

# PROPOSAL

## A LIBERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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### Background

The present MU General Education Program emerged during the 1980's and has undergone four modifications since that time. As is wont in the General Education revision process, faculty labored diligently and the result was a new program deemed appropriate at that time. It was impossible to anticipate the various dramatic changes which would ensue during the next decade: the advent of technology integration, the changing profile of the student body, intrusive legislative mandates attempting to measure academic excellence via one absolute measure, accreditation standards dealing with formative assessment. In addition the extant literature of the Scholarship of Teaching now offers substantively new insights regarding student learning, the necessity to consider competencies of learning over content, and a variety of student engagement activities which lead to deeper literacy. Recently, the Chancellor of the PA State System has gained approval for a 120-hour cap on all baccalaureate degrees. These facts and others combine to leverage a review and transformation of the MU General Education Program, if Millersville is to keep its place of pre-eminence as regional public liberal arts university.

### Millersville University's Continuation in Pursuit of Academic Excellence

Since 1855, Millersville University and its ancestral institutions have been committed to the pursuit of academic excellence. The year 2005 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the institution. That is the target date for the implementation of the new comprehensive General Education Program. As it has in its rich past, the new program continues to build on the agreed-upon elements of that which constitutes a rigorous and intellectually challenging liberal arts experience. The dramatic change embodied in the current proposal shifts the responsibility of that experience in a variety of ways:

- a) The conceptual framework builds on the elements of the Academic Affairs Planning Conference of November 2001 including the four driving concepts cited below.
- b) The pedagogy shifts to student-centeredness, interactive and both personally and technologically enhanced.
- c) The architecture shifts from a series of stand-alone, content-based courses chosen in a cafeteria presentation to a mixture of carefully selected core courses emphasizing **communications outcomes** linked to specific liberal arts outcomes within a **learning community** design, a sophomore **inquiry** course used as a **segue to major transformative learning clusters in the junior year**, culminating

in an **interdisciplinary, community-based, problem-solving civic engagement capstone experience.**

## **Marketplace Definition of Liberal Education Outcomes Needed**

**(Source: University of Pennsylvania Workforce Education Project)**

1. Communication Competence
2. Critical Thinking
3. Contextual Competence
4. Aesthetic Sensibility
5. Professional Identity
6. Professional Ethics
7. Adaptive Competence
8. Leadership Capacity
9. Scholarly Concern for Improvement
10. Motivation for Lifetime Learning

## **Themes from the Academic Affairs Stakeholders Conference (November 2001)**

1. Transform the curriculum and educational programs to respond to the changing needs of a dynamic society;
2. Intensify and convert our on-going commitment to social justice, diversity, and globalization into deliberate progressive action;
3. Assure a holistic student-centered environment; and
4. Advance civic engagement through expanded partnerships, community outreach and curricula initiatives.

## Philosophy of the Millersville University's Liberal Learning Experience

All Millersville University graduates will think critically and will possess skills and values for self-renewal, civic responsibility, and global awareness.

### The Framework

#### I. The Communications Core

**Outcome: Within the information age, students should be able to communicate using a variety of media, venues and fluencies.**

<b>Written:</b>	<b>ENGL 110 – English Composition</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Oral:</b>	<b>COMM100 – Fundamentals of Speech</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Creative:</b>	<b>a course which allows self-creative/artistic expression in art, music, theater arts or technology</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Language:</b>	<b>(other than English) proficiency determined by faculty but no less than two courses must be taken for credit and proficiency level noted on transcript</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Quantitative:</b>	<b>a course in math, applied statistics, logic, applied problem-solving, or course(s) to be determined by department of major</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Scientific:</b>	<b>a laboratory-based scientific inquiry course in natural/physical science</b>	<b>4</b>

Each course in the Communications Core must be passed with a grade of C or above

#### II. Learning Communities (First Year)

An integrated learning community consists of three courses, with a cohort of approximately 25 individuals moving together in the three courses. Learning Communities should be constructed so that no one discipline is repeated within the same learning community; students should be exposed to at least six disciplines in their LC experience)

One of the instructors serves as the Freshmen Year Advisor. A student from the previous year's learning community serves as a mentor for the Learning Community. Outcome: To ensure developmental advising experience for freshmen. Measure: continues second year. Electronic portfolio established and material placed on a shared server with appropriate firewalls.

During the First Year, the student takes two Learning Communities one on the Self and one on Community during each semester, totaling two for the year. A one-hour First Year Experience is attached to each learning community.

