

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
GENERAL EDUCATION COUNCIL
AY 2009-2010**

**Presented at the
699th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
November 18, 2010**

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**Annual Report of the General Education Council
AY 2009-2010**

The General Education Council (GEC) met monthly during AY 2009-2010, on a regular schedule on the last Friday of the month (except for holidays, when the meeting date was adjusted). Its major business focused on the changes in the General Education program for students entering September 2010 and thereafter, that had been voted by the Faculty Senate on May 9, 2009. These changes included (1) developing criteria and a submission process for faculty wanting to implement the 3-to-4 credit conversion for Natural World and Social World General Education courses, and (2) developing criteria, options, examples and procedures for the newly instituted upper-division Integrative Experience. The upper division Integrative Experience (a 3-credit experience, not necessarily course based) would be offered through the major and enable students in the major to reflect upon and apply learnings both from their previous General Education coursework and their continuing study within the major.

It is important to note that in carrying forward these changes in the General Education program, the GEC was supported by the Administration, through collaboration with the Dean of Undergraduate Studies John Cunningham and his assistant Ginger Etinde; the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment (director Martha Stassen and her dedicated graduate assistants Emily Krems and Sarah Jenness); and the Center for Educational Software Development team (David Hart, Ken Lee and Chris Hoffmann). More than half of the 2009-2010 GEC had earlier participated in the 2007-2009 Ad Hoc Task Force on General Education, made up of faculty, deans, department chairs, and members of the administration, and through that combined effort had worked closely to identify the broad goals of the General Education program and find ways to implement them. This continued collaboration underpins much of the work of the GEC during AY 2009-2010 noted below.

During the AY, the Council also conducted its usual business of General Education course approval and Quinquennial review.

The 3-to-4 Course Conversion and the GERICO Process

GERICO (the ad hoc General Education Revision and Implementation Committee) was established by Faculty Senate vote to expedite the 3-to-4 credit conversion approved in May 2009. GERICO was formally set up in September 2009, as a joint committee to bridge the work of the General Education Council and Academic Matters Council, given the dual jurisdiction involved in credit conversions for existing courses. GERICO's membership of 14 included chairs or designees plus additional faculty representatives from its two coordinating Councils, chairs or designees from the Program and Budget Council and the Rules Committee, representatives from the Registrar's Office and the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Secretary of the Faculty Senate. The Course Approval subcommittee that was charged with reviewing faculty proposals for 3-to-4 credit conversion consisted of the following six (mainly faculty) members: Maurianne Adams, Carol Barr (chair), Anne Herrington, John McCarthy, Brian O'Connor, Martha Stassen.

By the end of AY 2009-2010, the Course Approval subcommittee of GERICO had approved 206 General Education courses for 3-to-4 credit conversion, with 5 conversion requests still in process. This represents almost two-thirds of the 340 General Education courses currently on SPIRE. The bulk of this work – 175 proposals from 100 instructors – had been received by the first of two 2009-2010 deadlines, in October 15.

Implementation of the 3-to-4 credit conversion raised numerous challenges, such as the needs of students who entered prior to implementation of the new legislation, or the add-on of Honors credits (would 4-credit courses now become 5-credit courses). Not all of these dilemmas were resolved during AY 2009-2010 and have been carried over into AY 2010-2011 deliberations.

E-Submission and Review

The work of GERICO was made possible by an entirely new online course proposal submission and review process that was developed and implemented through collaboration among CESD (Center for Educational Software Development), OAPA (Office of Planning and Assessment), and GEC (General Education Council) during the 2009 and 2010 summers and throughout the 2009-2010 AY. This online process – and the extraordinarily hard work and dedication of the 6 Course

Approval subcommittee members of GERICO -- enabled GERICO to review more than two hundred conversion proposals in a single AY. Conversion submission and review criteria were developed by GERICO members during the 2009 summer, and refined by the General Education Council (GEC) during Fall 2009.

