2020 VISION:

Creating an Integrated General Education Program at SUNY Fredonia

I.   INTRODUCTION

General Education has a long history, infused with intent, as it was "inspired by the work of John Dewey and other turn-of -the- twentieth-century progressives [and] focused on the integration of knowledge for [the] purposes of engagement with the problems of contemporary civilization." (*Brint et al., 2009*) In contemporary culture the terms "liberal education" and "general education" are often used interchangeably.

Despite its historical intent, the current general education program at SUNY Fredonia, known as the CCC (College Core Curriculum), is perceived by faculty and students alike simply as a list of requirements to be completed by the end of a college career without any continuity or overarching purpose. (*Middle States Review 2009, Ad Hoc Gen Ed Review 2010*)

What we are proposing herein is a vision of general education at SUNY Fredonia that would hearken back to the original intent of general education, while simultaneously serving to:
(1) meet SUNY Central requirements; (2) aid in the seamless transfer of students; (3) respond to noted issues within our current CCC program; (4) incorporate design elements proposed and supported by faculty and departments on our campus; (5) integrate documented educational methodologies, which are proven high-impact practices associated with high levels of student engagement and learning; and (6) provide our institution a general education program that is progressive, visionary, unique and connected to our mission and identity.

II.   THE ISSUES

Based upon information provided by a number of institutional reviews that have occurred in recent years (see references), as well as on-going assessments of our current general education program (the CCC), the following issues have been noted. With regard to its basic structure:

- Perceived by faculty and students simply as a distributed list of requirements without any continuity or overarching intent (*Middle States Review 2009*)
- Lack of ownership among faculty (*GECKO grant 2010*)
- Lack of opportunity for faculty to collaborate on courses (*GECKO grant 2010*)
- Widely disparate approaches to course content from an introduction to a particular major to inviting, exploratory courses for non-majors (*GECKO grant 2010*).

More importantly, with regard to imparting the skills and knowledge commonly associated with a general education program, we note that our students generally lack the ability to:

- Integrate knowledge across disciplines (*NSSE 2008; Middle States Review 2009*)
- Engage in meaningful analytical and critical thinking (*NSSE 2008; Middle States Review 2009; 2012 Gen Ed Assessment of Critical Thinking Skills*)
- Illustrate an understanding of, and respect for, socioethnic, cultural and gender diversity (*Middle States Review 2009*).

III.   RATIONALE

The issues related to the skills and abilities of our students is most disconcerting since recent studies (*Humphreys 2006; Hart Research Assoc., 2009; Apollo Research Institute, 2011*) indicate that the skills most needed by students entering the workplace are those that our current general education program is not providing, namely:

- Creative and critical thinking skills;
- Analytical reasoning skills;
- Oral and written communication skills;
- Cultural literacy; and
- Applied knowledge obtained through real-world experiences.

While students need a depth of understanding within their major field of study, we must also understand that numerous studies have shown that our students are likely to change jobs, and even careers, 7-10 times over the course of their working lives. (*Hart Research Assoc., 2010*) To succeed in such a changing landscape requires the skills and capabilities that should be provided through the general education curricula. (*Hart Research Assoc., 2010; Humphreys 2006*)

The design and educational methodologies utilized by a general educational program are an inherent determining factor in the ability of that program to provide the skill-set needed by the students it is intended to serve. A recent study of educational experts (*Welch, 2003*), as well as a national study of employers (*Hart Research Assoc., 2010*), both identified thematically-linked courses as providing the essential skills needed by graduates owing to their interdisciplinary exploration of an issue, problem or idea. Furthermore, *Kun (2008)* has acknowledged thematically-linked courses, as well as first-year interdisciplinary seminar courses, as high impact practices, which lead to high levels of student learning, engagement and retention. With regard to program assessment, a number of recent studies (*Cambridge, 2008; Hart Research Assoc., 2008*) have indicated that e-portfolios provide a better evaluation instrument of student learning outcomes than standardized tests or other metrics.

