USM Core

A curriculum designed by the General Education Curriculum Planning Group to replace the current Core

Curriculum Description

Contents: Page

Introduction 2

Section I: Overview

USM Core at a Glance 2
Transfer 4
Curricular Sequencing 5

Section II: Learning outcomes for USM Core Courses

Entry Year Experience (EYE) 6
College Writing Requirement 7
Quantitative Reasoning Requirement 9
Creative Expression 10
Science Exploration 11
Cultural Interpretation 12
Socio-cultural Analysis 12
Mid-career Integrative Seminar 13
Thematic Clusters 14
Capstones 14
Diversity Requirement 15
Study of a Second Language 16

Section III: Assessment

Section IV: Administration and Governance 26
Introduction

Since the Fall of 2005, the General Education Curriculum Planning Group has been working to design a replacement for the current Core Curriculum which follows the Guidelines and Criteria for General Education at USM as approved by the Faculty Senate in March of 2005.

The curriculum we have planned reflects the spirit of the Guidelines and Criteria by its emphasis on:

- Coherence, integration, rigor, interdisciplinarity and practicality
- Careful attention to learning as a sequential and developmental process
- A focus on what students will know and be able to do as stated in the "Goals and Outcomes for General Education at USM"

In addition, the work of the Planning Group has involved a consistent effort to balance the need for a curriculum model and plan with the fact that a planning group cannot and should not design actual courses. This document reflects our efforts to strike that balance. The following pages provide descriptions of the curriculum components we have planned. They are not concrete and specific descriptions of the actual courses faculty will teach. As a consequence, the descriptions and summaries are very general and broad in some respects. At the same time, they provide a template which does indeed specify what faculty who design and teach the actual courses should attend to. We have confidence that faculty who design the actual courses which will correspond to these templates will utilize their full range of expertise in doing so. We also fully expect that implementation of the model will result in modifications to meet conditions and that on-going assessment will also inform decisions about changes to the curriculum.

SECTION I: Overview

USM Core Curriculum at a Glance

Introductory Level

This section provides a brief summary of the curriculum for quick-reference purposes. Please see the remainder of the document for more complete information on curricular components.

USM 100: Entry Year Experience: Human Cultures and the Natural World This is a requirement for all matriculated students entering with fewer than 24 credits. Students who have not satisfied their college writing requirement must enroll in a college writing course at the same time as they are enrolled in USM 100.

These courses are designed by interdisciplinary teams of faculty, focus on the interrelationship between human cultures and the natural world, and include student co-curricular experience(s). They are designed to

- introduce multiple disciplinary perspectives in a single course
- introduce students to the Goals and Outcomes of General Education at USM
- aid students in their transition to college, in an academically rigorous context involving active and collaborative learning

Each faculty member will teach a section limited to 25 students. Students not exempted from the college writing requirement must complete this requirement at the same time as their Entry Year Experience course.

College writing and quantitative reasoning are also Introductory Level requirements

USM 200s: (may be cross-listed as departmental courses) An EYE course and a college writing course are prerequisites for these courses.
Creative Expression
These courses engage students in artistic thinking for the purpose of
• learning the value of the creative process and associated skills
• using the creative process for developing talents and interests in the arts
• learning a set of skills that will enable them to use creative thinking in non-arts aspects of their lives.
Courses include a studio or practical component appropriate to the disciplinary perspective and expect students to create works in the particular art form or discipline. Class size is limited to 20 students.

Science Exploration Quantitative reasoning is a prerequisite for this course.
These courses engage students in learning how to think like a scientist through content which illustrates how experiment, observation and critical evaluation drive the scientific process. Students will
• develop science literacy and quantitative reasoning skills
• interpret and apply scientific findings
• explore the utility and relevance of science to daily life
• address ethical issues involved in experimentation and interpretation of data
• appreciate the successes and limitations of science
Courses include a laboratory experience; class size is limited to 40 students, labs to 20.