Although the initial focus of GEC e-submission was the 3-to-4 credit conversion process, the designers of the online General Education course submission and review process in CESD and OAPA paid attention to all potential dimensions of GEC course or conversion submission and review, whether for entirely new courses that were simultaneously going through the Academic Matters Council, or for already approved courses submitted for General Education designations, or for designation changes (mainly from Interdisciplinary or Science Interdisciplinary, that is, I or SI, to a discipline-based designation), or for 3-to-4 credit conversions. Each of these processes had different constraints and posed approval requirements and challenges to a uniform, coherent, reliable and accessible online submission process. Two full meetings of GEC (November and May) were devoted to presentations by CESD staff who took the GEC through a sample online submission and review process and gathered feedback for further revision during AY 2009-2010. The process of revision continues into AY 2010-2011. These online submission procedures are available through the UMA General Education website.

The UMA General Education Website

The General Education Website had been a product of AY 2008-2009 GEC initiative, as described in the 2009-2010 GEC Report to the Faculty Senate. Websites are not static entities, however, and the evolution of the 3-to-4 credit conversions (see above) and the Integrative Experience (see below) called for adjustments to the Website on an ongoing basis as inconsistencies emerged. The GEC is enormously grateful to OAPA for its work – and dedication of a graduate assistant – to focus on implementation issues, including adjustments to the Website. Without the ongoing attention of OAPA, much that is noted in this 2009-2010 report could not have been developed or implemented. The Website now has pages dedicated to online submission of proposals including the 3-to-4 credit conversion, and also to the Integrative Experience.

Quinquennial Review

The five-year General Education curricular review process had fallen into arrears in the years preceding 2009-2010. Major catch-up was needed. It was a problem that the extensive General Education files, all in hard copy, had not been converted to e-files, and that the Registrar's record of prior quinquennial review had not been entered into the electronic records. In order to re-start the quinquennial process, OAPA took the initiative of preparing a master spread sheet for all of the 300+ General Education courses in the system and to assess whether or not all of these courses are active. The OAPA graduate assistant who took on this task reported that, based on the preceding two years (2007-2009), there were 340 active General Education courses in the system and 170 inactive courses (that is, courses that have not been offered since 2007).

Looking back to before 2005, only 48 of these 340 active courses had been reviewed on a quinquennial schedule. During the AY 2005-2006, an additional 65 were reviewed, making a total of 113 of 340 active courses that had been reviewed.

During the 2009-2010 AY, the GEC reviewed 50 courses – still using hard copy submission and review -- and by the beginning of the 2010-2011 AY, 35 courses had passed quinquennial review and maintained their General Education designations, while 15 courses are still (AY 2010-2011) in the process of updating and review. The GEC unanimously approved a “sunset clause” to apply to courses whose offering departments do not respond to requests for quinquennial review, after initial request and two reminders.

By May 2010, the online submission process for quinquennial reviews was developed and tested, with further revision during summer 2010. It is anticipated that future quinquennial reviews will utilize the online submission process. OAPA developed a five-year (ten semester) quinquennial cycle, looking ahead from AY 2010-2015, by which 34 courses would be reviewed per semester, for a total of 340 over a ten semester period. This five-year semester-by-semester plan will enable all General Education courses in the system to be regularly reviewed by a firm and predictable quinquennial review plan.

The Integrative Experience

Some part of almost every one of the 9 meetings during the 2009-2010 AY dealt with our responsibility for developing the criteria and options for the Integrative Experience (IE). During these deliberations, the GEC was grateful for the enormous amount of research concerning IE's that had been compiled by the Ad Hoc Task Force on General Education during its 2007-2009 meetings. This research, mainly compiled or conducted by OAPA (the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment) for the Task Force, was presented to the GEC as appropriate by Martha Stassen (Director of OAPA) to inform our decisions. See Appendix A for a selection of this research.

Early on, the GEC decided that its IE criteria should be broad enough to encompass many different implementation plans, yet explicit enough to allow for review. GEC decided to develop broad criteria rather than check-lists, according to which IE proposals from departments would be expected to explain how they address each one of the criteria, rather than selecting items from a check-list. By November 2009, the GEC had agreed to base the criteria on three broad Learning Goals drawn from the 2009 Learning Goals that had been stipulated by the Task Force and voted by the Faculty Senate in May 2009. The GEC also agreed that these three criteria could be met through a range of credit-bearing options, such as new or revised departmental courses, research- or project- or problem-based seminars or courses, team projects, learning portfolios, or independent projects and theses that included collaborative group work.

