

Foundational Studies Proposal

Executive Summary

I. Introduction

In June of 2007, the Provost and the Faculty Senate charged the General Education Task Force with restructuring the current General Education Program (GE 2000), in response to long standing concerns relating to quality, quality control, efficiency, and implementation. The Task Force developed the Foundational Studies proposal (FS) throughout the Fall semester (2007) and the early part of the Spring semester (2008). Beginning in March and continuing throughout the Summer and into Fall 2008, the Task Force sought feedback from the campus. The Task Force explicitly asked for feedback on the Composition, Quantitative Literacy, and Literature and Fine Arts categories of the proposed program. Based upon the feedback received from open forums and the proposal feedback site, the Task Force modified the initial FS proposal. During the remainder of the Fall semester, the Task Force, with the assistance of the General Education Council, developed learning objectives, skill and applied-learning requirements, assessment instruments, and guidelines for implementation. Below is the Task Force's final report, as well as its curriculum proposal for the FS Program. The General Education Council will hereafter be referred to as the Foundational Studies Council, or simply, the Council.

II. How the FS Proposal Responds to the Provost and Faculty Senate's Charges:

A. Prepare students for the complexity of the twenty-first century

The proposed FS Program:

1. Places a greater emphasis on "ways of knowing" so that students are better able to access and keep up with changing content
2. Ensures integrative learning (e.g. Integrative Upper-Division Electives)
3. Guarantees opportunities for applied learning (e.g. "Ethics and Social Responsibility," Study Abroad, and Integrative Upper-Division electives)
4. Encourages students to study abroad (students may meet up to 6 hours of their Integrative, Upper-Division elective requirement by studying abroad)
5. Recognizes the importance of multidisciplinary (e.g. students may earn up to 6 hours for completing a second major, a minor, or a concentration)

6. Requires that all students participate in a community engagement, service learning, or experiential learning activity (“Ethics and Social Responsibility”)

7. Includes the components that the American Association of Colleges and Universities recommends for a high quality program

B. Ensure that students have a common experience

The proposed FS Program:

1. Mandates that the Council limits the number of courses offered in a single FS category (with the exception of the “Ethics and Social Responsibility” category and the Integrative, Upper Division Electives)

2. Maintains GE 2000’s “ways of knowing” requirements (although the titles and the organization of the requirements are somewhat different)

3. Requires course assessment to ensure that students will meet the same learning objectives across sections and across courses

C. Reduce course proliferation and redundancy

The proposed FS Program:

1. Eliminates the following GE 2000 categories

a. Scientific and Mathematical Studies Elective (17 courses)

b. Social Behavioral Studies Elective (41courses)

c. Literature, Artistic, and Philosophical Studies Elective (35 courses)

2. Eliminates the following requirements:

a. Information Literacy (10 courses)

b. General Education Capstone (12 courses)

3. Combines U.S. Diversity and International Cultures into a single category: “Global Perspectives and Cultural Diversity”

4. Mandates the Council to develop decision-making parameters to limit number of courses within each Foundational Studies category, with exception of the “Ethics and Social Responsibility” category and the Integrative, Upper-Division Electives

a. The decision-making parameters will not limit the number of courses that a department or program may have in the program (i.e. other decision-making parameters will be used to limit the number of courses in each category).

5. Restricts the Council’s review of new Foundational Studies course proposals—after the initial review in Fall 2009—to three year cycles

D. Assessment and the continued improvement of the program

The proposed FS Program:

1. Mandates the assessment of all FS courses—the Council will provide an assessment instrument to faculty teaching Foundational Studies courses
2. Mandates chairpersons/directors to “sign-off” on FS courses offered by their department/program each academic year—the Council will provide the requisite template to chairpersons/directors
3. Mandates faculty/departments/programs to create and submit completed course evaluation and assessment instruments for each of their FS courses
4. Will utilize the NSSE and the UNI-LOA to assess whether the Program is meeting its intended outcomes
5. Will utilize instruments developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities to assess whether the program is meeting its intended outcomes
6. Will utilize the MAPP to assess whether the Program is meeting its intended outcomes
7. Mandates open forums with faculty, staff, and students annually to determine whether the Program is meeting its intended outcomes
- 8 Will assess students’ final work product in Integrative, Upper-Division Elective courses
9. Mandates evidence of high quality instruction, as well as the consistent meeting of learning objectives, for a course to maintain its designation as a FS course

E. Transfer-Effectiveness

The proposed FS Program:

1. Creates an oversight committee to oversee FS transfer credit ensuring both transfer-efficiency and the fair treatment of non-transfer students

2. Restricts a course from receiving FS credit, unless it was designated as a General Education course (or is the equivalent of a FS course at ISU) at the university where it was taken