IV.   THE PROGRAM

Based upon the issues noted in our current general education program, the documented needs of our students upon successful completion of their undergraduate degree, and the established educational methodologies that can best achieve those needs, we are proposing a carefully and consciously re-designed general education program for SUNY Fredonia. As we explored and developed this vision, members of our committee investigated approaches embodied at other institutions, researched learning outcomes and the effects of different approaches to general education on the achievement of those learning outcomes; we learned about factors which affect student attainment and the characteristics of our students and our institution. Our recommendations, therefore, are not drawn out of a group discussion occurring in a vacuum, nor are they limited to our personal perspectives and agendas. Our recommended framework represents the conclusions of how *best* to design and implement a positive, productive and meaningful curricular innovation within the general education program at SUNY Fredonia.

IV.a.   SUNY GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

SUNY Fredonia is part of the SUNY system and, thus, must abide by the General Education Requirements (GER) approved by the SUNY Board of Trustees. These requirements are currently summarized as the '7/10/30' model: *students must earn 30 credits in 7 out of 10 disciplinary areas*. More specifically, these requirements are summarized as follows:

If you enter SUNY in fall 2010 or later, to earn a SUNY bachelor's degree, you must:		
1. Earn 30 SUNY-General Education Requirement (SUNY-GER) credits, which requires you to complete one or more courses in the following areas:		
2 required areas*	Basic Communication	Mathematics
Any 5 of these 8 areas*	American History Foreign Language Humanities Natural Sciences	Other World Civilizations Social Sciences The Arts Western Civilization
2. Demonstrate competency in:		
2 required areas	Critical Thinking	Information Management
3. Meet campus-specific and program-specific general education requirements that apply to your bachelor's degree.		
If you entered SUNY between fall 1998 and fall 2009, you may need to earn SUNY-GER credit in each of the ten areas, but check with your advisor because you may have other options. If you entered SUNY before 1998, the SUNY-GER may not apply.		

IV.b.   OVERVIEW

We propose the development of a unique, campus-specific *approach* to the general education requirements dictated by SUNY Central, but are **not** requesting any campus-specific requirements *in excess of* SUNY Central guidelines.

➢ FIRST YEAR (9 credits total): Entering students begin the general education program with a First-Year **'Social Inquiry' Seminar** (3 credits) that focuses on the exploration of self-identity and society. This course would also entail information literacy, oral communication, community engagement, campus resources, and, as part of this course, students will create and begin to populate their own e-portfolios. In addition to this course, students are expected to take courses in **Quantitative Reasoning** and **Written Communication**, as the two 'required areas' of SUNY GER. It is expected that students would take 1-2 courses each semester to total 3-6 credits each semester and 9 credits total for the year. Students with incoming credits toward any of the first-year requirements can advance to completion of other general education coursework. Foreign Language courses should be available to first-year students.

➢ WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM (3 credits): Given the importance of good written communication skills, students will be required to take a second **Writing**

Intensive Course (3 credits) beyond the basic written communication course required in the first-year of study. Preferably this course would be within the student's major area of study, but if not possible a specific one within the general education program. It is expected that one or more assignments from this course would be included in the student's e-portfolio.

➢ THEMATIC COURSEWORK (18 credits total): Students will satisfy the remaining 5 out of 8 SUNY 'area' requirements as **Thematically Linked Courses**, which aim to engage an in-depth understanding of a particular topic from multiple, disciplinary perspectives. Three themes are proposed and students are expected to take at least one course from each theme:

  o *Creativity and Innovation*

  o *Critical Thinking and Analysis*

  o *Global Perspectives and Ethics*

Educational research indicates that such in-depth approaches to general education courses, rather than the breadth approaches of most introductory coursework, are more engaging for the students and increase critical thinking skills.

These courses may be offered as single courses or as clusters of 2 classes. Thus, this 18-credit requirement could be satisfied by taking: (i) 6-indivdual courses, (ii) 4-individual courses and 1 course cluster, (iii) 2-individual course and 2 course clusters, or (iv) 3 course clusters. Throughout this process students will continue to populate and maintain their e-portfolio.

