

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**FROM THE REPORT OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE**  
June 2007

The Task Force on General Education proposes a new plan for general education at Kansas State University. What follows is a brief summary of the central recommendations. A more detailed explanation of the recommendations can be found in the full report of the General Education Task Force (15 June 2007).

*Building on the Strengths of the Current UGE Plan*

K-State should build on the strengths of the current UGE system. The new general education plan should be founded upon K-State's undergraduate SLOs and upon the understanding of general education set forth in K-State's 1994 University General Education Proposal. While we recommend putting aside the current UGE emphasis on pedagogy as a defining element of what is considered to be general education, we would like to see the innovative pedagogical principles and best practices of the past decade continued throughout the K-State curricula.

*Providing for Breadth of Knowledge and Proficiency in Essential Skills*

K-State should design a new system of general education to ensure that every student "acquires a breadth of knowledge in the areas and proficiency in the skills that [are the] hallmarks of being college educated." (Higher Learning Commission Statement on General Education)

Foundation for Breadth. K-State should adopt a university-wide general education goal to guide students toward the building of a foundation for a breadth of knowledge through courses and/or experiences in eight areas. At least six of these eight requirements (or roughly eighteen credit hours) must have course numbers that are outside of the student's undergraduate major department or program.

- Aesthetic Experience and Interpretive Understanding
- Empirical and Quantitative Reasoning
- Ethical Reasoning and Social Engagement/Responsibility
- Global Community
- Human Diversity in the U.S.
- Individuals within Social Systems
- The Natural and Physical World
- The Past and the Future

Communication and Critical Thinking. All undergraduate majors should offer students numerous opportunities to develop competencies in communication skills and critical thinking. All K-State undergraduates should purposefully seek courses and experiences that will challenge them to become proficient in these skills.

K-State's undergraduate student learning outcomes are at the heart of this proposal. All eight areas deal explicitly with *knowledge*, with an emphasis on building a foundation for a breadth of knowledge. The proposed breadth areas explicitly address *integrity* and *diversity* with Ethical Reasoning and Social Engagement/ Responsibility, The Global Community, and Human Diversity in the U.S. *Communication* and *critical thinking* are essential learning outcomes that should be prominently addressed throughout every student's undergraduate curriculum—in the major and in general education electives.

Oversight for the process of designating courses for general education credit should be bureaucratically efficient and ought to be the shared responsibility of faculty and Faculty Senate as well as an administrator charged to oversee the general education program.

### *Creating a Common First-Year Experience*

K-State should implement as part of a larger, common first-year experience a set of three-credit-hour first-year seminars. These first-year seminars would serve as students' academic introduction to K-State and general education at K-State and as the foundation of their undergraduate education. The seminars would be designed to strengthen the first-year students' intellectual skills of communication and critical thinking, to clarify the expectations related to the academic standards of college-level work, and to introduce students to the University's undergraduate learning outcomes.

The specific disciplinary emphasis for each of these first-year general education seminars would differ according to faculty interests and expertise. Despite the topic variation among the sections, the seminars would have common student learning outcomes; they would each focus on a coherent, distinctive, college-level academic subject; and they would all emphasize the general education of first-year, non-major students.

### *Assessing General Education*

K-State must develop an assessment program for general education. The Task Force strongly recommends a program focused on the University's undergraduate SLOs. The assessment program would have two primary parts: 1) initial assessment in the first-year seminar; and 2) assessment of integration of learning in the capstone course in the major.

The responsibility for general education assessment in the first year would rest with faculty and administrative leadership within the First-Year Experience program. The results of the assessment would then be reported to the Office of Assessment and shared with the university community.

General education outcomes could then be assessed again in capstone courses within majors. (For some general education outcomes, these may be "post-tests" of the instruments that were administered in the 1st-year seminars.) Each degree program ought to include a final, culminating capstone experience, tailored to its curriculum and discipline or profession. A capstone experience might be offered in the form of a course,

a project within a course, or an independent study. It might be concurrent with an internship or a project conducted outside the classroom. A primary requirement of this capstone is that students integrate general education with the major.

### *Implementing a New System of General Education at K-State*

The Task Force realizes that the Task Force Report is the beginning of the actual implementation process – a process that will involve many more important decisions and many more discussions with the K-State community. As we move forward, the Task Force offers several suggestions about implementation. The full list of implementation recommendations can be found in Section 4 of the full report (pages 34-37). Some of the major recommendations include the following:

- The general education reform process at K-State must work closely and carefully with the colleges and departments to integrate general education into the degree programs in ways that best serve students.
- The University should consider the creation of a Dean of Undergraduate Studies (or some similar type of leadership position), someone who would lead and administer several common university undergraduate programs such as general education, a first-year experience, Leadership Studies, and so on.
- The teaching of the first-year seminars, as well as all other general education courses, must become part of a participating faculty member's usual course load.

[Full Report of the 2006-2007 General Education Task Force](#)