By its November 2009 meeting, the following understandings concerning the IE had emerged in the GEC: IE options would be proposed by the majors, departments or concentrations; inter-departmental, College- or School-based collaboration would be highly encouraged; the IE is restricted to the upper division (junior or senior year, either semester); it would be paid through a \$210/student stipend (as with the JYWP) while understanding that a number of existing courses or seminars could be adapted to meet IE criteria and that there is no expectation that majors or departments develop an entire new set of courses or experiences.

Discussion of possible criteria (during the Fall 2009 and January 2010 meetings) gained urgency once the GEC had agreed with OAPA to submit an application to the Davis Foundation to support the campus-wide departmental initiatives called for by the IE; this proposal was due in March 2010. A small group of GEC members worked with Martha Stassen to develop what became a successful grant proposal to the Davis Foundation. During the 3-year period 2010 through 2014, this \$274,00 grant provides essential support for the development of the IE, working through departmentally-identified select Davis Fellows in two one-year cycles, and providing campus-wide as well as School- or College-based workshops through which department members can work together on their departmental or collaboratively based plans for the IE. In addition, the grant provides support for a pilot assessment of integrative learning outcomes in the second and third years of the project.

At its March 2010 meeting, GEC unanimously voted in the IE Criteria that are now listed on the GEC Integrative Experience Website and discussed various options or alternative structures that could be devised by majors/departments for their major students to fulfill the IE. These criteria were reviewed a second time during the April meeting and reaffirmed by unanimous vote. The GEC reviewed and approved the list of options that departments could implement in their IE plans for their majors. Members of the GEC also wrote up several examples of each of the options to help department members think about the applicability of various options to their own departmental plan. These criteria, options and examples appear on the GE Website under the Integrative Experience. (See Attachment A.) The Council moved and unanimously passed a motion that "Each major will establish or identity an approved Integrative Experience list of options for their students."

GEC members working with OAPA on the Davis award met through the 2010 summer to implement the initial stages of the grant. Development of the IE options and examples, a funding plan for implementation of the IE, outreach to the Deans, department chairs and faculty across the campus community, identification of current capstone or major courses that can be modified to address IE criteria, development of ideas for collaborative IE efforts at the School or College level, preparation of IE pilots for transfer students in Spring 2012, and a plan for full implementation of the IE by Spring 2013 are challenges and opportunities that were discussed at length in the GEC and carried forward for decision or recommendations by the GEC during the next AY 2010-2011.

Appendix A: The General Education Website for the Integrative Experience
<http://www.umass.edu/gened/teachingAdvising/integrativeExperience/ie.html>

From the Website:

The upper-division integrative experience (IE) provides a structured context for students to reflect on their own learning and explore the connections between the broad exposure provided by General Education and the more focused exposure of their major.

**Purpose Statement:
Upper Division Integrative Experience**

Integrative learning comes in many varieties: connecting skills and knowledge from multiple sources and experiences; applying theory to practice in various settings; utilizing diverse and even contradictory points of view; and, understanding issues and positions contextually.

(Statement on Integrative Learning, Association for American Colleges and Universities & the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, March 2004)

Preamble

The Undergraduate experience can be a fragmented one. Students fulfill a set of General Education requirements, fulfill another set of requirements for the major, and take various electives. They also participate in a range of extracurricular activities. Too often they see these components of their undergraduate education as unconnected and disjointed rather than experiencing them as an integrated whole that helps prepare them for a lifetime of learning.

The skill of integrative thinking, however, takes practice and focused attention. We know that current research into the process of learning highlights the challenge that novice learners face in making connections among seemingly disparate sets of information and experiences. Students require structured learning experiences to become integrative thinkers. They need multiple opportunities to draw on their previous learning, apply previous and new knowledge and skills to increasingly complex problems and discipline-based settings, and reflect upon how the various components of their education can help shape their future engagement in professional, civic, interpersonal, and intellectual activities.