IV.c. FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

Currently many programs offer first-year seminar courses for their majors. The seminar course proposed herein is intended to serve a different primary purpose from those currently offered. There are three distinct goals for this course and student participation in it. The academic content focus of the first-year seminar course will engage students with the overarching theme of "*Social Identity and Integrity*." Together with their faculty leaders, students will learn about and deepen their understanding of and respect for our diverse community, and will locate themselves within that community. Active consideration of the following questions will serve as the basis for the course:

- *Social Identity* — *Who am I as an individual and as a member of a group or society? How do we define a concept of "self" in relation to others? What does it mean to be successful in the various roles I inhabit? How do I prepare for success in my academic career? In my future profession? How do I fit into the larger community?*
- *Integrity* — *What are the basics of an ethical and moral life? Are these concepts culturally prescribed or universal?*

To promote interdisciplinary critical thinking skills the course is intended to be taught by faculty of different disciplines. Perhaps the best model for this interdisciplinary approach is to offer

multiple sections of the seminar at the same time and have the individual faculty for each section rotate through all sections offered at that same common time. During their class periods with each section the individual faculty would explore the "*Social Identity and Integrity*" theme from the vantage point of their individual disciplines. A common reading or 'Great Books' approach that ties to the overarching theme would provide cohesion between the sections and aid the individual faculty in this co-teaching-type arrangement. Additionally, every section of the first-year seminar would follow a common syllabus (see appendix for an example).

The second goal of the course, and one of our campus commitments to students and to one another, is that that of being an engaged community. In this seminar, students will experience engagement both within the campus and the community. Through participation in a range of campus events, and in opportunities for service learning, students will establish connections that can be sustained throughout their time on campus.

Finally, in addition to the interdisciplinary exploration of 'Social Identity,' the first-year seminar course is intended to support students as they make the transition into college life. Academic skills such as using technology, time management, identifying personal goals and priorities, and listening/studying skills, would be addressed, as well as an introduction to financial literacy and campus resources. Oral communication skills and the creation of an e-portfolio are additional important features of the first-year seminar course.

Based upon the above, the following statement of course objectives and student learning outcomes is proposed:

1. GNED 101 is a requirement of the SUNY Fredonia General Education Program. In addition, along with ENGL 100, this course fulfills the Basic Communication requirements of the SUNY-wide General Education Requirements (GER). In this course, students will:
    a. Develop proficiency in oral discourse; and
    b. Evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.
2. Upon successful completion of GNED 101, students will:
    a. recognize multiple disciplinary ways of asking important questions and finding answers to them;
    b. recognize and respect themselves and others as members of multiple communities;
    c. identify and use appropriate campus resources for support;
    d. become familiar with opportunities on campus and in the community, including opportunities for service;
    e. develop and maintain short and long-term goals;
    f. establish and maintain a campus e-portfolio;
    g. be able to perform the basic operations of personal computing use;
    h. understand and use basic research techniques; and
    i. locate, evaluate, critique, select and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

IV.d. THEMATIC COURSEWORK

Educational research has established that the needs of students taking a course for general education purposes are much different from those who are taking courses in order to pursue a degree within a particular discipline. One of the most significant issues within our current general education model is that the majority of courses being offered to satisfy the general education requirements are courses that are designed to be introductory courses for majors of the discipline. This approach to general education coursework does a disservice to both groups of students, majors and non-majors alike.

Best educational practices indicate that courses which present an in-depth discussion and analysis of a particular topic (for example, world music or global climate change) from a disciplinary perspective result in much higher levels of student engagement, learning and retention than those courses which attempt to cover the breadth of topical coverage provided within the entirety of a discipline (for example, introduction to psychology or general chemistry). While the breadth of a discipline is important and necessary information for students majoring within the discipline, it is not as relevant or interesting to non-majors. Furthermore, educational literature has identified thematically linked courses as providing the necessary interdisciplinary critical thinking skills essential to students since the exploration of single topics from multiple perspectives establishes the interconnectedness of society.

With the above in mind our proposed program requires 18 credit hours of thematic coursework. These courses may be offered as single courses or as clusters of 2 classes. Course clusters would be composed of 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. Such an arrangement facilitates true interdisciplinary exchanges in the classroom, allows for and encourages sustained coordination and cooperation between the professors, and helps to create student learning communities that can be carried beyond the classroom itself.

All general education courses (including course clusters) beyond first-year courses are expected to focus upon at least one of three themes:

- *Creativity and Innovation* – To provide students with the opportunity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in original ways and to think, react, and work in an imaginative or innovative way within a particular discipline, knowledge domain, or methodology.
- *Critical Thinking and Analysis* – To present students the means to analyze information and ideas carefully and logically from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems.
- *Global Perspectives and Ethics* – To awaken in students a high level of global awareness and make them competent to think ethically and critically about sustainability and global connections, and to introduce students to other traditions, perspectives and points of view

and teach them to value and respect them.

