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Report from the General Education Improvement Task Force

College Town Halls
Feb 12-19, 2025



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The problem:

Well-intentioned Gen Ed program with issues related to advising, transfer, graduation rates, extra student costs, communication

The task:

Retain what's working, improve what can be improved



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Gen Ed improvement activities to date:

- **Fall 2024**
 - Contracted Jennifer Hart, AAC&U Fellow, as a facilitator/coach
 - Conducted listening tours (October)
 - Held faculty development workshop (November)
 - Convened Task Force (December)
- **Spring 2025**
 - Task Force retreat (January 8-9)
 - Continuing meetings



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Gen Ed model development

- Mission and values statement
- Program goals and learning outcomes
- Structure
- Assessment architecture
- Policy considerations
- Implementation consideration



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NOTE:

We read all the feedback from faculty, administration, and staff, and we have made some structural changes in the proposed model.

ALSO NOTE: This is still in draft mode!



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Mission Statement

The General Education Program is a transformative learning experience that advances the university's vision of student-centered learning, positioning students as community leaders in Appalachia, the Commonwealth, and beyond. Throughout the program, students will cultivate core competencies, encounter new points of view, and learn how different disciplines develop and apply knowledge to make meaningful change.



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Values Statement

The General Education Program reflects the core values of the university, empowering our students to succeed as part of an inclusive community that pursues excellence by supporting intellectual freedom, innovation, and sustainability.



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Goals of the General Education Program

Radford University aims to educate students through a General Education Program that:

- Recognizes the skills and knowledge that students bring with them while also setting a new foundation for success in college, in their major, in their career, and in their life by creating educational opportunities that:
 - Provides transformative experiences that expose students to new ideas, challenge their assumptions, and encourage self-reflection
 - Develops an understanding of the world and the diversity of human experience
 - Cultivates an understanding of and respect for different ways of knowing
 - Develops the tools and skills essential for lifelong learning
- Helps students better understand themselves and others so that they can actively participate in their communities as engaged, informed citizens by creating educational opportunities that:
 - Establishes a connection to and understanding of place—Appalachia, the Commonwealth, and beyond
 - Develops ethical reasoning and self-awareness



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Program Outcomes

Upon completion of the General Education Program, students will:

- Develop fundamental skills that underlie and make possible the acquisition of knowledge as to establish a foundation for future success in their college career and beyond.
- Acquire and apply knowledge from a broad range of representative disciplines.
- Explore the connections between courses in the general education program and their broader experiences with college, their major, their career, and their lives.

Throughout the program, students will develop complementary skills in critical thinking, digital literacy, and civic engagement.



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Structure

- Foundational courses (Competencies)
- Distributive courses (Inquiries)
- Integrative courses (Integrative)



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Competencies – Demonstrate skills. Apply and analyze. - 9 credits

- **Quantitative reasoning – 3 credits**
- **Written communication – 6 credits**
 - **Introductory course**
 - **Intermediate course**



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Competencies Goals

Through competency courses, students will develop fundamental skills that underlie and make possible the acquisition of knowledge as to establish a foundation for future success in their college career and beyond.

Quantitative Reasoning

- Translate information among various mathematical forms (e.g., equations, graphs, diagrams, tables, words).
- Solve problems using appropriate mathematical tools.

Written Communication

Introductory

- Employ reading strategies to facilitate written communication.
- Engage in the recursive writing process, including pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading to improve written communication.
- Use appropriate vocabulary, mechanics, grammar, and style.

Intermediate

- Demonstrate proficiency in the writing conventions of a discipline.
- Communicate through writing their understanding of disciplinary content and/or texts.



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Inquiries – 18 to 20 credits

- Scientific – 6 to 8 credits
- Humanistic and Artistic – 6 credits
- Social and Behavioral – 6 credits



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Inquiries Goals

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion. Through inquiry courses, students will demonstrate their ability to acquire and apply knowledge from a broad range of representative disciplines. Students will be able to develop and apply methodological skills that encourage continuing exploration and lifelong learning.