The Integrative Experience (IE) requirement at UMass Amherst addresses the challenges associated with educational fragmentation. Positioned in the upper-division, the IE provides students with a structured opportunity to look back on their early college learning experiences, reflect upon and make connections between those earlier experiences and the more advanced work in their major, and use their integrated learning to prepare for the demands of the world beyond the University.

IE Criteria

The IE addresses the goals by fulfilling each of the following three criteria:

1. Providing a structured, credited context for students to reflect on and to integrate their learning and experience from the broad exposure in their General Education courses and the focus in their major.
2. Providing students with the opportunity to practice General Education learning objectives such as oral communication, collaboration, critical thinking and interdisciplinary perspective-taking, at a more advanced level.
3. Offering students a shared learning experience for applying their prior learning to new situations, challenging questions, and real-world problems that connect their majors with other disciplines or areas of inquiry.

These three criteria are the key ingredients for proposals to meet the IE. At the same time, it is important to note that there are many different upper-division and credit-bearing formats, options, or structures that can be proposed and approved, in light of the three key criteria.

IE Options

Programs, majors, departments, Schools or Colleges will be expected to themselves offer or arrange with each other to offer various options for satisfying the upper division Integrative Experience requirement. The upper division Integrative Experience (3 credits) will complete the General Education requirement for students, and responsibility for options will be located with programs, majors, departments, Schools or Colleges that offer undergraduate majors. Proposals for the Integrative Experience can include (and are not restricted to) the following options as long as they are designed to address the three purposes of the integrative experience and are designed as upper-division offerings for 3 credits.

1. Departments/majors design new courses to meet the IE requirement;
2. Departments/majors revise existing courses to assure that the three learning objectives will be addressed. These might include existing capstone courses in the major, revised as necessary to meet the IE objectives;
3. Departments/majors collaborate with other departments/majors to develop new interdisciplinary collaborative (or other) offerings that address the IE learning objectives as well as the objectives of the cooperating majors;
4. School/College-wide or Campus-wide collaborations focus on a multi-disciplinary theme with multiple instructors and disciplinary perspectives (using the newly designated campus number “UNIV 394”);
5. Departments/majors develop umbrella crediting mechanisms that stipulate the IE learning objectives and the basis for faculty review, grading, and credit, for IE options such as student portfolios, theses, independent or group projects (In the case of independent student projects or theses, the IE learning objective that involves “shared learning experience” can be met, for example, through a seminar that parallels the research and writing of the thesis, or a conference or some other shared learning experience that enables students to present, discuss, and provide feedback to each other on their independent projects);
6. Service learning or community-based learning activities, field experience, practica, or internships that are designed to address the IE objectives.
7. Other options that meet the three [IE criteria](#) are welcomed for review by the General Education Council and will be reviewed in light of those criteria.

IE Timeframe

Year 1

2010-2011, departments/majors are encouraged to develop pilot courses, seminars or other credit-bearing IE options for review by the General Education Council. These pilots may be offered as major requirements or electives for the pilot period.

Year 2

2011-2012, departments/majors will submit new or revised courses or other credit-bearing IE options to fulfill the IE requirement, and be prepared to implement these options for their upper-division transfer majors.

Year 3

2012-2013, departments/majors will be prepared for full implementation for juniors (if their implementation plan is scheduled for juniors), with 2013-2014 full implementation for seniors.

IE Examples

Note to faculty and department heads: These IE descriptions are the result of informal meetings and brainstorming sessions by members of the General Education Council who are considering what “examples” of the various options would look like. They were developed in response to questions from cross-campus colleagues who want to see examples of various IE options, however informal. These examples have not been vetted by appropriate departmental or other committees, nor have they been reviewed for approval by the General Education Council. Please read them in the spirit they are offered – as informal illustrations of possible ways to address the upper-division IE requirement. They were generated to stimulate your own thoughts about IE offerings that might suit your own undergraduate majors and departmental needs.