In order for a course or course cluster to be approved within a particular theme, each course must meet *AT LEAST THREE* of the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for that theme:

- *Creativity and Innovation*: Students will be able to:
  - acquire specific strategies & skills within a particular discipline and adapt them to a new problem or situation
  - connect, synthesize and/or transform ideas or solutions within a particular framework
  - integrate alternate, divergent, or contradictory perspectives or ideas in the solution of a problem or question
  - articulate the rationale for and consequences of his/her solution
  - create a novel or unique idea, question, format, or product within a particular framework

- *Critical Thinking and Analysis*: Students will be able to:
  - read analytically and critically
  - apply simple mathematical methods to the solution of "real-world" problems
  - select and use techniques and methods to solve open-ended, ill-defined and multi-step problems
  - create and construct an argument effectively
  - identify, critique and evaluate the logic and validity of arguments
  - synthesize information to arrive at reasoned conclusions

- *Global Perspectives and Ethics*: Students will be able to:
  - demonstrate an understanding of the principles upon which sustainable ecosystems and societies are built.
  - identify the national and global challenges associated with current economic, political, and social systems
  - demonstrate cultural and global awareness, knowledge and respect of different traditions and points of view
  - demonstrate competence in a second or additional languages
  - identify ethical issues and recognize different viewpoints and ideologies
  - apply ethical frameworks or principles and consider their implications
  - articulate different cultural perspectives on ethics and morals

We envision a course approval process very similar to the current process whereby courses apply for consideration within a theme by stipulating which SLOs satisfied by course content, how the course satisfies the SLOs and how students are assessed with regard to the SLO. This thematic consideration is in addition to the SUNY GER 'area' requirements, and this approval process could be streamlined by providing an on-line form.

V.   SELECTED STUDENT COHORTS
V.a.   TRANSFER STUDENTS

As ~30% (or 500 persons) of our incoming students each year are transfer students, there is a need to address how the proposed general education program would impact transfer students. As per SUNY Central guidelines students transferring within the SUNY System who have met a SUNY GER area at a sending campus are deemed to have met the same SUNY GER area at a receiving campus. This applies to students transferring with or without a degree.

More specifically, we propose the following:

- Entering transfer students who have completed the A.A. or A.S. degree at a previous institution would be deemed to have completed 60 credits of transfer work and the 7/10/30 general education requirement. Therefore they would be considered to have met the general education requirements at SUNY Fredonia (and not feed into our general education program at all).
- Entering transfer students who have not earned an associate's degree would be evaluated by the registrar (through the standard GETA attachment or transcript review) for completion of general education requirements, as is currently done.
- Any remaining '7/10/30' general education requirements, not completed prior to transferring to SUNY Fredonia, would have to be met within our general education program, as is currently done.
- To facilitate the transition into SUNY Fredonia we recommend that, in addition to the creation of the freshman seminar courses, we create a similar transfer seminar course (of 1-2 credit hours), for students to become familiar with our campus-specific services, the general education program and the creation and maintenance of an ePortfolio.
- As 95% of incoming transfer students are entering as sophomores (30%) or juniors (65%), most transfer students will be completing their remaining general education requirements within our **Thematic Coursework**. As with all students they will have to choose a course(s) which best meets their deficient general education 'area' requirements. The creation and maintenance of the ePortfolio should greatly assist them in identifying their particular disciplinary area needs.

V.b.   LIBERAL ARTS STUDENTS

The primary concern with regard to the Liberal Arts students is that student schedules are now built by the registrar's office prior to students' arrival on campus in the Fall. This issue, as well as other areas of concern, can be mitigated as proposed below:

- Three courses (9 credit hours) are expected of students during their first year. With regard to trying to build a schedule for a Liberal Arts student, all 3 of these courses could be taken during their first semester (seminar, quantitative reasoning, and written composition).
- The student schedule could be filled-out with introductory course(s) within areas of interest as designated by the student.
- Liberal Arts students can then begin their thematic coursework during their second semester of their first-year as long as they have completed the first-year seminar and a

total of 12 credits of coursework.

As any general education program is not intended, nor should it be expected to serve as, a feeder program for majors, beyond these initial ideas/concessions, students should be advised to be more focused and deliberate with regard to taking various introductory courses and selecting a major within an area of study that interests them.

