

The General Education Program at Springfield College

Statement of Purpose: The General Education program at Springfield College is informed by its century-old Humanics tradition of educating the whole person in spirit, mind, and body, for leadership in service to humanity. These requirements have the goal of developing literate, thoughtful, socially responsible students, and instilling in them a spirit of inquiry into the nature of humankind and the universe. Towards those ends, the requirements emphasize and encourage: the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, and competency essential for the improvement of the human condition in a diverse society; a search for personal and spiritual values; and the development of an understanding and appreciation of physical well-being.

Recognizing that our students will specialize in a variety of specific majors, the General Education requirements ensure that all students will achieve a common set of learning objectives as part of their Springfield College experience. These common objectives embody the college's definition of an educated person and ensure that our graduates will be able to demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and understanding needed to achieve the mission of the college to educate students for leadership and lifelong service to humanity. The common learning outcomes for all baccalaureate graduates include:

- The ability to provide leadership in service to humanity;
- The ability to communicate effectively in both written and oral form;
- The ability to think critically within and across disciplines, to interpret information, and to develop well-reasoned conclusions;
- The ability to read critically, interpretatively, and empathetically;
- The ability to reason quantitatively and to use mathematical and technological tools for problem solving and analysis;
- An understanding and appreciation of aesthetic, imaginative and creative expression;
- An understanding and appreciation of the scientific process of discovery, critical thinking, and analysis;
- An understanding and appreciation of the social sciences and historical perspective in comprehending the modern world;
- The ability to reflect critically on personal, spiritual, and cultural values in order to live an effective and fulfilling life;
- An understanding and appreciation of the importance of personal wellness and lifelong physical activity in the enrichment of human life;
- An understanding and appreciation of the opportunities and challenges inherent in a world that is increasingly diverse, multicultural, and international.

The following curricular requirements have been established in support of these outcomes. However, none can be fully achieved solely by taking a given course. Therefore, these outcomes will be reinforced across the General Education curriculum and within program majors and minors.

I. Competencies

These requirements have been designed to ensure that students have the fundamental skills necessary to communicate effectively in written English, to locate and interpret information, and to use technological tools.

1. College Writing

6 credits

This requirement is fulfilled by successfully completing or earning equivalent credit for two English composition courses.

2. Writing Across the Curriculum

6 embedded credits

This requirement is fulfilled by successfully completing a minimum of two **SC** courses designated as Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) for a total of six semester hours. One course must be taken during or following the student's third semester (or equivalent); this course may be taken in any discipline. The second course must be taken during or following a student's fifth college semester (or equivalent) in the discipline of the student's major. Courses used for WAC credit may also fulfill another General Education requirement, if it is so eligible, or a requirement in the student's major or minor.

3. Computer Applications

3 credits, or equivalent

Options

- **Successfully completing or earning equivalent credit for computer applications coursework**
- Successfully demonstrating proficiency in computer applications in the objectives developed for this area

Implementation: The CCC recommends that the CIS faculty develop an assessment tool that can be administered during SOAR only to those students who wish to fulfill this requirement by demonstrating proficiency. Advisors are encouraged to recommend more advanced CISC courses to these students.

NEASC Standard 4.19 calls for undergraduates to demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English.

Skills acquired in College Writing are extended within the discipline of the major. In this way, WAC contributes to coherence between the Gen Ed program and the majors.

Today's workplace demands technologically literate employees.

4. Information Literacy Across the Curriculum:

embedded in the curriculum

Implementation: In conjunction with the Information Literacy Faculty Advisory Committee the CCC will determine how the American College and Research Libraries (ACRL) national information literacy standards can be implemented throughout our curriculum.

In light of the rapidly increasing quantity of information available, and the need to develop in students the skills to access and use this information as well as to be able to critically assess the quality of the information, information literacy must be embedded in the curriculum across all disciplines.

II. Domains of Knowledge & Understanding

This area ensures that students are introduced to the primary domains of knowledge and understanding that typically comprise General Education and reflect the mission of Springfield College.