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Scientific Inquiry

– 6 to 8 credits

Scientific Inquiry

- Explain scientific concepts related to natural phenomena*
- Discriminate between valid and invalid inferences made using scientific concepts and evidence.
- Describe data collected via the scientific method (required for lab courses only, optional for non-lab courses).

*Natural phenomena: any state or process known through the senses (i.e. observable, measurable) rather than solely by intuition or reasoning



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Humanistic and Artistic – 6 credits

Humanistic and Artistic Inquiry

- Describe basic concepts in artistic or humanistic analysis.
- Explain the historical, cultural, or social context of an artistic practice, cultural form, artifact, or philosophical idea.



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Social and Behavioral – 6 credits

Social and Behavioral Inquiry

- Describe concepts or methods used in social and behavioral analysis.
- Analyze social and behavioral interactions using disciplinarily appropriate concepts and methods.



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Integrative – 6 credits

- Find Your Place: RADF 101 – 3 credits
- Navigate Your Journey - 3 credits



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Integrative Goals

Through integrative courses, students will explore the connections between courses in the general education program and their broader experiences with college, their major, their career, and their lives.



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Find Your Place: RADF 101 – 3 credits

Find Your Place: Radford 101 Learning Outcomes

The First-Year Seminar, RADF 101: Find Your Place, is intentionally designed to foster a strong sense of belonging while laying the foundation for student success at Radford University. The seminar aims to connect students with their peers, faculty, and the broader university, community, cultivating an environment where they feel supported and valued. Through this experience, students will develop essential skills for academic and personal achievement, engage with digital literacy by identifying credible information sources and using digital tools ethically, and explore the influence of place—whether Appalachia, the Commonwealth, or beyond—on their education and sense of identity. By encouraging reflection and connection, the seminar also promotes civic engagement and prepares students to contribute meaningfully to their communities.



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Find Your Place: RADF 101 – 3 credits

The First-Year Seminar will be centrally supported by Student Connection Programs and organized at the college level. If there are compelling reasons, individual departments/units may offer this requirement through a discipline-program specific course, but these courses would need to meet the learning outcomes outlined.

- Digital Literacy:
 - Identify credible digital information sources.
 - Utilize digital tools according to professional ethical standards
- Civic Engagement
 - Explain the influence of place - Appalachia, the Commonwealth, or beyond - on their educational experience
- Student Success
 - Demonstrate foundational skills necessary for academic and personal achievement at Radford University



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Navigate Your Journey - 3 credits

Navigate Your Journey Learning Outcomes

The culminating seminar of General Education provides students with opportunities to demonstrate and reflect on the relevance of General Education to their major/career and to guarantee access to high-impact practices for all students. The focus of this seminar is to participate in collaborative learning, produce scholarly or creative work, and present the outcomes to the university community and, possibly, beyond.

Programs with existing courses or research/creative experiences (such as a capstone course) may fulfill these requirements if they meet the following learning outcomes.

- Apply knowledge and skills gained through general education courses to scholarly or creative production
- Present the outcome of learning according to professional standards



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Questions
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Comments?



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Assessment architecture

	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Competencies	Data collection	Reflection	Program Revision	Data collection	Reflection
Inquiries: SI	Pause	Data collection	Reflection	Program revision	Data collection
Inquiries: HA	Pause	Data collection	Reflection	Program revision	Data collection
Inquiries: SB	Pause	Pause	Data collection	Reflection	Program Revision
Integrative	Pause	Pause	Data collection	Reflection	Program Revision



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Assessment Considerations

- Individual instructors identify an assignment that fulfills the learning outcomes and complete a rubric in D2L
- Students complete the assignment as part of their regular course work
- Instructors grade the assignment using their normal scoring criteria as part of the students' class grades.
- One rubric for each learning outcome in D2L – students will be evaluated on the rubric.
- Assessment is/can be different from grading
- Data privacy/anonymity important



