

Report to the University Senate
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The General Education program at NJCU continues to grow in its third semester of implementation. Approximately 329 class sections are running in the program in Fall 2016, including approximately 31 Tier 1 required Math courses, and approximately 92 Tier 1 and Tier 2 required English Composition and ESL courses. For the first time, each of these Math and composition courses will participate in Gen Ed programmatic assessment. The total number also includes approximately 159 Gen Ed “seminar” courses being offered by 23 departments, covering the six University-wide student learning goals, in the four Modes of Inquiry, across Tiers 1 and 2, and introducing students to an impressive range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to critical intellectual inquiry.

The Gen Ed program has collaborated with the Offices of the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Provost to confirm and catalogue approval status of all Gen Ed course proposals. At present, the new program has 42 temporarily approved and 50 permanently approved courses with more being added, and converted from temporary to permanent status, each week. The first Tier 3 capstone courses will be scheduled for Spring 2017, and there will be a push for Tier 3 capstone course proposal submissions with a goal of one from every department to meet anticipated student demand. Guidelines for Tier 3 capstone course proposals, and a template that accommodates a straightforward fill-in-the-blanks strategy for completion, appear on the Gen Ed website under the Faculty and Advisors subpage.

General Education implementation continues, as does the phase-out of the old General Studies program. Old program courses will no longer be offered for Area A-F credit, but will continue to be run for major or minor program credit. All new Gen Ed courses now fulfill Area A-F requirements, and students completing General Studies requirements on Academic Planning Sheet 3-GS will take new Gen Ed courses to complete these requirements. A list of new Gen Ed courses, organized by Area A-F requirements fulfilled by each course, is included in the Master Course List and on the Gen Ed website. In addition, a comprehensive list of new Gen Ed courses that includes Tiers, Modes of Inquiry, Area A-F requirements fulfilled by each course, and catalogue course descriptions, also appears on the Gen Ed website.

During the transition from old to new programs, students will continue to receive credit on Academic Planning Sheet 3-GS for old General Studies courses. However, to facilitate the transition to the new program, advisors are asked to steer students to new Gen Ed courses to fulfill Area A-F requirements. Students completing the General Studies program may consult the new degree progress report for a complete listing of the new Gen Ed courses that count toward their Area A-F requirements.

The new degree progress report also shows the Gen Ed program requirements for students completing the new Gen Ed Academic Planning Sheet. This supports student awareness of the new program requirements. As students begin using the new degree progress report to view their progress and select courses to fulfill their requirements, they will have direct

access to current information about what requirements are met by each course. This should diminish the need for the continual updating of special lists of Gen Ed courses. It will also facilitate efficient course enrollment and degree progress and may also contribute to more rational course scheduling.

The Fall 2015 Gen Ed programmatic assessment report is posted on GothicNet. The Gen Ed Committee on Assessment and Policy (GECAP) will finalize an action plan that responds to assessment results. The plan will include a series of faculty development events that will address:

- The University-wide student learning goals (UWSLGs)
- The Modes of Inquiry
- Programmatic assessment

More specifically, Gen Ed instructors will be provided essential information on:

- The specific outcomes for the six UWSLGs (and their role in Gen Ed classes)
- Supporting student achievement of the learning goals (without losing sight of discipline-specific course objectives)
- The Modes of Inquiry: the disciplinary context of skills work
- Signature Assignments (SAs): their role in Gen Ed courses and program assessment
- Assignment design: clarity, transparency, relevance: disciplines/modes and UWSLGs
- Scaffolding, drafting, revision: building a natural progression to end-of-semester SAs
- The Rubrics: teaching tools and assessment instruments
- Navigating Tk20
- Ensuring SA submissions
- Scoring SA submissions
- “Closing the loop” and improving student success

As there are approximately 100 adjunct faculty teaching in the General Education program in Fall 2016 (including those teaching Tier 1 and Tier 2 English Composition and ESL, and Tier 1 Math courses), adjunct as well as full-time faculty participation in these events will help ensure program success.

The reestablishment of the CAS curriculum committee provides an opportunity to revisit and clarify key elements of the Gen Ed program and the course proposal process. The Gen Ed program is committed to working with faculty to ensure that program goals continue to be met in each course, even when taught by full-time or adjunct faculty not involved in designing it. Toward that end, a plan for periodic curriculum review is being drafted to help ensure that Gen Ed courses continue to reflect approved course proposals and actively participate in programmatic assessment.