Cultural Interpretation
These courses engage students in the analysis and interpretation of cultural representations and practices. Students will
• learn how people make sense of themselves and their world through cultural representations and practices
• critically evaluate and develop arguments about these cultural representations and practices in relation to the historical context that produced them or in which they are made meaningful
• identify ethical issues raised by cultural representations and practices
Courses will develop writing and critical thinking skills. Class size will be limited to 30 students.

Socio-cultural Analysis
These courses engage students in the examination of socio-cultural systems and phenomena over time and across cultures. Students will learn to evaluate and use theories and conceptual frameworks that shed light on human behavior in social contexts through a cross-cultural and historical perspective. Students will
• evaluate claims about human behaviors in socio-cultural contexts
• describe the effects of behaviors in various roles through a cross-cultural and historical perspective
• understand the partial nature of theoretical and conceptual frameworks employed
Courses will develop writing and critical thinking skills. Class size will be limited to 30 students.

Intermediate Level
USM 300s:
Mid-career Integrative Seminar An EYE course, college writing, and three of the four 200 level courses are prerequisites for these courses.

These courses are designed by teams of faculty, address the interrelationship between human cultures and the natural world courses and focus on topics that require students to frame, analyze, and evaluate ethical issues, dilemmas, and actions, including their own actions. They reinforce and build on cognitive and developmental skills introduced in USM 100s and developed in USM 200s as they engage students in critical reflection upon their roles as citizens, family members, producers, and consumers. As the courses which both transfer and continuing students will take, they share at least one text from an agreed upon list in order to create a campus-wide common language for ethical analysis, discussion, and action.

Course includes student co-curricular experience(s). Class size will be limited to 30 students.
Departmental Courses 200s & 300s:

**Thematic Course Clusters** This requirement may be substituted by a minor of at least 15 credits; transfer students must take at least one course of this requirement at USM.

These groupings consist of existing or new courses from different departments that share a common theme or topic (e.g. Social Movements, Sustainability, Health Issues). Students must take a total of three courses in the group from at least two different prefixes and can count only one course from the major department that also counts toward the major. Students completing this requirement will

- be able to juxtapose and integrate competing and complementary ways of framing complex issues and problems
- have a deep and varied knowledge of an issue or topic
- be able to articulate how subjects are approached by different disciplines
- find, evaluate and use information at an advanced level

Course groups are encouraged to include co-curricular opportunities for students to apply what they have learned in the courses outside of the classroom. Home departments of the courses will determine class size and prerequisites.

**Concluding Level**

**USM/Departmental 400s**

**Capstone** a USM 300-level course is a prerequisite for this course.

This course is the concluding learning experience in the USM Core, integrating disciplinary learning with the Core and academic learning with life, career, and citizenship. Courses may be in the major or in the USM Core. In the course, students will

- demonstrate significant learning in a substantial number of the goals and outcomes in the *Vision, Goals and Outcomes for General Education at USM*
- practice the knowledge, skills, and dispositions outlined in the Guidelines and Criteria for General Education at USM.

Courses bring students together around a common issue, problem, or project. It is strongly encouraged that courses embrace civic engagement in the form of service learning, in collaboration with a community partner.

**Any Level**

**USM/Departmental Courses**

**Diversity Requirement**

Courses carrying the diversity designation will engage students in critical examination of and self-reflection on issues of difference and diversity. Courses will develop theoretical sophistication about issues related to diversity and foster the interpersonal skills necessary for understanding and working with diverse populations within the U.S. and in other parts of the world. This requirement can be satisfied with general education, major, or elective courses.

Course size is limited to 30.

**Guiding Principles Regarding Transfer, readmitted, and non-matriculated Students:**

1. The *USM Core* will be clearly presented and easily accessible.

2. Course equivalencies for all *USM Core* requirements will be interpreted flexibly by those making preliminary and official evaluations of transfer credit.