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Assessment Considerations

- Faculty-driven process about assessing teaching and learning
- If anyone is identifiable in any way, data are not included in the output
- Data go directly to the General Education Program
- Faculty cannot be evaluated using their individual assessment reports
- Individual instructor reports will only be provided to the instructor
- Departments/schools will not be required to generate assessment reports
- Program-level reports will be publicly shared on General Education program web site



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Assessment Considerations

- Collaboration between the IEQI, IT, and the Registrar's Office.
- Dashboards will need to be designed.
- Workshops for faculty interested in teaching any general education course need to be designed.
- Rubrics will need to be designed for each competency/inquiry/integrative course. These should be designed by faculty with facilitation by assessment professionals. They will be designed over the course of three years with the first areas designed in 2025-26 for implementation in assessment in 2026-27.
- Rubrics will need to be pushed into each D2L course in the area being assessed that year. This may require The program will need to be built into Planning and Self Study so that assessment data can be imported into D2L for analysis and reflection.
- Reporting templates will need to be designed.



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Policy Recommendations

- What it means to be a Gen Ed course
 - 100-/200-level, no prerequisites
 - Open to all students
 - No prior knowledge of discipline
- Course needs to carry credit to be assessed
- No double-dipping in Gen Ed (classes can have multiple designations, students can't use one class to cover 2 categories)
- 9-12 Gen Ed credits can be applied to the major
- Rename REAL Council to General Education Council
- Every policy will be on a Gen Ed web site through Provost's office



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Policy Recommendations

- A.A. and A.S. degree holders exempt from Gen Ed
- Applied Associate's degree needs a course-by-course audit
- RADF 101 can be a department first-year seminar
- RADF 101 developed for transfer/dual enrollment students
- Test-out processes (AP/IB/CLEP/Cambridge/placement test)
- Minimum of 24 Gen Ed credits required before taking the second integrative component
- Weeder courses should not be general education courses
- Exceptions for particular 300-level courses???
- Gen Ed/HNRS topics courses at 100-/200-level?
- Define 100-level, 200-level course (might vary by department)



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Implementation Considerations

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Communication and Training:

- **Clear Communication:** Develop a detailed and accessible communication plan to ensure advisors understand the rationale, goals, and structure of the new Gen Ed program.
- **Comprehensive Training:** Provide academic advisors with in-depth training on the new Gen Ed requirements, including course pathways, policies, and how they integrate with major requirements.
- **Advising Resources:** Create user-friendly materials (e.g., handbooks, FAQs, flowcharts) to assist advisors in explaining the program to students.



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Implementation Considerations

ADVISING

Alignment with Technology and Tools:

- **Degree Audit Systems:** Update degree audit tools like DegreeWorks to reflect the new Gen Ed requirements accurately and train advisors on their functionality.
- **Interactive Tools:** Develop interactive advising tools to help students visualize their academic path.



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Implementation Considerations

ADVISING

Transition and Exception Management:

- **Transition Plans for Current Students:** Develop clear guidelines for current students to transition to the new Gen Ed program or remain on their current curriculum. (Recommendations)
- **Exceptions and Overrides:** Establish clear processes for handling exceptions, substitutions, or transfer equivalencies within the new program.
- **Transfer Student Considerations:** Collaborate with enrollment management to align the new Gen Ed requirements with articulation agreements.



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Curricular Considerations

- RADF 101 will need to be designed by a faculty task force and approved through Curriculum. Under current policy, this will require the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee to serve as “departmental committee.”
- Lists of current REAL Courses will be created with current designations; departments will review the courses to determine if they align in the new general education program. Departments can make alterations if needed.
- Bulk curricular approval for designations will need to be done by the new general education committee.



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First Year Seminar Considerations

- Program Model Design
- Program Budget
- Course Proposal
- Course Design
- Course Assessment
- Training Development and Implementation



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