The Gen Ed director plays a supporting role in course scheduling by monitoring, and seeking to ensure an appropriate number of, courses offered in each Tier and Mode of Inquiry, and attempting to achieve a reasonable balance among the University-wide student learning goals being covered across the program over time. The Gen Ed Learning

Communities (or GELCs, formerly known as the First-Year Experience Program) have posed particular scheduling and enrollment challenges. As learning communities conceived in pairs and clusters of topically related courses, the GELCs require students to be enrolled in all the linked sections. A limited number of GELCs have been offered in recent semesters; and we anticipate that the GELCs will expand to include the first-year “Blocks” being piloted in Fall 2016. However, for an expanded learning communities program to be successful, an efficient and effective method of ensuring even enrollment among a large number of linked sections will need to be established. GELC enrollments may benefit when students are better informed and able to enroll themselves in linked pairs and clusters. Student self-enrollment in GELCs, using the PeopleSoft co-requisite function and enhanced pop-up messaging, will help ensure students are fully aware of what courses are linked in pairs and clusters to prevent unintentional uneven enrollments, an increasingly important concern if student self-enrollment in GELCs is implemented.

Programmatic assessment continues in Fall 2016 with the assessment of Spring 2016 student work. The first semester of assessment led to the preparation, and publication on GothicNet, of a comprehensive programmatic assessment report on Fall 2015 student achievement of three of the six learning goals: Written Communication, Oral Communication, and Critical Thinking/Problem-Solving. A summary of this report was also posted. Members of the NJCU community are invited to review and comment on the assessment report. Please send your comments, or feedback on any aspect of the Gen Ed program, to gened@njcu.edu.

The Fall 2015 assessment results have informed plans for faculty development. Submitted signature assignment prompts and the high percentage of NAs (when an assignment didn't require demonstration of a given learning goal), in addition to comments from instructors and assessment team members—as well as the members of GEAC and GECAP, which reviewed signature assignments submitted by instructors in Fall 2015 and Spring 2016, respectively—revealed a pressing need for faculty development in the area of assignment design. Transparent assignment design has been shown nationally to have a significant impact on student achievement, especially for underserved and first-generation students. A faculty development workshop focused on this powerful, research-based approach to assignment design, was presented by Mary-Ann Winkelmes of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas on April 29, 2016. A recording and workshop materials have been posted to the Gen Ed website for those who were unable to attend. (See www.njcu.edu/gened and view the Faculty and Advisors subpage.) In addition, a number of workshop participants have agreed to translate insights into assignments, with the possibility of participating in a research project and a local transparent assessment design (TAD) working group to improve student outcomes. If you would like to join the TAD working group, please watch for an invitation.

Programmatic assessment results will continue to be used to plan improvements to the Gen Ed program that positively impact student learning. The April workshop, and the follow-up working group, are part of that effort. We hope that, as the University community has an opportunity to review the programmatic assessment results, more people will get involved in discussions about teaching and learning at NJCU.

Tk20 setup is underway to enable completion of assessment team scoring of Spring 2016 student work (many thanks to Cheryl Swider); and the assessment team has begun its norming work in preparation for scoring signature assignments submitted in courses that

covered Civic Engagement and Intercultural Knowledge, Information and Technological Literacy, and Quantitative Literacy. Assessment team members will meet in the coming weeks to finish their work on juried assessments, and the results will complete the first round of programmatic assessment of all six University-wide student learning goals.

An effort to improve Gen Ed communications has begun primarily by improving Gen Ed website design, but also by simplifying the layout of information provided in the Gen Ed section of the Master Course List. The signature assignment navigation guides have been updated to reflect the upgraded Tk20 site, and the student version now includes a streamlined “quick guide” to address complaints about the length of the full student guide.

Increased participation in curriculum/course development, teaching (including GELCs), and program assessment will be solicited among faculty, who will be asked to complete rubrics on Tk20 for their own students’ end-of-semester signature assignments; and we will be working to improve awareness of Gen Ed program features (and rationales) among instructors, advisors, students, and colleagues in student support services. Gen Ed workshops were held this summer with the OSP advisors and Hub tutors, and we are opening lines of communication with individual students and student groups to increase their input into conversations about future program refinements. This summer, presentations were also made to Summer Bridge/ASCEND students on the Gen Ed program structure (Tiers and Modes, the Capstone), requirements, opportunities (GELCs, intermodal courses), and procedures (especially required signature assignment uploads); and we are working with Lemana Kaifa, SGO President, to set up periodic student focus group sessions at which student input will be sought.

General Education program implementation, including assessment plan implementation, continues to be a team effort that relies on the contributions of many NJCU community members. I would like to thank the many faculty members who have proposed and/or taught General Education courses for their essential and inspiring work. I would also like to thank the members of the assessment team for their dedication and service on this important initiative. Sincere thanks also go to Bob McBride and Sue Gerber, who have made major—and largely behind-the-scenes—contributions to program implementation. The members of the General Studies Coordinating Committee and the General Education Executive and Assessment Committees, as well as the Curriculum Committee and the Committee for Assessment and Policy, have also done invaluable work. I would like to single out the former and current chairs of these committees, Regina Adesanya, Cindy Arrigo, Hanae Haouari, Barbara Hildner, and Michelle Rosen, as well as former Interim General Education Directors Ansley LaMar and Fran Moran, for their service toward realization of this new program. The department chairs have also been key supporters of the implementation process: their patience and generosity, in addition to their tireless work, have made a tremendous difference, as has the work of the University Senate and the Senate Executive Committee, who have played an important role in program implementation. I would also like to thank the many members of the administration who have supported the new program, especially President Sue Henderson and Provost Dan Julius, Associate Provost Deb Woo and Assistant Provosts Karen Morgan and Nurdan Aydin, Deans Anne Mabry and Joao Sedycias, Allan De Fina, and Bernard McSherry, and Associate Deans and staff members, most notably Chris Cunningham, Sarah Roman, and Damaris Castillo, who have consistently supported implementation. Thanks are also due to the offices of the Registrar, University