- (A) **The First Year Experience** 1  
 (Attached to the Learning Community: Understanding Self)  
 This course emphasizes adjustment to college life.

**Outcome:** To ensure a positive adjustment to university life.  
**Measure:** Continues into second year.

- (B) **The First Year Experience** 1  
 (Attached to the Learning Community: Understanding Connections)  
 This course emphasizes a service-learning project.

**Outcome:** To ensure a positive civic engagement introduction.  
**Measure:** C grade or better in project. Must maintain a diary of project.

- (C) **The Learning Community: Understanding Self** 9  
 Three integrated courses, none from the major if known

**Outcome:** To ensure that all Millersville students acquire knowledge, comprehend theory and appropriately apply that learning regarding the role of self in relationship to globalization, diversity, ethics/values, connections and citizenship responsibility within an integrated learning experience so that the idea of self as an integral part of the whole is appreciated.

- (D) **The Learning Community: Understanding Connections** 9  
 Three integrated courses, none from the major if known

**Outcome:** To ensure that all Millersville students acquire knowledge, comprehend theory and appropriately apply that learning regarding the role of community in relationship to globalization, diversity, ethics/values, connections and citizenship responsibility within an integrated learning experience so that the idea of a world with no boundaries is appreciated.

**Presentation:** Word-processing technology capability.

### First Year Program Model

FALL		SPRING	
	s.h.		s.h.
<b>First Year Seminar Adjustment</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>First Year Seminar Civic Engagement</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Learning Community: Understanding Self</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Learning Community: Understanding Connections</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>ENGL 110 (3) or COMM 100</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>COMM 100 (3) or ENGL 110</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Other courses</b>	<b>3-4</b>	<b>Other courses</b>	<b>3-4</b>

### **III. Sophomore Inquiry (Segue course)**

This course is part of a cluster of courses designed by the major department. The purpose of the course is to assess competencies learned in the General Education Program and to introduce the student to methodologies, sub-fields and various expectations of the major discipline. These courses should be transformative. They are discipline-based, but are not survey courses.

**Outcome: To ensure that the student is able to use analytical techniques in pursuit of solving a discipline-based project. To ensure that the General Education competencies have been acquired by the students.**

**Presentation: Information Technology, including spreadsheets**

### **IV. The Major Experience**

Determined by Departmental Faculty

### **V. The Senior Capstone Liberal Arts and Discipline-Based Synergy Experience**

This course is an integrated experience, which is community-based and tied to a civic engagement project. Taught by a faculty member and a community practitioner who mutually guide the students as a team to rendering a solution to a community problem.

**Outcome: Application of discipline-based methodologies.**

**Outcome: Synthesis of liberal arts competencies.**

**Outcome: Critical analysis of problem solving (discipline and liberal arts based)**

**Outcome: Evaluative reasoning in selection of methodology.**

**Presentation: Information Technology, Power Point.**

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## **Implementation and Resources**

Design a Comprehensive Implementation Plan including the following elements:

- Link to Decolonization of Curriculum Theme (Academic Theme 2002-03)
- Marketing to faculty, prospective students (speakers; institutes; faculty workshops)
- Faculty Development Funds
- Registrar/Banner Adaptation
- Admissions Training
- Faculty Restructuring/Departmental Restructuring
- Assessment Focus
- General Education Director
- Decentralized Writing Centers
- Advising Re-engineering process
- Electronic Portfolios and Server Support
- Seeking Outside Funding Support
- Continue Curriculum Transformations/Assessments, etc. to include and build this program
- Continue funding for Teaching Circles
- Continue the faculty breakfast curricula
- Continue the Dean of H&SS special funding for professional development.
- Funding from Friends of Liberal Arts initiatives.

## **Information Sharing**

Team members will share the experiences they gained through a variety of formal and informal mechanisms including:

- Brown-bag Lunch Sessions through Humanities and Social Sciences and the Center for Academic Excellence
- Presentation at Faculty Scholarship Social
- Presentation to President's Advisory Council
- One-on-one meetings with President, and all Vice Presidents, and all Union Leaders
- Presentation to School-Community Advisory Council
- Presentation to Board of Trustees
- Presentation to Alumni Groups
- Presentation to local School Superintendents and Guidance Counselors
- Publication in the *Millersville Exchange* and local newspaper
- Development of Power Point modules
- Website Development