V.c.   HONORS STUDENTS
Currently students within the Honors Program take four seminars in order to fulfill part of their general education requirements. This would not change as part of the proposed revision to the general education program. These seminar courses would be taken in lieu of some of the thematic coursework requirements of the revised program. Thus, all incoming students (regardless of status) have the same first-year 'Social Inquiry' requirements, but beyond the first-year students within the Honors Program would take 4 seminar courses to fulfill part of their general education requirements. General education requirements (7/10/30) not satisfied by the first-year and Honors seminar coursework would be satisfied through the thematic coursework.

V.d.   TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS (COLLEGE OF EDUCATION)
Undergraduate students majoring in teacher education programs will meet and/or exceed the requirements of the SUNY General Education Program through designated courses that fulfill the requirements for initial certification by completing five out of seven general education categories (Mathematics, Natural Sciences, American History, Humanities, and Foreign Language), which align with our four mandated core content areas.

The second Writing Intensive course will be addressed through a major course within the respective programs of study. Thus, all incoming prospective education majors will take the same First-Year Inquiry requirements, but beyond the first-year, education majors will take the remaining general education courses in the categories delineated above, along with the appropriate capstone course of student teaching. General education requirements (7/10/30) not satisfied by the first-year seminar and designated Education courses would be satisfied through the thematic coursework.

VI.   SUPPORT
VI.a.   ADMINISTRATION
Prior to SUNY Central dictating SUNY-wide requirements for general education (1998), which led to the development of the CCC, SUNY Fredonia had both a 'Dean of Special Programs' and a 'Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinator.' While the writing coordinator position was funded through an external grant, the institutional support for these positions showed an internal commitment to general education that has been lacking since (*Middle States Review 2009*). As a 30-credit block of coursework that every student at SUNY Fredonia must complete in order to graduate, and a program of classes that involves every department on campus, as well as one with significant assessment needs, such a program needs a full-time administrator with associated secretarial support. This person would be responsible for:

- Chairing the general education committee
- Approving courses to be included in general education (through the gen ed committee)
- Reviewing courses (most likely via syllabi) already approved
- Administration of faculty incentives
- Program assessment
- Assisting with student issues and questions
- E-Portfolio assessment and evaluations
- Housing and maintenance of pertinent general education materials & records
- Working with the PDC to develop pertinent workshops

In addition to a full-time administrator responsible for overseeing and assessing the new program's efficacy, a Writing Program Administrator would support the development of writing-intensive (WI) courses, design interdisciplinary writing resources for both faculty and students, and ensure that effective writing skills are an ongoing priority of general education. Drawing upon aspects of both the Portland State University and Ithaca College models, we recommend that the Writing Program Administrator be responsible for:
- Establishing guidelines and expectations for writing-intensive courses.
- Designing and running faculty workshops that focus on effective integration of writing assignments, activities, and assessment.
- Appointing and chairing an advisory committee for approving WI course proposals.
- Reviewing syllabi, assignments, and assessment methods of approved courses.
- Collaborating with Reed Library staff and PDC to develop tutorials, Webcasts, and other writing resources for faculty and students.
- Developing a Writing Center hub on campus for students who need additional support for their WI coursework.
- Teaching WI courses for majors without an approved course.

Monitoring the ~5,000 students we have annually on this campus through the general education program, as well as encouraging and supporting faculty in their roles of teaching the content of those classes, not to mention assisting additional staff and administrative areas that may be impacted by general education (such as the registrar), requires at least one full-time, focused administrative position (with secretarial support). In light of the growing investment in writing across the curriculum in U.S. colleges and universities (*Thaiss and Porter 2010*), a Writing Program Administrator would contribute to both our general education program and support other writing-focused initiatives on campus.

VI.b.   FACULTY
Providing some administrative support for the general education program is a good first step in encouraging faculty to become more involved in general education (because then they can focus on their teaching rather than administration and assessment, which has become burdensome for many). But the shift from our current general education model, in which many courses are

simply 'Introductions to the major,' to a thematic, integrative, interdisciplinary general education program, is going to require additional faculty support and incentives. A few ideas, which are not intended to be all-encompassing or exclusionary, are given below.

