



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TENNESSEE**  
KNOXVILLE

To: Undergraduate Council Members

From: Vice Provost R.J. Hinde

Re: General Education Reinvention

Date: 6 April 2017

Please find attached to this memo the final report of the General Education Reinvention Task Force, along with the task force's recommendation for a new university-wide General Education curriculum and a new UTK graduation requirement. At its called meeting of April 18, 2017, the Undergraduate Council will be asked to approve both the General Education curricular framework recommended by the task force and the new graduation requirement. If approved, these changes will take effect in the 2020-2021 academic year.

The task force was originally appointed by my predecessor, Sally McMillan, and was charged with reinventing the General Education curriculum "in ways that are consistent with the vision and mission of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville" so that the curriculum will "align with the QEP focus on experiential learning as well as the broad themes of the Ready for the World initiative", will "help students clearly understand the value of general education in helping to solve the 'big problems' of the world", and will "encourage engagement across disciplines".

To complete this assignment, the task force has met continuously since its inception in January 2015. The task force has had several meetings with department-, college-, and university-level bodies, has issued intermediate progress reports on its work through stories in *TN Today* and the Provost's *Priorities* newsletter, and has presented progress reports to the university's Academic Council and to the Undergraduate Council. The task force also invited the entire campus community to a General Education Roundtable to obtain input from faculty (tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track), staff, and students. The task force has carried out its work in an open, consultative manner and has considered input and recommendations from a large number of campus constituents.

The proposed new General Education curricular framework has been designed to not increase the number of credit hours dedicated to General Education requirements that are not also applicable to a student's major or minor. The main changes to the current General Education curriculum are as follows:

- (1) Addition of a required course in Applied Oral Communication, typically associated with (and overlapping with) a student's major, that provides students with experience in discipline-specific oral communication;
- (2) Addition of a new category of Applied Arts & Humanities courses allowing students to apply to General Education requirements up to six credit hours that provide opportunities for independent creative work and artistic expression;

- (3) Replacement of the two-course Cultures & Civilizations requirement with a two-course Global Citizenship requirement that includes a U.S.-focused course and a course with international focus;
- (4) Recognition that some courses might fit into either the traditional Arts & Humanities or Social Sciences area, or the new Global Citizenship area – although students cannot apply a single course to more than one area at a time;
- (5) Increased flexibility in a student’s course selections through a two-course General Education Elective component that allows students to develop an academic focus within their General Education coursework, and that can support a student’s pursuit of a minor;
- (6) Addition of a new Engaged Inquiries requirement that helps students understand how the learning objectives in General Education coursework link to topics in their major field of study, and that emphasizes collaborative, reflective, applied, and multidisciplinary learning – Engaged Inquiries courses can be in a student’s major or minor, or pure electives.

The task force also proposes that all students complete an integrative, culminating educational experience that integrates their General Education and major coursework by applying what they have learned to the study of a critical issue or challenge facing today’s world. This Contemporary Issues and Solutions requirement can overlap with a disciplinary capstone course, with a course in a student’s major, or with elective courses.

The proposed new framework for General Education is innovative and flexible, connects to the university’s Experience Learning and Ready for the World initiatives, incorporates several evidence-based high-impact practices shown to promote student retention and graduation, and does not add requirements that will stand in the way of students’ timely progress to graduation. The additional flexibility provided by the new curriculum’s Elective component may in fact reduce graduation bottlenecks.

The Undergraduate Council is being asked to approve the framework of the new curriculum; approval will be followed by appointment of a new implementation task force that will finalize catalog copy, oversee the establishment of new subcommittees of the Council’s Curriculum and General Education committees, and begin creating the course lists that will populate the new curriculum. A draft version of the new General Education catalog copy has been provided by the task force as a starting point for implementation; however, the Council is not being asked to approve the draft catalog copy at this time. The draft catalog copy is provided here simply to help Council members understand the broad structure of the proposed new curriculum.

The Council will be provided with new catalog copy for consideration in academic year 2017-2018 and course lists for final approval in academic years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.