Option 1: Departments/majors design new courses to meet the IE requirement;

Example from Communication

The creation of a new course, organized around a broad theme, that would fulfill the IE experience while connecting with the subfields of the major. (In Communication, for example, the range includes media studies, cultural studies, film studies, rhetorical studies, performance studies, and social interaction research, all through both qualitative and quantitative methods.) Currently, proposals are being developed for courses dedicated to themes such as humor, horror, and the mind-body relationship. All of these courses would allow students to engage various intellectual approaches within the department (such as humor in film, television, and other media, as well as rhetorical and ethnographic approaches to humor studies), but incorporate other aspects of the Gen Ed experience. Assignments might include, for example, a short paper that asks students to examine the neuroscience of laughter or the study of laughter among other primates (and therefore draw upon perspectives learned in BS and PS courses), a short paper that asks them to examine an interpretation of a comedic novel in film form (and therefore draw upon their work in AL or AT courses), and a short paper that asks them to examine the historical development of political comedies (and therefore draw upon their work in H courses). Other assignments would necessitate Gen Ed skills, such as oral presentations, group work, and information literacy.

Example from Linguistics: Encounters with Unknown Languages

Little is known about the vast majority of the world's 5000 languages. In this course, students work together to elicit information about one of these unknown languages from a native speaker. The course culminates in a workshop with oral presentations and the publication on the internet of a description of the language, with all of the participants as co-authors.

Because the object of study is an entire language, this course requires students to apply and integrate the knowledge gained in all of their previous linguistics courses. To get the needed information from the native speaker, students must exercise skills in formulating and testing hypotheses that they have learned in their science and analytic reasoning courses. Working with each other and the native speaker gives the students a semester-long lesson in collaboration and cross-cultural communication. The language also becomes a vehicle for learning about the history and culture of its speakers — a context in which students can apply the knowledge gained in their social science courses. Through this direct experience, students gain an appreciation for the importance of human linguistic and cultural diversity and the ways in which this diversity is threatened.

Option 2: Departments/majors revise existing courses to assure that the three learning objectives will be addressed. These might include existing capstone courses in the major, revised as necessary to meet the IE objectives;

Example from Communication

The transformation of a course already on the books into an IE course, such as COMM 265 (Democracy and Discourse). The assignments would be redesigned so as to ask undergraduates to engage their Gen Ed experience. The first assignment, for example, currently asks students to represent two sides of a contentious political issue in such a manner that the reader could not determine which position the author agrees with; this could be adapted so that students are asked to write about a contentious scientific issue as drawn from their work in PS or BS courses. The second assignment is an opinion paper in which students must reflect upon the role of the arts in democratic society; this could also easily be adapted to ask them to draw upon their previous work in AT or AL courses. A third assignment currently asks them to defend a version of democracy (e.g., deliberative, agonistic, strong, etc.) they find compelling and to juxtapose it to fascism; this could be retooled so as to stress drawing upon methods learned in H courses. Finally, assignments that stress Gen Ed skills (such as group work and oral communication) are already an element of this course, but they could be increased so as to serve as a fulcrum experience. Several days could be dedicated, for example, for students to enact the roles of an actual deliberative body and make decisions relevant to the class; this practice would not only allow them to rehearse several of the skills introduced to them in Gen Ed courses, but also allow them to develop as citizens who must engage who differ in political views. For example, one assignment could ask students to deliberate on the Gen Ed requirements themselves, imagining that they were in the roles of the Gen Ed Council. Finally, short reflection papers occur throughout the semester, and they may easily be adapted so as to connect students' experience with their major, Gen Ed, and the course material.

Example from English: Revised Career Workshop

Presently, we offer a 1-credit career workshop that can accommodate a limited number of students. That workshop could be expanded into a 3-credit course that would include a review of work accomplished as a student in the English major and Gen Ed, a self-assessment of knowledge, skills, and interests, and exploration of career possibilities.

Option 3: Departments/majors collaborate with other departments/majors to develop new interdisciplinary collaborative (or other) offerings that address the IE learning objectives as well as the objectives of the cooperating majors;

Example from English: Upper level literary seminars

Seminars would explore an intersection of literature with, say, science, consider socio-historical contexts, and also include a self-reflective component.