To encourage faculty involvement and assist match-making between interested faculty the general education program administrator should provide venues to allow faculty from differing departments to talk about common interests in order to develop thematic course pairings. This may include social networking events, as well as hosting forums or rengas through the PDC.

[Portland State University](#) has an additional model for encouraging faculty involvement in general education: tenure-track faculty lines that are shared between departments and the general education office. The general education office provides the funding for the position (as the hired faculty member is required to teach coursework within the general education program) but the faculty is housed within the academic department. Such a focused hiring process is especially useful in encouraging involvement in general education programming from departments that have historically been less involved in such course offerings.

In addition to simply encouraging and supporting faculty who invest in general education, we also need to provide incentives to assist faculty in helping us to revise our general education program through course creation. Revision of the general education program is not going to be simple; what we are proposing is a significant paradigm shift, which will occur over time, but is still going to require considerable changes in course content and structure. We propose that the first time faculty are team-teaching a course cluster, both faculty get credit for both classes. This will allow them the time needed to ensure an interdisciplinary nature to the course content. Another proposed incentive would be to allow faculty to 'bank' teaching credits such that if they teach an overload one semester, they can take a reduction in contact hours in another semester (in case such an option is necessary due to departmental needs, etc.). We understand that adjunct faculty teach a significant portion of our General Education courses and that such reductions in teaching loads are not helpful for these faculty. Similar incentives should be made available to adjunct faculty to ease their transition into this new program as well.

VII.   IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Following two academic years for approval and development, the proposed revised general education program would be implemented over the course of 4 academic years, following the class of 2020. The specific implementation timeline is given below.

AY 2013-2014: Submission and approval of new general education framework by University Senate. Initiation of search for General Education Administrator.

AY 2014-2016: Official hire of General Education Administrator. Development of First-Year 'Social Inquiry' seminars and ancillary coursework. Significant outreach to incoming and current students with regard to the changes ahead. Further development of transfer, ePortfolio and assessment plans.

AY 2016-2017: New general education program becomes effective for all incoming students. Full schedule of all First-Year 'Social Inquiry' seminars and ancillary coursework. Development of Thematic Coursework.

Summer 2017: Assessment of First-Year Inquiry/ First-Year of Implementation.

AY 2017-2018: Full schedule of First-Year Inquiry and some Thematic Coursework available. Development of additional Thematic Coursework. Assessment of individual courses within general education program.

Summer 2018: Assessment of First-Year Inquiry, Thematic Coursework, and Second-Year Implementation.

AY 2018-2019: Full schedule of First-Year Inquiry and Thematic Coursework.

Summer 2019: Assessment of individual courses and overall general education program using ePortfolios.

AY 2019-2020 & Beyond: Full revised general education program implementation is complete. Annual assessment of courses within the general education program, as well as assessment of the program as a whole.

VIII.   ASSESSMENT
VIII.a. MISSION AND GOALS
Based upon the recently approved general education mission statement:

> *The SUNY Fredonia General Education Program facilitates students' acquisition of the knowledge and skills required to be creative, responsible, and engaged global citizens. At SUNY Fredonia, general education emphasizes integrated, interdisciplinary skills, competencies, experiences, and perspectives that foster critical thought and form the foundation for lifelong learning.*

We propose the following programmatic goals for the overall general education program:
- To inspire students' intellectual curiosity about the world and a deeper understanding of their place in it.
- To promote students' understanding of, and critical reflection on, themselves as products of and participants in diverse traditions of art, ideas, and values.
- To develop students' capacity for effective personal expression and ability to use writing and quantitative reasoning as a way to learn material and a means to discover, construct, and order meaning.
- To prepare students for purposeful civic engagement on the local, national, and global levels.
- To develop students' understanding of the ethical dimensions of what they say and do.
- To prepare students to be tolerant of ambiguity and uncertainty and to respond critically, constructively, and creatively to change.

VIII.b. *PROGRAM ASSESSMENT*

Our programmatic goals, like the baccalaureate goals, have been conceived as overarching goals for our students and the program rather than as specific learning outcomes. At the same time, however, SUNY Central GER dictates that students fulfill at least 7 out of 10 disciplinary areas and 2 competencies, each of which has an associated list of student learning outcomes (SLOs) that must be regularly assessed. Our programmatic assessments through the use of e-portfolios will highlight the distinctiveness of each, but do not preclude their connection; they are not mutually exclusive. We propose an ongoing assessment of our general education program using student ePortfolios that integrates the assessment of both the course- and area- specific requirements of SUNY Central SLOs, and the more subjective and longitudinal assessment of the program goals and student growth and development. The design of both the course- and area-specific assignments will need to be developed carefully and fully integrated into the course design and approval process. Their creation by relevant disciplinary and general education faculty will be part of the implementation of the final approved program.