3. Transfer credits will be evaluated by the Transfer Affairs Office, in consultation with faculty when appropriate. The age of transfer credits does not affect the transferability for *USM Core* requirements.
4. USM will develop a grid showing how credits completed within the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System will transfer into the *USM Core*.

5. Students transferring fewer than 24 semester hours are required to complete all levels of the *USM Core*, either in transfer or by completing appropriate USM courses. These students must take an Entry Year Experience course if they have not completed a comparable course.

6. Students transferring in 24 or more semester hours are not required to take the Entry Year Experience course, but must complete all other *USM Core* requirements either through appropriate transfer credit or by completing the requirement at USM.

7. In reference to USM’s minimum 30 semester hour residency requirement, students will be required to complete a minimum of 6 semester hours in the *USM Core* to include Mid-career and Capstone.

8. Readmitted students (those who wish to resume a USM degree after a ten year absence) and non-matriculated students will be treated as transfer students.

9. Students who have previously earned a baccalaureate degree will not be required to complete the *USM Core*.

**Curricular Sequencing**

Sequencing of curricular components is necessary to the integrity of the developmental and integrative learning which distinguish the proposed curriculum. These priorities must also be balanced in relation to the needs of our large transfer student population, and by the realities of and constraints on scheduling at both the institutional and individual level. The sequencing described below reflects the Planning Group’s efforts to balance these concerns. As with all aspects of the curriculum, we expect to be responsive to what assessment data tell us about the efficacy of our sequencing plan.

**Entry Level**

Students with fewer than 24 credits take an Entry Year Experience (EYE) course and complete their college writing requirement. The quantitative reasoning requirement must be completed during the student’s first 30 credits and is a prerequisite for Science Explorations courses. This sequencing assumes that a student meets her/his Quantitative and English proficiencies; if not, the student must be enrolled in the appropriate proficiency related course-work.

**Midlevel**

**Step One:** Students must complete EYE and College Writing before taking Creative Expression, Socio-cultural Analysis, or Cultural Interpretation. Students must complete EYE, College Writing, and Quantitative Reasoning before taking Science Explorations.

**Rationale:** EYE and the four courses at the second level share a core of common learning outcomes (see course templates). These outcomes are introduced in EYE and developed in the courses at the second level. Consequently, students must complete EYE prior to any second level coursework. Additionally, the outcomes introduced and developed in the Science Explorations courses presume achievement of the learning outcomes of the Quantitative Reasoning component. The learning outcomes of all four courses at the second level also presume achievement of the learning outcomes of the College Writing component.

**Step Two:** Students must complete at least three of Science Explorations, Creative Expression, Socio-cultural Analysis, Cultural Interpretation prior to taking the Mid-Career course.
Rationale: Again, this sequencing is necessitated by the developmental character of the learning outcomes common to the four second level courses and the mid-career course. The requirement that students complete three of the level two courses (rather than all four) reflects an effort to balance the integrity of developmental learning with the need to avoid bottlenecks and risky (from a student persistence standpoint) delays in student progress through the curriculum.

Step Three: Students can begin their Thematic Cluster at the time they take their mid-career course (i.e. concurrently). Students who complete a minor in lieu of a cluster may begin the minor at any time, depending on the particular requirements of the minor.

Rationale: The more relaxed nature of the sequencing at this stage of the curriculum again reflects the desire to balance the integrity of developmental learning with the realities of scheduling. Faculty responsible for developing and maintaining clusters will be free to propose requirements and/or prerequisites in addition to those defined here. Until we have assessment data that shows otherwise, we think this is the most judicious sequencing of mid-career and cluster courses.

Capstone
Students proceed to their Capstone experience once they have completed the mid-career course and must be completing their course cluster or minor either concurrently or prior to their capstone.

