversity or International courses then this requirement is considered to be completed. These cross-listed courses are identified with a D or I designation on the American Diversity and International course lists. The international requirement may be waived if a student successfully completes an approved Summer, Fall, or Spring term abroad through the International Programs Office.

As we live in an increasingly diverse and multicultural world, the purpose of these courses is to prepare students to understand, communicate and collaborate with those from diverse communities within the United States and throughout the world. The American diversity courses seek to increase awareness of contemporary and historical issues surrounding the social and cultural diversity in the U.S. Students

engage in critical thinking and inquiry into the issues, complexities, and implications of diversity, and how social, economic, and/or political forces have shaped American communities. Diversity includes such characteristics as ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. The international courses seek to develop an understanding of international values, belief systems and social issues that have contributed to current balances of power and cultural relations. Students develop an understanding of the roles that the United States and other countries have played in global relations and the ways cultures have interacted and influenced each other.

J-3-f. **Integrated Studies – ISEM 101** (3 cr.), **ISEM 301** (1 cr.) **and Senior Experiences** (variable credits)**.** * One course from ISEM 101 (open to freshmen only). One credit of ISEM301. One course chosen from the approved Senior Experience courses listed in the General Catalog.

The purpose of these courses is to provide students with the tools of integrative thinking, which are critical for problem solving, creativity and innovation, and communication and collaboration. Integrated learning is the competency to attain, use, and develop knowledge from a variety of disciplines and perspectives, such as the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences, with disciplinary specialization (to think divergently, distinguishing different perspectives), and to incorporate information across disciplines and perspectives (to think convergently, re-connecting diverse perspectives in novel ways). It is a cumulative learning competency, initiated as a first-year student and culminating as reflected in a graduating senior.

ISEM 101 Integrated Seminar. Sponsored by the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences, the ISEM 101 Seminars are taken during the Fall or Spring semester of student's first year. It is recommended that students take an introductory course in the major in the semester he/she is not taking ISEM 101. This is a **critical foundational seminar** that prepares students and bridges them into their integrated four-year curriculum of **General Education /Major Field of study**. **First General Education Assessment Point. ****

The ISEM 101 Integrated Seminars emphasizes a **seminar** format, with an integration of **humanities** and **social science** multiple-disciplinarity, focusing on **diversity** and **community studies**, anchored to the University/ISEM 101 **Learning Outcomes**. They include the **Common Read** and the **Runstad Lecture**, often the author of the Common Read.

ISEM 301 Great Issues Seminar. Sponsored by the Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Art and Architecture, Business and Economics, Education, Engineering, and Natural Resources, the ISEM 301 Great Issues seminars are linked to campus-wide events and performances ("signature events" and other events of education relevance) and offered throughout the year. They may also be listed as an approved American Diversity or International course. To enroll, students need 26 credits and ENLG 102. . **Second General Education Assessment Point**. **

The ISEM 301 Great Issues seminars emphasize a **seminar** format, **integration/multiple-disciplinarity**, with a focus on a **campus-wide event of significance**, and the University

Learning Outcomes. They will begin to be offered on a regular basis by **Spring semester 2014.**

Senior Experience. Sponsored by all eight university colleges, the upper division (300, 400 level) **Senior Experience** (course, internship, performance, seminar, student teaching, etc.) is typically offered through the student's academic major. The capstone "experience" integrates the University **Learning Outcomes** with the student's discipline. All will be offered on a regular basis by **Fall semester 2015**, if not sooner. **Third General Education Assessment Point. ****

Note: the J-3-d, J-3-e and J-3-f components entail are the same requirements that had been listed in the previous Catalogs under J-3-d General Core Studies, and are now reconfigured into these three components.

* Within the J-3-d, J-3-e, J-3-f component requirements, students must courses from **four** different disciplines. ISEM 101 Integrated Seminars and ISEM 301 Great Issues Seminars do not count toward the three disciplines.

** While assessment of the entire General Education curriculum will be conducted, the J-3-f Integrated Studies component, with its multi-year dimension reflective of student competency maturation, will serve as key diagnostic points of assessment. From assessment results ongoing adjustments and improvements in the curriculum will be sought and learning competencies gained for our students.

For more information: Rodney Frey, Director of General Education, and Professor of Ethnography
Office: 885-6268 Cell: 208-596-6476 rfrey@uidaho.edu http://www.uidaho.edu/class/general-education

University of Idaho