VIII.c. *ePORTFOLIOS*

With regard to the use of the ePortfolio for assessment, it is important to note that the assessment of the overall general education program is different than the assessment of an individual student. Students will be assessed through individual assignments or activities within particular classes, not through the ePortfolios. The purpose of the ePortfolios for the student is to monitor their fulfillment of requirements and to document their growth throughout their undergraduate careers. As students upload document to their ePortfolio certain information will be required to be provided. Student advisor will check to make sure that all required fields are completed, but will not grade or assess the quality of the submitted work.

The overall General Education program will be asses through a random sampling of all of the ePortfolios, but no one person(s) will read or assess all of the ePortfolios for all of our students. Portland State provides a reasonable model for the use of programmatic assessment through the use of ePortfolios. Each summer 300 ePortfolios are randomly chosen for the purposes of programmatic assessment. These Portfolios are assessed by an assessment team, which includes faculty from across campus, as well as representatives from off-campus, based upon established rubrics for each of the programmatic learning goals. The assessment team conducts this assessment over the course of 2-3 days in the summer and each member is provided incentives of $200 per day for their efforts. Each portfolio is assessed by multiple members of the team, and then the team discusses the multiple analyses to provide feedback to the teaching faculty.

IX.   CONNECTIONS
IX.a.   *BACCALAUREATE GOALS*

During the 2011-2012 academic year, SUNY Fredonia created and adopted a set of campus-wide learning goals. The intention of these so-called 'Baccalaureate Goals' is to unify the campus, across all four divisions (Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Administration and University

Advancement) into one, holistic *Community of Learning*:

> *SUNY Fredonia will focus its mission to ensure that all Fredonia students, utilizing knowledge developed through a broad range of intellectual experiences, will be:*
> - ***Skilled*** *(develop Intellectual and Applied Skills, Literacies and Knowledges),*
> - ***Connected*** *(engage Community and Diversity, Local Stewardship, Global Citizenship),*
> - ***Creative*** *(demonstrate Scholarship, Artistry, and Innovation) and*
> - ***Responsible*** *(activate Sustainability, Ethics, Leadership and Professionalism).*

The proposed re-design of the general education program intends to directly support these overriding Baccalaureate Goals. Specifically, the proposed mission statement:

> *The SUNY Fredonia General Education Program facilitates students' acquisition of the knowledge and **skills** required to be **creative**, **responsible**, and engaged **global citizens**.*

explicitly utilizes the same terminology, in order to connect the overall mission of general education to that of our university. Furthermore each of our proposed learning outcomes is directly connected to one, or more, of the Baccalaureate Goals, as noted below:

- To inspire students' intellectual curiosity about the world and a deeper understanding of their place in it. (***Skilled***)
- To promote students' understanding of, and critical reflection on, themselves as products of and participants in diverse traditions of art, ideas, and values. (***Connected***)
- To develop students' capacity for effective personal expression and ability to use writing as a way to learn material and a means to discover, construct, and order meaning. (***Skilled***, ***Creative***)
- To prepare students for purposeful civic engagement on the local, national, and global levels. (***Connected***)
- To develop students' understanding of the ethical dimensions of what they say and do. (***Responsible***)
- To prepare students to be tolerant of ambiguity and uncertainty and to respond critically, constructively, and creatively to change. (***Skilled***, ***Creative***, ***Responsible***)

Even further, each of the 4 themes (one for the first-year seminar and three as part of the thematic coursework) that are within the overall general education program are intended to directly connect to one of the baccalaureate goals:

- Social Identity and Integrity (***Responsible***)
- Creativity and Innovation (***Creative***)
- Critical Thinking and Analysis (***Skilled***)
- Global Perspectives and Ethics (***Connected***)

IX.b.   SUNY GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Our overall proposed general education program requires a total of 30 credits, as specified by SUNY GER.