Example from English: CHFA or other multi-disciplinary Seminar Series around a common topic/issue

It would include guest speakers from the participating disciplines, some readings, and discussion forums. We might also collaborate with Commonwealth College on such a program. It would be run as a lecture with discussion sessions.

Example from Geosciences: ‘Geosciences Today’, or ‘Problems, Understanding, Solutions’, or ‘Geosciences and Global Issues’

The seminar would be team-taught by two or more Geosciences faculty, hopefully one geologist and one geographer. The seminar series could easily vary from year to year depending on which faculty members participated. Any Geosciences (Geology, Geography, Earth Systems) major could use this seminar to satisfy the IE requirement. We could easily take advantage of our diverse physical to social expertise and use the bridge of 'environment' as the common thread. It is designed to make connections between the human experience and our knowledge of the physical world we live in. It builds on the goals of the Gen Ed program by integrating our UMass experience with real world problems.

One such seminar topic could focus on Climate Solutions, and could use the recently published National Academy of Sciences book ‘The Climate Solutions Consensus: What We Know and What to Do About It’. We could think of a range of topical issues that could be explored as an Integrative Experience in successive years. A Connecticut River field class could be another outstanding example of an integrative experience that could be shared among the social and physical scientists in the Department of Geosciences.

Numerous other seminar topics are envisioned: 1) availability of clean water, 2) global warming, 3) energy, 4) natural resources, 5) land use change, 6) environmental degradation, and 7) natural disasters. Any of these topics would explore the science behind the issue as well as the human dimensions of these issues such as disease, economics, social injustice, and policy. Students would work in groups to grapple with the diverse dimensions of an issue and explore possible solutions. We expect that this seminar series may draw in students from other majors. We would propose to have minimal pre-requisites for such a course, perhaps either an introductory geology or geography course.

Example from Communication

A collaborative course with departments outside the major (within the college or outside the college). Communication students with a background in ethnography, media analysis, and rhetorical studies could work with students in the sciences on a project addressing the Connecticut River. A course of this nature could provide an opportunity for students to interview people who work on or who are tied to the river, and address ecological and environmental issues. In doing so, students would draw upon their specific majors, but share in common those perspectives learned in Gen Ed courses. Similarly, Gen Ed skills (such as oral communication, group work, and self-reflection) could become an integral aspect of the assignments, which could culminate with an end-of-semester public conference.

Example from Communication

A collaboration with departments outside the major (within the college or outside the college) so as to offer related IE experiences with enough overlap as to justify serious connections throughout the semester. For example, an IE course in Communication on the theme of protest music might be taught in the same semester as IE courses in civil rights history. Collaborative meetings or conferences could provide a means to bring students in these IEs together regularly for productive discussions. Assignments in these IE courses would follow the individual department's guidelines, but could easily incorporate perspectives from Gen Ed courses as well as Gen Ed skills (such as oral communication, group work, and self-reflection). Other institutes of higher education (such as Indiana University) hold similar activities, called "themesters" (theme semesters) in which numerous courses (Gen Ed and non-Gen Ed) address a broad theme, and create opportunities for crosspollination, as well as guest speakers.

Option 4: School/College-wide or Campus-wide collaborations focus on a multi-disciplinary theme with multiple instructors and disciplinary perspectives (using the newly designated campus number "UNIV 394");

Example from Communication

The proposal of a university-wide IE experience, allowing for any undergrad to enroll. The course would need to be around a broad issue in order to allow involvement across the faculty; for example, a course organized around what it means to be human, or a course organized around what every citizen needs to know. Assuming a two meetings per week, the first meeting could be dedicated to a lecture from a university professor on the topic (with a different guest professor each week), so that students would hear what it means to "be human" in biology, business, theater, astrophysics, neuroscience, rhetoric, etc. The second meeting would be dedicated to students drawing upon their major and their Gen Ed experiences to respond to the lecture. Assignments would also include drawing upon Gen Ed skills (such as oral communication, group work, and self-reflection), and perhaps culminate in a public conference or campus celebration.