III. The Task Force's Response to Campus Feedback on the FS Proposal:

In response to the campus feedback, the Task Force:

- A. Separated the proposed "Literature and Fine Arts" category into two categories: "Literature and Ideas" and "Fine and Performing Arts"
- B. Removed the 2.0 credit restriction from the "Health and Wellness" category, as well as all other "grandfathering in" of structure and credits
- C. Renamed and re-conceptualized the proposed "Citizenship and Social Responsibility" category—now named "Ethics and Social Responsibility"
- D. Clarified that "Historical Studies" is the correct name for the historical "way of knowing" category.
- E. Retained GE 2000's first year and junior level composition sequence
- F. Better defined the "Ethics and Social Responsibility" category, as well as the Integrative, Upper-Division Electives
- G. Distinguished the historical "way of knowing" category from the social and behavioral "way of knowing" category
- H. Chose not to include the term "Philosophical" in the title of the "Literature and Ideas" category
- I. Did not create a separate "Critical Thinking" category, with the expectation that critical thinking skills will be developed in each of the FS categories.
- J. Encourages departments/programs to require their students to take Math, Information Technology Literacy, and Fine or Performing Arts beyond the FS requirement or to earn a second major or a minor in fields that they think are essential
- K. Encourages departments/programs to require their students to continue taking a Non-Native language, especially if it better prepares them, as well as makes them more marketable, in their profession (e.g. Education students, Criminology majors, etc.)

IV. Answers to Expected Questions

A. Why change the name of the program from General Education to Foundational Studies?

1. Our current General Education program is viewed as “in addition to,” rather than “essential to” students’ major field of study. The new name is premised on the principle that the FS program and academic units should and do work collaboratively to ensure the success of our students.

B. Why the addition of two new categories: “Ethics and Social Responsibility” and Integrative, Upper-Division Electives?

Ethics and Social Responsibility

1. High quality programs include an ethics component.
2. The study of ethics and social responsibility is not only critical at this historical moment, it is critical across time and cultures.
3. Ethics and social responsibility cut across all disciplinary areas
4. Social Responsibility is an explicit component of the University’s mission.
5. Social Responsibility is an explicit component of the University’s special emphasis for the NCA.
6. This category will ensure that all students who graduate from Indiana State University will have had an experiential learning or community engagement experience
7. Departments and programs across the University will be able to propose courses for this category.
8. Unlike other Foundational Studies categories, the number of courses in this category will not be limited; instead, growth in this category will be controlled through coordinated scheduling and course rotation.
9. These courses, regardless of the level at which they are offered, will be writing intensive
 - a. The Council will operationalize “writing intensive”

Integrative, Upper-Division Electives

1. This category salvages the best aspects of the General Education Capstone experience, while avoiding its implementation difficulties.
2. These courses will allow students and faculty to be creative, integrate material, and apply knowledge and skills to new contexts—skills that according to American Association of Colleges and Universities are necessary to navigate the complexity of the twenty-first century.
3. The inclusion of these electives will ensure greater rigor in the FS program by requiring more critical reading, more intensive writing, and more advanced analysis.
4. This additional category is in response to the critique that General Education courses are boring, replicate the high school experience, and are too easy.
5. Departments and programs across the University will be able to propose courses for this category.
6. Unlike other FS categories, the number of courses in this category will not be restricted; instead, growth in this category will be controlled through coordinated scheduling and course rotation.

C. Why “requirements” instead of “credits” or “hours”?

1. Approximately 70% of our students will need remedial or developmental courses in Mathematics and Composition. Thus, determining an exact total number of credits for the Program is impossible.
2. This approach emphasizes learning objectives, outcomes, and competencies over the strict management of total number of credits.
3. This approach is more likely to ensure transfer-effectiveness.
4. This approach guarantees that we do not “grandfather in” GE 2000’s structure.
5. This approach allows for the creation of new and innovative approaches for meeting the FS requirements (e.g., self-paced tutorials or online courses).

D. Why not reduce the overall number of requirements more significantly?

1. While our students need more skills-based courses (e.g. Composition or Math courses) to bring them up to the standards of the twenty-first century, the Task Force did not want to deprive them of other equally important learning experiences solely for the purpose of reducing hours.

2. The push to reduce the overall number of credits tends to come from majors and programs that require a significant number of credits. The Task Force recommends that instead of short changing students in the area of liberal learning that the number of credits be reduced in these majors and programs.