NEASC Standard 4.12 states that undergraduate degree programs are designed to give students substantial and coherent introduction to the broad areas of human knowledge, their theories and methods of inquiry.

Intentional learners are integrative thinkers who can see connections in seemingly disparate information and draw on a wide range of knowledge to make decisions. (AAC&U Greater Expectations, p. 21)

General education is designed to instill not only skills, but habits of mind that will enable students to appreciate a variety of issues, to think independently and critically, and to learn independently. (Peter Stearns. *Liberal Education*, Winter 2002)

Educators at every level develop robust academic advising systems to explain the high expectations of college-level learning and help students map coherent pathways through a landscape of many institutions and programs. (AAC&U Greater Expectations, p. 34)

1. Arts and Humanities

9 credits

Coursework in these categories will enhance students' abilities to read critically, interpretively, and empathetically; to understand and appreciate aesthetic, imaginative and creative expression; and to reflect critically about values.

Choose one from each category:

- A. Literary Studies (*possible exs: Literature, Creative Writing . . .*)
- B. Visual/Performing Arts (*possible exs: Art, Music, Dance . . .*)
- C. Spiritual & Ethical Dimensions (*possible exs: Religion, Philosophy . . .*)

2. Analytical and Natural Sciences

6-7 credits

Coursework in these categories will enhance students' abilities to reason quantitatively and to use mathematical and technological tools for problem solving and analysis; and to understand and appreciate the scientific process of discovery, critical thinking, and analysis.

Choose one from each category:

- A. Quantitative Reasoning (*possible exs: Math, Statistics . . .*)
- B. Natural Sciences (*possible exs: Biology, Chemistry, Physics . . .*)

3. Social Sciences

6 credits

Coursework in these categories will enhance students' understanding and appreciation of the historical perspective in comprehending the modern world and of the social sciences.

Choose one course from each category:

- A. Historical/Cultural Studies (*possible exs: History, Anthropology . . .*)
- B. Behavioral and Social Sciences (*possible exs: Psychology, Sociology, Political Science . . .*)

Majors awarding a B.A. degree may require additional courses from Arts and Humanities.

Majors awarding the B.S. degree may require additional courses in Analytical and Natural Sciences.

4. International/Multicultural Studies

3-6 credits

Coursework or experiences in this category will enhance students' ability to understand and appreciate the opportunities and challenges in a world that is increasingly diverse, multicultural, and international.

Options

- Three semester hours at the intermediate level in a language familiar to the student
- **Six semester hours at the introductory level in a language new to the student (possible exs. French, Spanish, Manual Communication)**
- Participation in an approved study abroad experience
- Three semester hours of coursework designated as providing a multicultural perspective within American society and three semester hours designated as providing an international perspective (*possible exs: Geography, Religion, History . . .*)

The CCC recommends that the foreign language faculty offer a placement exam in French or Spanish to ensure appropriate placement into language courses.

5. Social Justice

3 credits, may be overlapped

This requirement is fulfilled by successfully completing a course designated as having a Social Justice emphasis. This course may also fulfill another General Education requirement or a requirement within the student's major or minor.

6. Physical Education

6 credits

Coursework and experiences in this category will help students gain an understanding and appreciation of the importance of personal wellness and lifelong physical activity.

A. Health & Wellness

3 credits

B. Physical Activity

3 credits

Options

- Physical Activity courses
- Intercollegiate Athletics (maximum 1 credit)
- Independent Study/Individualized Fitness Program

Higher education for the twenty-first century faces the global nature of major problems, requiring awareness of global interdependency and the need for enhanced international cooperation. (AAC&U, p.6)

Responsible learners appreciate others, while also assuming accountability for themselves, their complex identities, and their conduct. By weaving moral reasoning into the social fabric of life and work, they help society shape its ethical values, and then live by those values. (AAC&U, p. 23)

“Particular strengths of the ACR are its emphasis on writing across the curriculum and its inclusion of physical education.”
NEASC Report
December 2000

General Education Policies:

Overlap:

Students may use **up to 3 courses** to satisfy the General Education requirements listed under "Domains of Knowledge and Understanding" and to simultaneously fulfill requirements in their majors or minors.