Rationale: The learning outcomes for the Capstone presume achievement of the outcomes of the mid-career course. The allowance for concurrent completion of cluster courses and capstone is justified by the fact that the learning outcomes of these two curricular components are less developmentally linked. Additionally, concurrent completion of cluster and capstone allows for flexibility which may be necessary for departmentally developed capstones which will serve the curricular goals of both the major and of general education.

SECTION II: Learning Outcomes for Curriculum Components

Entry-Year Experience (EYE)

Entry courses are theme-based, interdisciplinary, four-credit courses designed to introduce students to substantial elements of the goals and outcomes of general education and to aid them in their transition to college, in an academically rigorous context involving active and collaborative learning.

Learning Outcomes
Student learning outcomes are drawn from the Outcomes for General Education and the Guidelines for the Development of Entry-Level Experiences. All outcomes listed below will be introduced in Entry courses Students should be able to:

1. Describe, explain, analyze and evaluate, orally and in writing competing perspectives on human cultures and the natural world:
   - Apply terminology appropriate to an understanding of human cultures and the natural world.
   - Recognize that one’s individual experience, thinking and culture provide only one of many possible perspectives.
   - Describe the interrelationships between human cultures and their natural environments in different global and historical contexts and explain the differences and/or similarities.
   - Differentiate the perspectives of different disciplinary approaches to human cultures and the natural world.
   - Apply appropriate factual and conceptual knowledge to analyze unfamiliar or novel cases of interrelationships between human cultures and their natural environments.

2. Identify, evaluate, and apply effective behaviors to best support their learning and self-understanding.
3. Reflect upon and integrate learning in entry-level experiences with other learning experiences (for example, co-curricular experiences).  
4. Engage in effective and respectful dialog with others that honors diversity and recognizes forces that work against doing so.  
5. Understand and apply appropriate levels of cognitive skills and critical thinking such as those described by Bloom and Perry.  
6. Navigate and adhere to University policies and procedures critical to student academic and personal success.  
7. Use appropriate information literacy skills (see ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education).  
8. Understand general education content areas related to citizenship and social responsibility in anticipation of further study in the mid-career learning experience.  
9. Exhibit an intellectual curiosity and a propensity to act on that curiosity by posing and exploring questions in areas that are unfamiliar and challenging.

Course Characteristics  
1. Content must be theme-based and interdisciplinary, focus on the interrelationships between human cultures and the natural world.  
2. Course design must intentionally create learning communities.  
3. Pedagogy used must be problem-based in which students are engaged in their own learning; EYE Pedagogies:  
   • Create a substantial level of classroom interaction between students and between students and instructor.  
   • Make substantial use of pedagogies oriented toward active and problem-based learning.  
   • Utilize a variety of teaching techniques appropriate to specific learning objectives and to a variety of learning styles.  
4. Course must include co-curricular experience as a form of learning.  
5. Course introduces systematic and reflective self-appraisal (e.g. portfolio).  
6. Course section enrollment limited to 25.  
7. Where appropriate, faculty will work in collaboration with representatives from the Library, Advising, Student Life, Academic Assessment, Writing Collaborative, and other divisions.

College writing requirement  
The college writing requirement can be met through a number of specific courses (these include but are not limited to ENG 100, ENG 101, and ENG 1XX). The requirement introduces students to the practices, habits, conventions  

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1 Co-curricular learning experiences complement and support student learning in General Education courses, and are designed to offer engaged learning experiences that generally occur outside the classroom, that complement and align with course content, that integrate course learning with other learning, and that provide the opportunity for self—reflective learning which takes into account context and personal development. Co-curricular learning experiences take a variety of forms, ranging from participation in an on-campus event or organization related to course content to service learning.