If you enter SUNY in fall 2010 or later, to earn a SUNY bachelor's degree, you must:		
1. Earn 30 SUNY-General Education Requirement (SUNY-GER) credits, which requires you to complete one or more courses in the following areas:		
2 required areas*	Basic Communication	Mathematics
Any 5 of these 8 areas*	American History Foreign Language Humanities Natural Sciences	Other World Civilizations Social Sciences The Arts Western Civilization
2. Demonstrate competency in:		
2 required areas	Critical Thinking	Information Management
3. Meet campus-specific and program-specific general education requirements that apply to your bachelor's degree.		
If you entered SUNY between fall 1998 and fall 2009, you may need to earn SUNY-GER credit in each of the ten areas, but check with your advisor because you may have other options. If you entered SUNY before 1998, the SUNY-GER may not apply.		

The required 'Basic Communication' area within SUNY GER entails both written and oral communication skills. Within our program oral communication skills are satisfied as part of the first-year seminar course, while written communication skills are satisfied through the first-year writing course, as well as the second, writing intensive course.

Given the 3 courses required as part of the **First-Year Inquiry** experience, students would have satisfied 2 of the SUNY GER by the end of the first year (Basic Communication & Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning), both of which are the required general education areas. Additionally, one of the required competencies (Information Management) is an integral aspect of the first-year seminar course. Thus, by the end of the first year, an entering freshman would need to satisfy 5 more GER "areas" (while earning a total of 30 credits and demonstrating competency in critical thinking) in order to satisfy the SUNY GER.

The completion of these final 5 GER area requirements can easily be met within **Thematic Coursework** (18 credit hours, 6 course) requirement of the proposed program. In order to demonstrate fulfillment of the 7 out of 10 area requirements dictated by SUNY GER students would provide sample work within their e-portfolios. Our vision of the e-portfolio is similar to our campus website or ANGEL course management system in that there would be a common "shell" for all students to use. This shell would allow for personalization, but provide a common structure. We envision at least part of this common structure being framed around the GER such that completion of the 7 out of 10 disciplinary areas required by SUNY could be easily assessed through sample work included within the e-portfolio, and students would be engaged in ensuring their own completion of these area requirements.

With regard to the "demonstrated competencies" required by SUNY GER, the proposed e-portfolio requirement infuses Information Management throughout the student's undergraduate

experience. A hallmark of the **Thematic Coursework** required as part of the program is the integration of critical thinking skills within the educational framework of the linked courses themselves. The assessment and attainment of student's abilities in these areas can be assessed through the e-portfolio, as well as through particular assignments within specific classes. For example, thematic coursework will have to assess critical thinking skills as part of the course.

Finally, it is important to note that while the intent of the proposed General Education program is to increase interdisciplinarity, it is not meant to do so to the exclusion of those programs or courses which are already interdisciplinary by their nature. More specifically it is very much possible for interdisciplinary courses to be included in the **Thematic Coursework**, even to the extent that a thematic cluster could be composed of two interdisciplinary courses. Since interdisciplinary courses by their nature integrate multiple SUNY-wide GER 'areas' it is possible for such courses to be given approval as such. This has not historically been the case on our campus, but is allowed by SUNY central and has been done on other SUNY campuses. Thus as an integral part of our redesigned General Education program we are proposing that individual courses be allowed to satisfy up to 2 GER disciplinary area designations (assuming the courses document and assess that they are achieving the required Students Learning Outcomes for both areas) and, therefore, that thematic clusters could satisfy up to 4 GER areas.

IX.c.   SEAMLESS TRANSFER
In December 2012 the SUNY Trustees passed a resolution regarding the intention of 'Seamless Transfer' of students between SUNY institutions. This resolution led to a Memorandum to Presidents, which was disseminated in its final form on June 14, 2013. This resolution stated, among other things, that all general education programs at every campus within the SUNY system must allow students to complete the 7/10/30 SUNY GER within the first 2 years of undergraduate study. Please note that the resolution only requires that general education programs *allow* for the completion of the GER within 2 years; it does not require that students MUST complete the GER within 2 years.

While best educational practices indicate that that it is better to spread general education coursework across the four years of a typical undergraduate curriculum, the general education proposed herein does allow students to complete all 30 credits within their first 2 years of study, though students should be encouraged to spread their general education coursework out to at least 3 years.