

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Could current Fredonia students still transfer in General Education credits taken in the summer at other institutions, or once they are here are they only allowed to take our courses?	2
Q: Would it be possible to come up with a cost estimate comparing the proposed new CCC with what we currently offer?.....	2
Q: We are reducing our General Education requirements because students can now graduate without taking even one natural science, etc.....	2
Q: There are already issues with scheduling classes on this campus. Isn't this program only going to make course scheduling worse?	2
Q: The current program offers more flexibility.	2
Q: The proposed program is under-staffed/ under-administered.	3
Q: Some departments get their majors largely from introductory courses (internal transfers). Won't these departments end up losing majors with this new program?	3
Q: Won't this program lead to a delay in students completing a major program if they do internally transfer? That is, if a student gets excited about a major from taking a General Education course, in the past they would (most likely) have taken the first introductory course, but with this program they wouldn't have, which could throw off their ability to graduate on time.....	3
Q: How do we get other departments involved in General Education that historically have not been?	4
Q: Can first-year students take themed coursework?.....	4
Q: Can students test out of the first-year writing course as they do now?.....	4
Q: If a transfer student comes in with all the General Education requirements met (7/10/30), do they still have to take the transfer seminar?.....	4
Q: What if a student is failing one of the courses within a General Education cluster. Can the student withdrawal from just the one class?.....	5
Q: The proposed program just won't work with our major because of requirements/sequencing, etc.....	5
Q: Can't some of the current general education courses be part of the revised program?.....	5
Q: If a current CCC course doesn't automatically come into the new general education program, does that mean the course has to be totally revised?.....	5
Q: How can the first-year 'social inquiry' seminar courses be interdisciplinary if only one faculty is teaching the course? Are you expecting faculty to become interdisciplinary?	6

Q: Could current Fredonia students still transfer in General Education credits taken in the summer at other institutions, or once they are here are they only allowed to take our courses?

A: Yes, students can transfer in General Education credits just as they do now.

Q: Would it be possible to come up with a cost estimate comparing the proposed new CCC with what we currently offer?

A: This request, while reasonable and understandable, is beyond the scope of this committee. However, the provost is working with the deans to provide a cost estimate.

Q: We are reducing our General Education requirements because students can now graduate without taking even one natural science, etc.

A: Yes, but there are a number of points to be made in response to this concern:

- First, as part of the SUNY-wide strategic plan (otherwise referred to as the ‘SUNY 6 Big Ideas’) all campuses are being asked to increase transferability between SUNY schools in order to “streamline the educational pipeline.” Our proposed program is written to adhere to the simplest aspect of the SUNY-wide General Education Requirements (7/10/30) without imposing any additional campus-specific requirements. This will aid in the ability of students to easily transfer into our institution without having to necessarily complete any additional (campus-specific) General Education coursework.
- Our committee did discuss imposing campus-specific requirements for particular areas (e.g., Natural Sciences). In the end we felt that this would best be discussed and decided with University Senate with its wider representation from across campus.
- Lastly, the more courses contributed by a department to the overall General Education program, the less-likely a student will graduate without exposure to that particular area.

Q: There are already issues with scheduling classes on this campus. Isn't this program only going to make course scheduling worse?

A: The campus is in the process of ordering new course scheduling software, which should aid in the course schedule issues. The realities are that there will always be courses occurring concurrently and so thought will need to be made with regard to when courses are offered and the variety of options within particular categories (i.e., not all clusters will be able to be scheduled between 11 and 1, etc.). Just as do department chairs, the General Education Program administrator will have to be aware and assist with this distribution.

Q: The current program offers more flexibility.

A: This statement was made with regard to a previous version of the general education revision proposal. The current framework is much more flexible as we have removed the requirement that general education coursework be spread over the 4 years of study of a typical undergraduate

program and allowed for individual themed courses rather than the required course clusters previously proposed.

