

General Education Implementation Proposal

The general education curriculum now championed by OAA and the topic of various implementation committees is inadequate for students in ASC. If we accept it, we will be abandoning the highest and soundest principles of a liberal arts education as they have been known in U.S. higher education for the past century.

While we respect the rights of professional colleges to have a GE that is not as comprehensive as the GE for ASC, we do not agree that the GE for ASC should be reduced to the level of the professional colleges: “One GE” makes sense only up to a point. Colleges have different missions; the mission of ASC is to provide a broad educational foundation for students with a concentration in one or more areas (majors, double majors, and minors), not to train students directly for a profession. We depart from our essential mission if we do not take our GE seriously as the main vehicle for providing this broad education for our students.

The original proposal presented to ASC by the provostial committee was much different and much broader than what we are now debating in the academic year 2019-2020. It contained a first-year seminar taught by faculty for three credits; it also included thematic areas that required three courses (9 hours) for their satisfaction. This structure resembles closely what the University of Buffalo implemented a few years ago. In effect, we have copied Buffalo’s model, and then reduced it to something much less than, and much inferior to, what Buffalo is offering.

We propose to retain the structure we approved in the spring of 2019, but to make sure that this structure provides the type of education we can take pride in as faculty members in ASC. We therefore propose restoring the initial three-credit seminar. This seminar will enable new students to have contact in their first year with a faculty member in a small course setting and to get to know the excitement of intellectual inquiry with a small group of peers. We also propose restoring the number of hours required to satisfy thematic areas to nine hours (normally three courses). The three courses will provide ASC students with several different approaches to a common theme and enrich the student’s knowledge through exposure to a variety of perspectives.

The table on the following page presents a comparison among four alternatives: the GE at Buffalo, the GE that OAA is currently proposing, the current GE for ASC BA/BS? students, and our proposal for a new GE that retains the structure we approved in April 2019, but strengthens the GE as we have described in the previous paragraph.

As a commentary on our modified proposal, we would add the following considerations:

1. The first-year seminar would include as part of its structure information about the history and purpose of general education in higher education, as well as in-depth exploration of a topic of broad intellectual interest. Ideally the instructor or instructors would include multiple perspectives on a given topic.
2. The foundation courses would remain the same areas that have been proposed by the provostial committee and cited in the document presented to the ASC Senate last April.
3. To ensure the appropriate breadth and diversity in the thematic areas, students will have to enroll in courses from at least two different departments.

4. To help reduce the credit-hour burden on ASC students, we propose counting the foundational course on Race, Ethnic and Gender Diversity, if taken at OSU, as part of the three courses for the theme Global Citizenship for a Just and Diverse World.
5. To further assist students in their credit-hour limits, we propose that three courses in the GE, whether from foundation courses or themes, may overlap with courses required for a major or minor in the College.

Comparison of General Education at Buffalo and three alternatives at OSU

	UB	OSU - OAA	Current OSU	Proposed OSU
First Seminar	3 credits (3 hours/week)	1 hours	1 hour	3 hours
Foundations	21 credits	22-25 hours	46-57 hours	22-25 hours
Pathways/Themes	18 credits	8-12 hours	-	15-18 hours
Capstone	1 credit	1 hour	-	1 hour
Total Credits/Hours non-ASC	43	32-39	47-58 hours	41-47 hours
World Languages		0-12 hours	0-12 hours	0-12 hours
Total for ASC Students		32-51 hours	47-70 hours	41-59 hours

The proposed OSU GE for students in ASC will have a reduction in credit hours from the current GE. At the low end it could entail as few as 41 hours; at the upper end it might require 59 hours, which is still much less than the upper limit for the current GE. It will normally not reduce the credit hours to the level of the OAA-driven proposal.

While we regard this ASC specific GE proposal as more optimal for students in our College, we would encourage other colleges to adopt as much of our requirements as they believe are feasible given constraints of training in their curricula. Professional schools, for example, could retain the current credit-hour requirement for themes (4-6 hours), or they could expand one or both of the theme areas to resemble the theme requirements in ASC. Professional colleges could expand their first-year course to three credits by either creating their own introductory seminars or by asking ASC to provide their students with seminars for their students.

This proposal will require investment on the part of OAA. To staff first-year seminars for approximately 4000 incoming ASC freshman will require the hiring of something in the neighborhood of 50 additional faculty members. In practice, this means an investment of something around \$5M in recurring funds (PBA). Maybe mention the investment Buffalo made. There may well be other investments required. But large changes in curriculum are never cheap,

and if OSU wants a GE that it can exhibit with pride across the nation, it will devote the resources necessary to fund this sort of initiative.

To sum up the implementation proposal:

1. It would contain bookends, but the initial bookend would be a faculty-taught seminar for three credit hours, not a one-credit modular, online course.
2. The proposed GE would contain the following foundation courses (the same ones that are contained in the current OAA-driven proposal):
 - Writing and Information Literacy – 3 hours
 - Mathematical & Quantitative Reasoning or Data Analysis – 3-5 hours
 - Literary, Visual and Performing Arts – 3 hours
 - Historical and Cultural Studies – 3 hours
 - Natural Sciences – 4-5 hours
 - Social & Behavioral Sciences – 3 hours
 - Race, Ethnic and Gender Diversity – 3 hours
3. The proposal has three thematic areas. The first would comprise the three themes approved in the spring; the second of these would deal with Global Citizenship for a Just and Diverse World; the third thematic area would encompass a number of themes to be determined and approved by the ASC Senate
4. The proposal retains the capstone course as it has been proposed in the OAA-driven document.