Minimum Number of General Education Credits:

Students may demonstrate competency rather than take coursework to meet some General Education requirements. However, to ensure that students have a genuine and significant General Education experience outside of their major field of study, all students must complete a minimum of 40 credits of General Education coursework to graduate. (Exception: approved study abroad experiences may be substituted for coursework.)

Registration:

Enrollment in courses that meet General Education requirements cannot be restricted to students in specific majors or minors.

Implementation Procedures:

The model will be implemented for students entering the college in Fall 2006. During 2005-2006, departments that wish to request that new or existing courses be used to satisfy general education requirements will submit their requests to the school-based curriculum committee. The school-based curriculum committee will review the course proposal and determine if the course satisfies the appropriate learning outcomes. The school committee will send a preliminary recommendation to the CCC for approval of courses that clearly demonstrate that a substantial portion of the course addresses the learning outcomes identified for that portion of the general education model. An Advisory Council, consisting of a representative from each department, will be formed to assist in the approval process. The CCC's recommendation will be forwarded to the VPAA for final approval.

Once implemented, the CCC, based on outcomes assessment data collected from students completing the new program, will review the general education requirements of the college. This review will be linked to the next NEASC comprehensive evaluation of the college in 2010.

In order to create coherence in their programs of study, to fulfill the requirements of majors that require high numbers of credits due to licensing requirements, and/or to complete a minor.

The 3-course limit has been designed to ensure that students receive a genuine and significant General Education experience outside of their major and minor fields of study. Majors and minors that allow students to use additional General Education coursework to fulfill requirements must submit a rationale to the College Curriculum Committee for approval.

CCC Recommendations Regarding the General Education Program at Springfield College:

Skills and Concepts for Leadership in Service to Humanity

Oral Communication:

The CCC recommends that students be required to take one course in any discipline that emphasizes oral presentations and listening skills, and that criteria for oral communication learning objectives be developed.

Critical Thinking Across Disciplines:

The CCC recommends that General Education courses intentionally work to develop students' critical thinking skills, and that a definition of critical thinking be developed to guide faculty teaching General Education courses.

Social Justice:

The CCC strongly encourages all departments to develop more SJ course options so that students do not have to take an additional course outside of General Education or the major or minor to meet the SJ requirement.

Leadership in Service Requirement:

The CCC strongly urges that the leadership in service component of a student's curriculum not include a new 3-credit "leadership course," but that leadership skills be integrated in an intentional fashion into first-year seminars, General Education courses, Service Learning experiences, and coursework in the majors and minors—including the capstone experience.

Capstone Experience:

The CCC recommends that all programs include a "Capstone" experience within the major.

Service Learning:

The CCC recommends that Service Learning be incorporated into the majors and minors, and where feasible into the General Education program.

Linked Courses/Multidisciplinary Courses within General Education

The CCC recommends that faculty develop linked courses so that students may integrate and apply the knowledge from one course to another.

The challenge to every liberal arts course is how much critical thinking does it generate and how much participation does it mobilize, how does it relate its body of knowledge to other disciplines, to the communities and literacies of the students, and to the larger conditions of society. (Ira Shor (1987). *Friere for the Classroom.*)Th

Colleges and universities implement curricula to develop student knowledge and intellectual capacities cumulatively and sequentially, drawing on all types of courses (general education, the major, electives) and non-course experiences. Expect college seniors to complete an integrative capstone experience as evidence of advanced college-level learning. (AAC&U, p. 31)

Education prepares students for active participation in the community. A general education prepares students to be creative and flexible thinkers. It develops communication skills, analytical and practical thinking, and ethical judgment.

A good general education program should have as a goal to encourage students to make intellectual connections. Linked courses are effective ways of increasing the coherence of the general education program.