Example from Geosciences: 'Geosciences Today', or 'Problems, Understanding, Solutions', or 'Geosciences and Global Issues'

The seminar would be team-taught by two or more Geosciences faculty, hopefully one geologist and one geographer. The seminar series could easily vary from year to year depending on which faculty members participated. Any Geosciences (Geology, Geography, Earth Systems) major could use this seminar to satisfy the IE requirement. We could easily take advantage of our diverse physical to social expertise and use the bridge of 'environment' as the common thread. It is designed to make connections between the human experience and our knowledge of the physical world we live in. It builds on the goals of the Gen Ed program by integrating our UMass experience with real world problems.

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Option 5: Departments/majors develop umbrella crediting mechanisms that stipulate the IE learning objectives and the basis for faculty review, grading, and credit, for IE options such as student portfolios, theses, independent or group projects (In the case of independent student projects or theses, the IE learning objective that involves "shared learning experience" can be met, for example, through a seminar that parallels the research and writing of the thesis, or a

conference or some other shared learning experience that enables students to present, discuss, and provide feedback to each other on their independent projects);

Example from Afro-American Studies

A major sequence in Afro-American Studies requires that a student elect a minimum of 33 credit hours in the Du Bois Department, in addition to the three-credit Junior Year Writing requirement. Of these, 15 credit hours are devoted to the introductory sequence. An additional 12 credit hours must be taken in any of the four areas of the advanced sequence, consisting of courses ranging from the 200 through 400 levels (excluding the senior thesis).

Senior Thesis Seminar: A final 6 credit hours must be taken in the senior thesis seminar, in which students receive guidance in researching and writing a thesis paper. AFROAM 496, Senior Thesis, is typically offered as a three credit course in the fall and in the spring terms of the senior year of our major. All Afro-American Studies majors are required to attend a senior seminar, where they will write a senior thesis or equivalent under the supervision of two faculty members. These courses take place as an individual student experience. In the proposed Integrative Experience revision of the Afro-American Studies Capstone course sequence, AFROAM 496 (IE), we will offer students a structured, credited context to reflect on their experience of the broad exposure provided by General Education and the focus in the transdisciplinary AFROAM major.

COURSE OBJECTIVES – At the completion of AFROAM 496, students will have demonstrated:

- They can persuasively and effectively engage in oral communication about their ideas and work
- They can apply and integrate methods of analysis to real world problems and contexts
- They can evaluate many perspectives aware of the relationship among culture, self, and others
- They can engage in original research of an appropriate cultural topic
- They can author a scholarly project and present it in a professional manner
- They can create an academic portfolio (CV, course & reading lists, academic biography, etc.)

In the first three credit hours of AFROAM 496 students will reflect on and practice General Education learning objectives such as collaboration, interdisciplinary perspective-taking, and critical thinking at a more advanced level. Here students will have a common learning experience for applying their prior learning to new situations, challenging questions, and real-world problems that connect their majors with other disciplines or areas of inquiry. The course is mandatory for AFROAM majors and may be open to AFROAM minors, double majors where AFROAM is the secondary major, and non-AFROAM majors provided the student has had enough AFROAM course work and otherwise secures approval from the course's lead instructor and/or the AFROAM department's director of undergraduate studies (chief undergraduate advisor) or department chair.

TEXT MATERIALS – Required

- Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*, Oxford University Press, 1977 (544 pages)
- Other articles or artifacts on Afro-American studies, culture and values as assigned

Option 6: Service learning or community-based learning activities, field experience, practica, or internships that are designed to address the IE objectives.

Example from Communication

Adding an IE component to already-existing or in-development community outreach programs. Several faculty in Communication are involved in dialogue projects that bridge undergraduates with high school and middle school communities in western Massachusetts, often with the explicit aim of addressing issues around race, ethnicity, and gender. These experiences easily could be adapted so as to draw upon both methods of research learned in Gen Ed courses as well as several skills emphasized by Gen Ed learning goals.

Example from English: IE Internships

Presently a fair number of our majors do internships, and we encourage them to do so. All, by design, require application of prior learning to new situations/real-world problems. We could envision developing guidelines to insure that the first and second IE objectives would also be realized.

