

CHARGE TO THE GENERAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE

January 22, 2021

The Provost hereby charges the members of the **General Education Task Force** to redesign the University's general education curriculum.

Background

The last reform of general education started in 2000 and was completed and implemented in 2003. Since that time there have been significant changes in the student body and the faculty as well as important revisions to the University's mission statement¹ and the associated statement on vision, and values.² Most importantly, our local, regional, national, and global environment has changed significantly. In order to fulfil its mission and serve its students, UNC Charlotte requires a coherent, distinctive, and innovative general education program that prepares students to be successful and engaged in their communities and their careers.

This charge to review and redesign UNC Charlotte's general education program was developed by a General Education Parameters Working Group that the Provost appointed in Fall 2020. The Parameters group undertook a review of best practices for general education design and the general education programs at UNC Charlotte's peer institutions. It also conducted two town hall meetings attended by more than 200 faculty and staff members. All of those findings are reflected in the following charge to the General Education Task Force.

Charge

The General Education Task Force (General Education Task Force) is charged to work as an agent for the University community to develop a general education curriculum that meets students' needs and thus supports the local, regional, national, and global communities which we serve. As an agent for the University community, the General Education Task Force is expected to undertake its work by engaging in broad campus dialog and to arrive at its recommendations through consensus. Its goal must be to create an equitable, sustainable structure for a revised general education program that highlights the value of general education as a critical element in a

¹UNC Charlotte Mission Statement:

UNC Charlotte is North Carolina's urban research university. It leverages its location in the state's largest city to offer internationally competitive programs of research and creative activity, exemplary undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs, and a focused set of community engagement initiatives. UNC Charlotte maintains a particular commitment to addressing the cultural, economic, educational, environmental, health, and social needs of the greater Charlotte region.

²UNC Charlotte Vision and Values Statement commits the university to providing:

- *An accessible and affordable quality education that equips students with intellectual and professional skills, ethical principles, and an international perspective.*
- *A strong foundation in liberal arts and opportunities for experiential education to enhance students' personal and professional growth.*
- *A robust intellectual environment that values social and cultural diversity, free expression, collegiality, integrity, and mutual respect.*
- *A safe, diverse, team-oriented, ethically responsible, and respectful workplace environment that develops the professional capacities of our faculty and staff.*

UNC Charlotte degree. The requirements of the general education program and of academic majors must be broadly integrated, and the combined value of the educational experience must be clearly articulated and manifest in the courses students take. This integration will help ensure that UNC Charlotte's general education curriculum serves transfer students. It will also help ensure the curriculum's viability and coherence by aligning the program to current and anticipated University resources as an integral part of what faculty and departments do.

The General Education Task Force should complete its work in two phases. During Spring 2021, the Task Force will identify the big picture themes and outcomes for the general education program. Then, during the 2021-22 academic year, the Task Force will complete the curriculum proposal and address key implementation questions. During this second phase, the General Education Task Force's membership will be augmented by satellite working groups that will ensure broad participation and expertise from faculty and staff. The General Education Task Force is expected to complete curriculum design by May of 2022, which will enable implementation of the new general education curriculum in Fall 2023.

Phase One: January 2021 - May 2021: Establishing Overarching Themes and Outcomes

1. Obtain feedback from faculty, students, co-curricular units, academic advising, administrators, alumni, and community groups. While all of these stakeholder groups are important, it is critical for the General Education Task Force to actively engage faculty, particularly during the first stages of the design process that will establish the broad outcomes and requirements for the general education program.
2. Develop the outcomes for UNC Charlotte's general education curriculum and the underlying philosophy and intellectual framework that informs these outcomes. The outcomes, philosophy, and intellectual framework must be clearly defined and must align with UNC Charlotte's mission and relevant goals from UNC Charlotte's Strategic Plan. However, above all, they must ensure that the general education curriculum provides **what students need**. These needs include:
 - The opportunity to develop critical competencies and skills, including (but not limited to) critical thinking, communication, deep reading, quantitative reasoning, information analysis, civic engagement, and intercultural competency.
 - The opportunity to develop these competencies and skills in a scaffolded fashion throughout the curriculum, both in introductory courses and in more specialized courses in the major.
 - The opportunity to build literacy with regard to key disciplines, perspectives, and ways of knowing including the humanities, social sciences, sciences, and arts.
 - The knowledge and skills that prepare students to be informed and socially responsible citizens who can engage in informed and ethical discussion on critical issues, including justice, equity, and sustainability.
3. Use a backward design approach to work from these outcomes to develop the structure of UNC Charlotte's general education curriculum and its core requirements that:
 - Embodies principles of equity and ensures equitable outcomes for all students
 - Enables and encourages seamless transfer -- both in terms of credit awarded and time to degree -- particularly for students transferring from institutions in the North Carolina Community College system

- Remains coherent and sustainable over time with respect to resources and faculty engagement. While resources will be needed to support the development of the new curriculum and maintain its coherence, the assumption is that the faculty resources are already available on campus
4. Gather information and share the proposal with a wide range of groups, including faculty, students, co-curricular education units, advising teams, administrators, and community stakeholder groups.
 5. Identify satellite working groups for the 2021-22 academic year that will engage a broader group of faculty and staff to finalize curriculum development within each of the areas of the general education requirements and address particular implementation challenges.

Phase Two: August 2021 - May 2022

During Phase Two, the General Education Task Force will oversee the work of satellite working groups that develop detailed curricula for each of the core requirements identified in Phase One. It will also address all of the necessary issues to develop a complete implementation plan for the general education program that will launch in Fall 2023.

Satellite working groups will be tasked with designing curriculum details in each of the broad general education areas and/or developing and refining implementation plans.

Tasks include:

- Defining learning objectives for each curricular component;
- Determining approved courses (considering evaluation of historical enrollment, grading, and instruction data, sample syllabi, frequency of course offering, etc.);
- Recommending new courses or course elements to fulfill curricular goals not met by current courses;
- Recruiting and engaging faculty to pilot new elements of the proposed curriculum and assess those efforts in order to make changes;

The General Education Task Force will focus on a variety of questions that need to be resolved in preparation for implementing the general education curriculum. Tasks include:

- Soliciting input from faculty, students, co-curricular units, academic advising, administrators, alumni, and community groups; while all stakeholder groups are important, engaging the faculty remains the priority;
- Evaluating impacts on each college/department in order to ensure that the curriculum is sustainable;
- Engaging and consulting with academic units as they prepare to revise current courses or propose new courses that will be incorporated into the general education curriculum;
- Developing detailed implementation plans as regards issues like advising, student information systems, and transfer equivalencies;
- Developing an assessment plan for the new curriculum;
- Creating a faculty development plan to support new curriculum including pilot offerings of elements of the curriculum in 2022-23;

- Ensuring that the 2023 general education curriculum will enrich, brand, and market the UNC Charlotte undergraduate education experience;
- Recommending administrative structures and processes for long term evaluation and evolution of the curriculum in light of new data, needs, and national trends, including a mechanism to ensure substantive participation by a duly elected faculty governance body (or bodies);
- Considering and addressing standards set by accreditation, certification and licensure bodies;
- Preparing the formal curriculum proposal that will be submitted for UNC Charlotte's faculty governance review in 2022-23.