2 According to the Guidelines and Criteria, interdisciplinary studies involve “more than one discipline with explicit attention to integration—in which the insights of disciplines are integrated into a larger, more holistic perspective.
and skills of college literacy. By using sequenced reading and writing to cultivate the practices and habits of mind that characterize intellectual inquiry and engagement with ideas, the course constructs opportunities for students to learn how thinking and the language that conveys it develop and change through drafting, revision, critical engagement with other writers and readers, re-reading, editing, and proofreading. Reading and interpretation are introduced and reinforced as active practices of textual construction. Similarly, writing is practiced not as a way to demonstrate what students already know, but as a means to discover or create new knowledge. The focus throughout is on revision, both of students’ ideas and of the expression and articulation of them. Students learn to compose essays that reflect their own points of view, developed through thoughtful engagement with complex expository readings of some length, and articulated in an essay organized around a thesis and in language relatively free of sentence-level error.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students completing a college writing course should be able to:

1. write expository critical papers that are
   - at least 4 pages long,
   - organized around a thesis or project,
   - represent the student writer’s point of view,
   - go beyond summary to engage analytically with academic readings of some length (at least 15 pages),
2. correctly use an appropriate citation format (such as MLA, Chicago, or APA),
3. make interpretive connections between separate readings
4. use standard written English,
5. employ a variety of sentence structures.
6. understand and explain their own processes of prewriting, drafting, revising and editing;
7. use varied practices and processes to discover what they have to say and to control the rhetorical and grammatical effects of their paragraphs and sentences;
8. engage in constructive peer review that focuses on rhetorical strengths and suggestions for revision of their own and others’ work;
9. gain a sense of their own rhetorical agency and competence through repeating and varying a process of writerly revision;
10. know and apply the conventions of citation, quotation, and paraphrase;
11. identify their own individual patterns of syntax and common errors and how to respond grammatically and rhetorically to their own errors;
12. use a handbook and appropriate dictionary as tools for individual exploration and for the diagnosis and response to error;
13. learn how to understand and think critically about the ideas and language of others through their reading, including rethinking previous knowledge in light of new readings and ideas;
14. account for the interpretive difference that every text allows for or for their own inability to make sense of a difficult text;
15. develop and articulate their own meaningful responses to the ideas and language of others through their writing;
16. use writing as a means of discovering and creating knowledge.

Students who successfully demonstrate the above learning outcomes will have made at least an introductory demonstration of the following general education goals as articulated in the Guidelines and Criteria for General Education at USM:

- Have knowledge of the processes of creative expression and products of human imagination across cultures
- Recognize and construct well-reasoned arguments
- Value, appreciate, and work effectively with diverse viewpoints, uncertainty, and ambiguity, and remain open-minded towards alternatives.
- Have knowledge of the intellectual standards of and criteria for sound reasoning and logical argumentation, and
• Alternative systems of thought, and modes of problem solving.
• Express themselves clearly through a variety of media including writing, speaking, non-verbal modes, and technologies
• Critically read and frame questions for understanding
• Have knowledge of the standards and criteria of effective communication and critical reading and,
• A variety of texts from the major fields of knowledge and
• The characteristics and contexts of diverse forms and modes of communication.

Course Characteristics
1. use collaborative in-class discussions and sequenced reading and writing assignments that enact a rereading of earlier material as they ask for interpretations of the new;
2. make student writing the course’s central texts and devote substantial course time to a workshop approach to the writing being done;
3. focus on expository prose in both assigned reading and writing;
4. use representative academic readings that are at least 15 pages;
5. require a minimum of 20-25 pages of final draft writing over the entire semester, with a minimum of 4 papers that are at least 4 pages long;
6. employ a variety of forms of writing, such as journals, class preparation assignments, collaborative question-writing, and in-class writing;
7. address formal concerns such as organization, paragraphing, transitions, sentences, etc. in the course of a larger, context-specific discussion of how meanings are discovered and negotiated by writers rather than as purely mechanical matters;
8. teach the intellectual issues and opportunities required by research;
9. introduce the practices of editing and proof-reading and distinguish between them.
10. have a maximum enrollment of 20 students.