That said, the proposed program is somewhat less flexible than the current program (the CCC) with regard to the *structure* of the program. Distribution models, like our current CCC, offer the most flexible structure, but the question is at what expense. Student opinion surveys indicate that the students don't like our current program, assessments indicate that our current program is not providing our students with the skills they need and the literature indicates that students actually prefer a more rigid structure. Furthermore, while the revised program is more rigid with regard to the structure, the requirements within that structure are actually more flexible (7/10/30 model, while our current program is 10/10/36).

Q: The proposed program is under-staffed/ under-administered.

A: We are asked for a full-time administrator (with secretarial support) of the overall program, and a part-time 'writing across the curriculum' administrator. This *may* not be enough staff for this program, but is a very reasonable starting point. Given that we have a 5 year implementation plan, if staffing/administration of the overall program is an issue, then that is something that can be addresses as the program is rolled-out.

Q: Some departments get their majors largely from introductory courses (internal transfers). Won't these departments end up losing majors with this new program?

A: The first-year seminar &/or thematic courses may actually attract students to majors better than an introductory course. The literature indicates that students are more engaged in courses that delve deeply into a topic rather than providing a breadth of knowledge. Most introductory coursework is about breadth rather than depth, while the coursework we are proposing as part of the revised program is more focused on depth and as such could provide a better way to pique interest for particular fields of study.

All of this said it is also important to note that a General Education program is not intended, nor should it be expected to serve as, a feeder program for majors. It has an expressed and explicit purpose just as do major programs of study, and should be designed for that purpose. The General Education program we have proposed was designed based upon best educational practices in order to "*facilitate students' acquisition of the knowledge and skills required to be creative, responsible, and engaged global citizens.*"

Q: Won't this program lead to a delay in students completing a major program if they do internally transfer? That is, if a student gets excited about a major from taking a General Education course, in the past they would (most likely) have taken the first introductory course, but with this program they wouldn't have, which could throw off their ability to graduate on time.

A: Regardless of the General Education program in place, internal transfers always face the very likely possibility that their graduation date may get delayed because they are entering a program

late. The reality is this: a General Education program is not intended, nor should it be expected to serve as, a feeder program for majors. It has an expressed and explicit purpose just as do major programs of study, and should be designed for that purpose. It is also possible that if particular departments or programs of study are finding this issue to be an increasing trend or nuisance that they could re-think their course sequencing or programmatic flexibility.

Q: How do we get other departments involved in General Education that historically have not been?

A: SUNY Fredonia is not the only institution for which this is/has been an issue. As discussed within the proposal one way to deal with this issue is as part of the hiring process. The general education program may be provided faculty lines, which they can then utilize to hire within particular, under-represented areas. The newly hired faculty member would be part of a particular department but half (or more) of their teaching load would be devoted to general education. Additionally providing incentives for faculty to integrate into the general education programming can be very helpful. Thus, departmental- and upper- administration can be instrumental allies in enhancing “buy-in” to the general education program.

Q: Can first-year students take themed coursework?

A: Yes. Ideally, general education coursework be spread throughout the four years of a typical undergraduate career. That said, not all students are ‘typical’ students. Many students (and not just transfer students) come in with some amount of college credit. With this in mind it is possible for a first-year student (less than 30 credits) to take thematic, general education coursework. All thematic coursework will have the first-year seminar as a pre-requisite because it is during the seminar course that students learn how to set-up and start populating their e-portfolios.

Incoming first-year students with ‘advance standing’ (i.e., college credits) should be given priority for Fall semester seminar courses. This would allow the student to take thematic coursework during the second-semester of their first year.

Q: Can students test out of the first-year writing course as they do now?

A: Students can currently test out of the first-year writing course and that will not change in this new program. It is important to note, nevertheless, that, while this is an option, it happens very rarely.

Q: If a transfer student comes in with all the General Education requirements met (7/10/30), do they still have to take the transfer seminar?