Example from Geosciences: A project-based course ‘This is Our State Park’

Teams of students representing diverse majors will spend a semester assembling information and writing brochures describing the attributes of our Massachusetts state parks. Each team will be assigned one park, and each team will have one or two faculty mentors. The course will carry 3 credits. Students will assimilate information about the geology, geography, climate, biota, pre- and post-European settlement history, natural resources, human impact today, etc. Each team will distill a wealth of information into a brochure-length document that can be disseminated in paper form at their park and on the web. A poster session for all teams will be the culmination of the team projects at the end of the semester.

Learning goals:

- Students will work in teams and consider diverse perspectives while building a document that will have value to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- Students will practice valuable research, writing, and communication skills as they prepare materials for a general audience.
- Students will practice critical thinking skills as they investigate, assemble, assimilate, and distill information from a range of disciplines.
- Students will have firm deadlines to meet and will be given general guidelines for creating the brochures (e.g., length and standard layout). However, students will also be challenged to think creatively about what information to include in the brochure, on the Park website, and on end-semester poster.

The student projects will be coordinated by the Office of the Massachusetts State Geologist (<http://www.geo.umass.edu/stategeologist/index.html>) in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (<http://www.mass.gov/dcr/forparks.htm>).

Example from the University of Delaware: The Discovery Learning Experience

“All DLE courses incorporate the following two learning goals:

1. Students will apply critical thinking skills and academic knowledge/concepts to develop effective responses to, and make informed decisions about, problems or situations encountered in the course of the learning experience.
2. Students will engage in reflection, which incorporates self-assessment and analysis of the learning that has occurred as a result of their participation in the DLE. At a minimum, students will be expected to examine and demonstrate what they have learned as a result of the DLE, how they have learned it, the impact of their learning on their personal and professional growth, and how to apply that learning in other situations or contexts.”

Number of credits: 3 semester credits

Timing: can register for a DLE any semester if they have the knowledge/experience necessary

Example: WOMS 498: Internship in Women’s Studies

- Sample syllabus describes central purpose as “an opportunity to integrate what you have learned in your Women’s Studies classes so far with experiences outside the classroom”.
- Class activities include fieldwork in service learning setting; weekly internship seminar meetings that involve the exploration of student-identified “learning issues” connecting fieldwork to academic concerns; development of annotated bibliography; journal writing to include “reflective, informed opinions, building upon your first reactions but going beyond this to include knowledge acquired and reasoned conclusions”; final oral project.

Example from Portland State University: Senior Capstone as community-based learning

“Senior Capstone is the culmination of the University Studies program. Capstone courses are designed by Portland State University’s faculty to build cooperative learning communities by taking students out of the classroom and into the field. In Capstone courses, students bring together the knowledge, skills, and interests developed to this point through all aspects of their education, to work on a community project. Students from a variety of majors

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and backgrounds work as a team, pooling resources, and collaborating with faculty and community leaders to understand and find solutions for issues that are important to them as literate and engaged citizens.”

Number of credits: 6 quarter credits

Timing: senior year

Example: Applications of Social Marketing

“Social marketing adopts the same marketing principles that are used to sell products to consumers to ‘sell’ ideas, attitudes and behaviors. Social marketing seeks to influence social behaviors to benefit the target audience and the general community. Like commercial marketing, the primary focus is on the consumer--on learning what people want and need rather than trying to persuade them to buy what we are producing. Rather than dictating the way that information is to be conveyed to the community, researchers are learning to listen to the needs and desires of the community citizens themselves, and build community programs from there. This class focuses on that process and will partner with the City of Beaverton.”

Option 7: Other options that meet the three criteria listed in section (B) above are welcomed for review by the General Education Council and will be reviewed in light of those criteria.

Example from English Department: Student developed E-Portfolio

Over their academic careers, students would submit written work from both courses for the major and artifacts from Gen Ed courses. They would also write a reflective essay on their studies, interrelationships among courses, and thoughts on applications of their studies to their post-collegiate lives. Students would be introduced to it in our required entry seminar, ENGL 200, Intensive Literary Studies Seminar for Intended Majors and Minors, typically taken during students’ first or second year. It would also be discussed in ENGL 300, our Junior Year Writing course. We view the e-portfolio as a vehicle for work accomplished through some of the course options.