Quantitative reasoning requirement

Students in quantitative reasoning courses will acquire introductory mathematical concepts and skills that are necessary for everyday life and to successfully complete their chosen field of study. In quantitative reasoning courses students will gain an awareness of the utility of mathematics in life and an appreciation of the scope and nature of its decision making potential. These skills include critical thinking, mathematical reasoning, the use of technological tools, computation, interpretation, inquiry, and application of mathematical concepts to issues and problems in the contemporary world.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will be able to:
1. Recognize, explain, and use the tools of thinking critically to:
   • Pose relevant questions about quantitative analyses
   • Explain the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning.
2. Apply appropriate and correct numerical computation and technology to decision making.
3. Apply techniques for estimation with correct units of measurement identified.
4. Identify and select, in problem solving, the appropriate quantitative method and strategy, and apply appropriate algebraic or statistical analysis.
5. Describe the power of, and use appropriately, deterministic or stochastic function models and
   • Use technology to construct and interpret graphs of these functions, and
   • Explain the limitations of the graphs.
6. Organize, analyze, interpret and present data in appropriate and effective ways using
   • Verbal and written methods,
   • Correct notation and symbols,
   • Algebraic or probabilistic/statistical methods and
• Technological tools.

7. Demonstrate an appreciation for the varied applications of quantitative reasoning in areas not traditionally viewed as quantitative fields.

Students who successfully demonstrate the above learning outcomes will have made at least an introductory demonstration of the following general education goals as listed in the Guidelines and Criteria for General Education at USM:

- Employ quantitative and qualitative analyses to solve problems, identify the component parts of complex issues and describe their interrelationships, and evaluate information using accepted criteria and standards.
- Recognize and construct well-reasoned arguments
- Have knowledge of the intellectual standards of and criteria for sound reasoning and logical argumentation
- Express themselves clearly through a variety of media including writing, speaking, non-verbal modes, and technologies
- Critically read and frame questions for understanding
- Value and appreciate the richness of multiple literacies and forms of expression, and the limitations of each in contributing to knowledge and understanding.
- Have knowledge of the standards and criteria of effective communication and critical reading and,
- Have knowledge of artistic, scientific, quantitative, linguistic, technological, philosophical, and socio-cultural literacies.

Course Characteristics:
1. All quantitative reasoning courses should involve active and collaborative learning such as a lab or other hands-on learning component.
2. Course enrollments are limited to 30
3. Course Prerequisites: Students must meet existing proficiency requirements prior to enrollment.
4. Course restrictions: Students must complete their quantitative reasoning component prior to enrollment in a Science Exploration course.

Creative Expression

Creative Expression courses will engage students in artistic thinking for the purpose of learning the value of creative process and associated skills, using creative process for developing talents and interests in the arts, and learning a set of skills that will enable them to use creative thinking in non-arts aspects of their lives.

Learning Outcomes
Students completing a Creative Expression course should be able to:
1. Comprehend that there are various definitions of “art” for the art form (visual art, creative writing, dance, music, theater, combinations of these);
2. Understand the value of the art form as an expression of the culture that produced it and as something that affects students now as citizens, family members, consumers and producers;
3. Recognize that artists express unique views of their world and express them in various ways;
4. Understand how ideas are produced through creative process by creators in the art form;
5. Recognize and draw on various disciplines informing the conception and practice of the art;
6. Experience and be able to analyze, evaluate, and critique orally and in writing a work of art as experienced in a live concert, theatre performance, reading, or exhibition;
7. Understand and use orally and in writing the vocabulary, theories, and principles of the art form;
8. Find, evaluate, and ethically use information in the creative process and be able to continue to learn about and appreciate works of art;
9. Describe and use steps in a creative process, such as identifying and defining a problem, generating imaginative solutions to it, and critically evaluating the outcome.
10. Express themselves through an art form by creating or performing using appropriate media, processes, tools, and techniques
11. Demonstrate skills of analysis as specified in outcomes 2.1-2.6, 3.1, 3.4, 3.6, and 3.7 of the Vision, Goals and Outcomes for General Education at USM.