Advisement, and Enrollment Management—especially Miriam Laria, Evelyn Villatoro, John Duff, Ben Rhodin, and Jimmy Lau—for their efforts in support of the new program. Many thanks also to Hilary Englert, whose work as General Education Learning Communities Coordinator helped smooth the transition from the former First-Year Experience Program to the new GELCs initiative, a potentially high-impact endeavor that promises to improve student success in General Education and beyond.

While plenty of work lies ahead for Gen Ed at NJCU, without the contributions of these dedicated people and many more, the new program could not have come this far.

In closing, the following email, sent to Fall 2016 Gen Ed instructors, provides an overview of, and key information for faculty teaching in, the new Gen Ed program. It may be of interest to those concerned with Gen Ed program developments. As always, please visit www.njcu.edu/gened for more information.

Thank you for your interest in Gen Ed at NJCU.

From: Joshua Fausty <JFausty@njcu.edu>
 Subject: For Instructors of Gen Ed Courses (incl. English Composition/ESL and Math courses)
 Date: September 3, 2016 at 6:28:51 PM EDT

Dear Colleague,

I hope you had a great summer. This email highlights key features and requirements of the new General Education program.

If you are receiving this email, you are a Gen Ed instructor in fall 2016 when, for the first time, English Composition courses (including ESL and bilingual courses) and Tier 1 Math courses will participate in Gen Ed programmatic assessment.

Welcome to General Education at NJCU.

Thank you in advance for your attention to these matters; I've provided links to supporting documentation where it might be helpful.

1. In Gen Ed courses, skills-building work takes place in the context of discipline-specific (and interdisciplinary) instruction in the Mode(s) of Inquiry. Click [here](#) for descriptions of the Modes of Inquiry; click [here](#) to find your course's Mode(s) of Inquiry.
2. Weekly coursework in Gen Ed classes includes targeted skills building to help students achieve the [specific outcomes](#) associated with the two [University-wide student learning goals](#) covered in each course. To find out which two learning goals are covered in your course, and on your end-of-semester signature assignment(s), click [here](#).
3. To help ensure that students are able to achieve these learning goals on their end-of-semester signature assignment(s), be sure to keep the [specific outcomes](#) for your course's two learning goals in mind as you plan weekly coursework leading up to your signature assignment(s). [Here are the outcomes again in Word format](#) to facilitate adding them to your syllabus or assignments.

4. Adopting principles of transparent assignment design clarifies requirements and expectations to help students achieve success. Consider watching this [video presentation](#) by Mary-Ann Winkelmes on transparent assignment design; click [here](#) to download the workshop packet.
5. Gen Ed students are required to submit their signature assignment(s) to Tk20 by the end of finals week; please ensure that they do.
6. Click [here](#) to view signature assignment submission instructions for students, including a new [Quick Guide](#).
7. As in previous semesters, signature assignment(s) will be scored by the assessment team. Results will be aggregated and reported for programmatic assessment purposes. Faculty will grade their students' signature assignment(s) following the normal grading process (including any special grading or portfolio procedures required by the English, ESL, and Math departments). In addition, instructors will be asked to play a more active role in assessment by scoring their students' signature assignment(s) using the program rubrics on Tk20.
8. The purpose of assessment is to inform faculty development initiatives, improve curriculum and instruction, and enhance student success. I have consulted with the Provost and Dean of Arts and Sciences who agree that data resulting from the direct assessment of student learning in General Education will not be used to evaluate faculty teaching performance.
9. To view the signature assignment navigation guide for faculty, click [here](#).
10. To view the fall 2015 Gen Ed assessment results, use your web browser to log into GothicNet; then click [here](#).
11. Gen Ed instructors are encouraged to join the assessment team, which will be scoring spring 2016 signature assignments early this fall.
12. A number of Gen Ed faculty development events will be held this fall; please watch for announcements and plan to attend.

More information is available at www.njcu.edu/gened; please remember to click "Additional Navigation" to view the subpages.

As always, feel free to email me at jfausty@njcu.edu or gened@njcu.edu with any questions or concerns.

Best wishes for a super fall semester. I look forward to working with you on behalf of our students.

Josh

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