A: Yes. The transfer seminar is about more than just our general education program. It is designed to help students make the transition from their prior institution to Fredonia, where the expectations and services may be different.

Q: What if a student is failing one of the courses within a General Education cluster. Can the student withdrawal from just the one class?

A: Cluster courses are intended to be two separate classes that are taught back-to-back and focus on the same topic from at least two different disciplines. The courses would be co-requisites and thus would have the same student population. The two teaching faculty are expected to work together on course coverage and perhaps have joint class sessions, experiential activities and/or field trips.

All of this said, the cluster is composed of two separate classes and thus it would be possible for a student who is performing poorly in one to withdrawal from only one of the courses within the cluster. Faculty who are teaching the cluster courses should understand this possibility and plan accordingly.

Q: The proposed program just won't work with our major because of requirements/sequencing, etc.

A: This statement was made with regard to a previous version of the general education revision proposal. The current framework is much more flexible as we have removed the requirement that general education coursework be spread over the 4 years of study of a typical undergraduate program and allowed for individual themed courses rather than the required course clusters previously proposed. Hopefully with these changes in place this is not as much of a concner as it was previously.

Q: Can't some of the current general education courses be part of the revised program?

A: Yes. However, no course (regardless of the form of the new program) could just be "grandfather-claused" in. We should know and understand this. Courses that were approved under the GCP still had to undergo a re-approval process to be considered a CCC course. That is just the nature of creating something new.

Q: If a current CCC course doesn't automatically come into the new general education program, does that mean the course has to be totally revised?

A: No, not completely, though some courses may require more work than others, and some faculty may be more open to completely revamping a course or creating a totally new course as part of a cluster. Many courses are likely to simply be revised to fit within a particular theme.

To assist with this question I will use my own general education course as an example, and assume that I would like to create a thematic cluster. I teach Chemistry and the Environment. As part of this course I cover topics pertaining to Agriculture, Water Pollution, Energy, and Atmospheric Issues (Climate Change, Smog, Ozone Layer, etc.). I could envision pairing this course with a course taught by Tracy Marafiote, David Kinkela, or Jeanne Frerichs, in which case I might focus the course more specifically on just Food & Agriculture in order to tie-in with

their areas of social justice, pesticides, and food & culture. I could also imagine pairing the course with Christina Jarvis' course on Writing & Social Change, in which case I would focus the class more on Water and Energy, as she does with her course. In either case we have focused topics, but I would be talking about those topics from the perspective of a scientist and my 'paired' faculty would be approaching the topic from their disciplinary area of expertise.

In creating our thematic cluster, I am not creating a whole new course, but I am refining my current course in order to better align with the second course in my cluster. As a faculty in a cluster course, I would work with my "paired" instructor to determine the structure and thematic focus of our courses, the content and scheduling of the courses, and possible joint endeavors, such as field trips. My class is currently approved as a CCC course, but would have to seek approval under this new program as one course within a thematic pair.

Courses are individually assessed with regard to GER 'area' (as designated by SUNY Central), as well as thematic intent. That is, courses must demonstrate that they fulfill the Student Learning Outcomes both for a particular disciplinary (GER) area, as well as for a theme. The assessment of the individual courses within the cluster will be very similar to what is currently being done.

Q: How can the first-year 'social inquiry' seminar courses be interdisciplinary if only one faculty is teaching the course? Are you expecting faculty to become interdisciplinary?

A: A model that has worked well at other institutions is to offer multiple sections of the seminar all at the same time (e.g. 5 sections offered from 12-1pm). Individual faculty, from multiple disciplinary areas, are assigned to (and responsible for) individual sections, but as part of the course will rotate through the sections so that the particular topic or theme can be discussed/examined from the perspectives of the individual areas. Thus, no one faculty is expected to be interdisciplinary in their approach to the course, but on the whole the seminar is taught in an interdisciplinary way.