3. The Task Force has introduced several new policies, as well as kept several policies from GE 2000, that will offer students enrolled in high credit majors and programs some relief:

a. A designated FS course will meet a FS requirement regardless of a student's major.

b. Students may meet up to 6 hours of the Integrative, Upper-Division Elective requirement by either completing a second major, minor, or concentration or by studying abroad.

c. Students with a 650 Verbal SAT (or its ACT equivalent) who complete the University Honors curriculum are exempted from the first year composition requirement.

d. Students with a 650 MATH SAT (or its ACT equivalent) are exempted from the Quantitative Literacy or Mathematics requirement.

e. Students who complete the University Honor's Program have met the following Foundational Studies requirements:

Social and Behavioral Science
Literature and Ideas
Fine and Performing Arts
Ethics and Social Responsibility
Upper Division, Integrative Electives

f. Students who complete in high school two years of the same non-native language or two years of multiple non-native languages with a C grade or better in 4 classes have met the Non-Native Language requirement.

g. Students who study abroad may petition to have those credits meet specific Foundational Studies requirements—in addition to

six of those credits meeting the Integrative-Upper Division Elective.

E. Why eliminate GE 2000's Information Technology Literacy requirement?

1. The Task Force understands that information literacy is an essential skill. However, it maintains that although interrelated information literacy is different from technological literacy.
2. GE 2000's ITL courses tend to focus on technological literacy at the expense of information literacy.
3. Fewer and fewer of our students need basic technology courses—as was fully anticipated when the ITL requirement was included into the GE 2000 program.
4. Opportunities to develop and improve information literacy skills will be infused throughout the FS Program.
5. Academic units should require students to take the technology and information literacy courses that they need to adequately prepare for their profession.
6. The Library or the Student Academic Services Center should offer a series of online tutorials for students who are identified as having inadequate technological skills.

F. Will students be able to use more than 6 credits of study abroad towards meeting requirements in the FS Program?

1. Yes, in addition to the six credits counting toward the Integrative Upper-Division Elective requirement, students may petition to have those credits, as well as any additional credits, meet specific FS requirements.

G. Does earning a degree in Secondary Education constitute earning a second major, minor, or concentration for the Integrative, Upper-Division, Elective requirement?

1. Yes.

Role of the Coordinator and the Council in the Implementation of the FS Program

During the Spring semester (2009), the Council will:

- A. Develop a detailed set of decision-making parameters that will be disseminated in May 2009
- B. Develop course proposal templates for each FS category which include category learning objectives and skill and applied learning requirements
- C. Develop course evaluation and assessment templates for each FS category
- D. Develop the timeline for initial review of courses
- E. Develop the timeline for ongoing review of courses, categories, and the FS program en total
- F. Develop a method for modifying the FS Program so that an overhaul of the program is not necessary in 2020
- G. Work with the Coordinator and the Associate Deans to develop decision-making parameters for accepting transfer credit

During the Summer terms (2009, 2010, and 2011), the Coordinator will:

- A. Hold developmental sessions for faculty working on FS course proposals—in conjunction with CIRT
- B. Provide stipends to faculty who successfully complete a FS course proposal—in conjunction with the Office of Academic Affairs

During the Fall semester (2009), the Council will

- A. Review FS proposals
- B. Work with academic advisers, Associate Deans, and representatives from Enrollment Management, Admissions, and First Year Programs to roll out the program to the 2010 cohort of new students

General Guidelines for Implementation of the FS Program

- I. Courses from the existing General Education program will not be “grandfathered in.”
- II. The Council will define the time frame for when proposals for each FS category will be reviewed in Fall 2009.
- III. The Council will define the time frame for when approved courses in each FS category will be reviewed thereafter.

IV. The Council will limit the total number of courses offered in the FSs program either by limiting the number of courses offered in a given category and/or through intentional, strategic, and coordinated scheduling.

V. Departments/Programs may propose a course for any FS category; however, they are not guaranteed a course in the FS program.

VI. The Council will conduct the “first” review of proposed courses. The Council will seek the advice of disciplinary (or “ways of knowing”) experts.

VII. Proposed courses must meet FS category learning objectives, as well as other skill and applied learning requirements.

IX. Departments/programs must demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring a high quality FS curriculum (e.g. high quality instruction).

X. Departments/programs must demonstrate a willingness to ensure the efficient running of the FS program (e.g. coordinated scheduling and the rotation of courses).

Recommendations for Future Action

- A. Determine how to use the SAT's scored writing assessment to place students into first year composition courses
- B. Investigate the value-added of introducing Writing across the Curriculum
- C. Strategically invest resources to create state of the art academic centers and/or support services (Writing, Critical Reading, Information Literacy, Technological Literacy, Math, Communication, etc.)
- D. Strategically invest resources to hire faculty-experts to teach writing and math to students with under-developed skills
- E. Charge an ad hoc committee to provide recommendations on revising the requirements for earning a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science
- F. Charge an ad hoc committee to provide recommendations relating to block FS transfer credit for students who have completed an Associates degree at another university or who have completed their General Education (or its equivalent) at another university