

Dear Colleagues,

I wanted to take this opportunity to provide some background as to the evolution of the General Studies pilot at West for CAPC, which I've outlined below.

In mid-summer 2013, then Provost Betty Phillips convened a task force of faculty drawn from across ASU's campuses--the NextGenEd Working Group--to redesign the university's General Education requirements which had devolved into a "checklist" approach to the attainment of general knowledge. The NextGenEd Working Group recommended the adoption of a new integrated approach to General Studies that would incorporate themes from interdisciplinary perspectives rather than the distribution model that had long been in place at ASU. In 2019, a new faculty task force, acting upon the recommendation of NextGenEd, designed an integrated, thematic General Studies program constituting eighteen credit hours, six of which would be drawn from an introductory course and a culminating experience. The New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences was selected to pilot this new General Studies model beginning in Fall 2020. A team of six New College faculty members were designated in Fall 2019 to select a unique theme that would guide General Studies and identify courses that would best speak to that theme.

After arriving at the theme of "Transformations" and soliciting courses from faculty and school directors to be included in the pilot, the committee of New College faculty members focused its attention on issues related to implementation. There were two primary hurdles, both related to issues of scalability, that guided deliberations. In particular, the model advanced by the 2019 task force called for two separate, three-credit courses--an introductory course and a culminating experience--to bookend the proposed sequence. Given that current projections indicate that approximately 800 incoming first-year students will make their way to the ASU West campus in fall 2020, the group agreed that the courses, when envisioned as face-to-face, three-credit offerings, were not scalable. Moreover, given the inflexibility of major maps in many pre-professional fields (education, health sciences, forensics, biology, etc.), it is not possible for incoming first-year students to take an additional three-credit course in their first three semesters of study. After much deliberation, the committee arrived at a possible solution that will allow the sequence to remain bookended.

Rather than a three credit, face-to-face introductory course, the group proposed a sequence of three, one-credit online courses. The proposed sequence appears below:

1. Global Transformations
2. Social Transformations
3. Connections

These courses are modular in approach, with videotaped lectures, directed readings, brief written assignments, and a combination of live discussions and discussion board posts focused upon the significant questions and concepts, beliefs and creative visions, theories and discoveries that have transformed our world. The primary goal is to give students a sense of the excitement of scholarly inquiry, to challenge students to think rigorously about important ideas and to allow students to learn from a variety of sources, disciplinary perspectives and professional orientations. The third, one-credit course, entitled Connections, will provide students with a structured approach as to how they can synthesize and reflect upon their General Studies experience in both their prior one-credit courses as well as in the four, three-credit courses that constitute the acquisition of habits/skills in the areas of

Inquiry, Collaboration, Innovation and Engagement. In a self-reflective essay (in this case the writing of a living will), students will, through an iterative writing process, learn to think deeply and critically about their set of experiences in the General Studies sequence and reflect upon how their thoughts have developed and evolved over their course of study. Another benefit of this approach, which essentially funnels students from global to social transformations, and then to personal or self-transformation is that they can be utilized again for the exploration of new themes without having to undergo a significant redesign.

Given that the thematic program consists of 18 credits, upon completion of the program and together with graduation, students will be awarded a certificate in their area of general-studies concentration (in this case, Transformation and Change). We believe this additional credentialing will signal to future and potential employers that students have not done their general studies randomly, but rather have worked to understand the dynamics of a phenomenon (in this case transformation) through the lenses of several (inter)disciplinary orientations. PLEASE NOTE: the ChangeMaker form for the certificate has been corrected to indicate that it has been approved for planning.

The program as outlined above was brought before the ASU Academic Senate in April 2020. The motions excerpted below were passed by the senate and speak to the process and protocol by which the thematic approach will be considered for university-wide adoption, an issue which I believe was raised at last week's CAPC meeting.

In brief, Motion 2020-80 gives permission for the pilot:

it is a matter of procedure that members of the University Senate provide consent for the proposed launch of the pilot program on the West Campus in Fall 2020. Additionally, it is appropriate for the University Senate to consider a motion to establish guidelines for future stages of implementation of the revised General Studies model, if it is eventually considered for university-wide adoption. These guidelines should include a protocol for review, assessment, and consent of detailed theme proposals and other curricular innovation. This protocol for review should include the General Studies Council, The University Senate's Curriculum and Academic Programs Committee, and the University Senate.

Motion 2020-81 tells us to work with the senate going forward:

The UAC recommends that the Senate, through its designated leadership group, the University Academic Council, establish guidelines for future stages of implementation of the General Studies revision program. These guidelines shall include protocols for review by the General Studies Council, by the Senate's Curriculum and Academic Programs Committee, and by consent by the University Senate

Eight, 100-seat sections of NEW 194: Global Transformations were offered in Fall 2020, and four additional sections are now underway this semester. We plan on again offering eight sections of NEW 194: Global Transformations in Fall 2021, along with four sections of NEW 294: Social Transformations.