

# General Education for the 21st Century

***Strategic Plan Theme: Student Success***

***Funding Level: More than \$5 million***

***Facility Needs: Adjustments to existing facilities will be needed***

***Submitting Unit: CAL***

***Collaborating colleges/departments/units involved with this proposal.***

units: CAL (dean's office, CISAH, WRA101), CNS (dean's office, CISGS, math), CSS (dean's office, CIS), APUE, Accreditation, Honors College (dean's office) colleagues from: Library, Writing Center, Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation, CANR

***What is the proposal's big theme or idea?***

General Education for the 21st Century

***What is the proposal's goal?***

To study, design, and implement a general education program that works in conjunction with major and minor degree programs, and co-curricular learning opportunities to ground and propel students through their undergraduate careers. With a commitment to foster students' proficiencies, defined as skills, talents, and knowledge, we seek to create a program that prepares students to act ethically, to contribute to the common good, to make informed decisions, and to learn continuously throughout their lives.

Furthermore, we intend to adopt process principles that foreground campus-wide buy-in; data-informed decision-making; and equity along the lines of the American Association of Colleges & Universities' General Education Maps and Markers: "General education programs should advance practices and policies that are aimed at achieving the full spectrum of learning outcomes for all students regardless of their backgrounds." General Education is a critical retention tool and can help level the differentials of students' pre-college experiences.

No matter the curricular structure that results, we see general education as an institution's intentional way of engaging students in its disciplines' practices, processes, and "threshold concepts" (to invoke Land and Meyer's important teaching and learning framework) to transform students' lives. Further, we believe that such engagements are most effective in the context of a robust theory and practice of asset-based learning that puts students' own experiences at the center, a practice that seeks to make good on values of inclusivity and equity in education.

***Define the significance, or impact of your big idea.***

A new gen ed program would have widespread direct and indirect impact on the undergraduate experience, faculty engagement, budget, support units and programming, advising, and collaboration across campus. It would orient the entire university toward innovative teaching and active learning so that our students are poised to engage their worlds with creative and intellectual flexibility and resilience.

This proposal's work has its rewards and risks, of course. By returning to the question of what general education should be and do for our students, and by intentionally redesigning gen ed at MSU, we gain the opportunity to reassess our goals for gen ed, and to start from where we want students to end, thereby putting into practice and studying a curriculum built to provide integrated learning experiences that best

serve and prepare our diverse student population for the 21st century. We have an opportunity to establish shared learning experiences for our undergraduates that can have significant effects on retention, persistence, and time-to-degree, given the high rates at which our students change majors. In fact, we hope to create a gen ed experience that approaches students' changes in their courses of study as a potential asset for understanding, rather than as a liability for progress. New structures on this scale would have implications for budgets, transfer admissions, acceptance of test credit (i.e., AP), academic policy and advising, Honors College and alternative tracks, tenure system and fixed-term hiring and teaching assignments, the recruitment and use of graduate student teaching assistants, the distribution of SCHs across colleges, student scheduling, student success and time to degree, classroom utilization, the staffing of existing units delivering general education (ISB/P, ISS, IAH, WRA101, MTH), and facilities, if we are to undertake this endeavor with a true commitment to rethinking our pedagogies alongside our courses and their content.

***Who will be impacted?***

All MSU undergraduates. All academic colleges. Grad School. All units engaging with and serving undergraduate students, e.g. APUE, RCPD, NSSC, Advising, Career Services Network, Admissions, RO, etc. Facilities.

***What does sustainability for your proposal look like?***

MSU stands to join several Big Ten peers in rethinking gen ed for the 21st century. The Ohio State University is just completing an overhaul of their 30 year old general education curriculum. Purdue has garnered a great deal of positive attention for their work with Teagle. Maryland's program successfully integrates with their majors. Penn State's program is also relatively new and engages students in diverse epistemologies. In contrast, most other Big Ten schools have programs that are at least 10 years old and rely on support programming to fill curricular gaps. We have an opportunity to re-envision general education and position it as essential to the value proposition of an MSU undergraduate degree in preparing students for lives and careers after graduation.

With a successful revision, we would be able to say what every MSU student gets out of and does with general education and to articulate the value of general education to stakeholders (students, parents, employers). We would coordinate and collaborate across colleges to a greater extent than is currently in practice. We would support and encourage faculty and staff development that speaks to what we learn from the assessment of student learning.

We would need to understand how best to fund this curriculum, so that all students have access to high quality and high impact experiences from the moment they enter MSU, no matter their major.

Our work builds on recent efforts to pilot and facilitate different and/or coordinated approaches to different parts of MSU's general education curriculum, i.e. Integrative Studies, First-Year Writing (WRA101), Mathematics/Quantitative Literacy, and the Tier II writing requirement. Examples include:

CAL + CSS + CNS Teagle/NEH sponsored grant that piloted 13 sections of gateway seminars into Integrated Studies focused on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The associate deans of the collaborating colleges are ready to review our data—gathered from the direct assessment of student learning and qualitative input gathered about the faculty's and students' experience of these unique courses. Lessons learned from this pilot could inform the development of small (50-75 students) general education courses for new students.

CISGS – faculty driven efforts over past 3 years have resulted in the creation and implementation of 5 competencies, with 36 subcompetencies, aligned with ULGs and National Standards.

CISAH – consistent faculty-driven efforts related to programmatic improvement, including learning goal revisions that center DEI.

First-Year Writing (FYW) – continuous programmatic review and faculty development, most recently from a DEI perspective.

Tier II Writing Programming – presently, there is a Tier II Faculty Learning Community that provides informal supports for Tier II faculty.