Course Characteristics:
1. will have a studio or practical component appropriate to the discipline that allows the student to explore the creative process in depth;
2. expect students to actively create works in the particular art form or discipline using the creative process;
3. require students to reflect orally and in writing on the art itself and the process of creating it;
4. include co-curricular activities, such as attendance at readings, performances, openings, etc.
5. Enrollment limited to 20.

Science Exploration

To think like a scientist, students must know how science knowledge is created and interpreted. In a Science Exploration Course, content should serve as a vehicle to illustrate how experiment, observation and critical evaluation drive scientific progress. Science literacy and quantitative reasoning skills will be developed as tools to interpret and apply (often conflicting) scientific findings. The course will explore the extent to which science is a successful knowledge system relevant to daily life. It is also a human endeavor with attendant ethical issues and uncertainties. The Science Explorations Course should give the student an appreciation of the successes and limitations of science.

Learning Outcomes
Students completing a Science Explorations course will:
1. be able to articulate the boundaries of science and explain how science differs from other disciplines both in content and methodology;
2. be able to explain how natural scientists create knowledge through scientific methods and understand how scientific ideas become accepted theories;
3. be able to address ethical issues involved in experimentation and interpretation of data;
4. be able to discuss the value and relevance of science in their life, and how it may impact them as consumers, as producers, and as citizens;
5. understand and be able to use the vocabulary and concepts of the sciences so that current issues can be understood and intelligently discussed (science literacy). Students should also be exposed to a sample of science literature and some of the means for accessing that literature;
6. be able to critically evaluate information communicated through scientific media;
7. exhibit quantitative reasoning skills: how to read and analyze problems, select appropriate strategies, and solve those problems;
8. understand both the achievements and the limitations of the sciences, and indicate current boundaries of our knowledge, recognizing that scientists differ in their interpretations of data;
9. understand that ethical conversations involving the natural world are more meaningful if persons understand natural processes from a scientific perspective
10. Demonstrate skills of analysis as specified in outcomes 2.1-2.6, 3.1, 3.4, 3.6, and 3.7 of the Vision, Goals and Outcomes for General Education at USM.

Course Characteristics:
A science exploration course will be 4 credits, with 3 credits of lecture and 1 credit of laboratory. The lab will provide hands-on activities that complement the lecture part of the course. Enrollments in the lecture sections limited to 40. Enrollments in lab sections limited to 20 (due to lab sizes). The quantitative reasoning requirement must be completed prior to enrollment in Science Exploration.

**Cultural Interpretation**

Cultural Interpretation courses engage students in the close analysis and interpretation of cultural representations and practices in order to learn how people make sense of themselves and their world. Students critically evaluate and develop arguments about these cultural representations and practices in relation to the historical context that produced them or in which they are made meaningful.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students’ knowledge and skills will be developed in relation to the following Course Outcomes:

Students will:
1. Understand the diverse roles of individuals and groups as they are expressed in cultural representations (e.g., cultural products and practices such as rituals, literary products such as texts, artistic products such as images);
2. Employ appropriate lenses to the analysis of cultural products and representations;
3. Analyze, critique, and evaluate these cultural representations in historical and disciplinary context and with the understanding that standards of evaluation are themselves historically produced and contingent;
4. Identify ethical issues raised by the cultural representations, including what they suggest about students in their diverse roles;
5. Develop and argue their own interpretations of the meaning or significance of the cultural representations, either for the people who produce them or for contemporary readers and audiences;
6. Demonstrate skills of analysis as specified in outcomes 2.1-2.6, 3.1, 3.4, 3.6, and 3.7 of the Vision, Goals and Outcomes for General Education at USM.

**Course Characteristics**

Cultural Interpretation courses must engage students in the analysis of cultural representations from more than one historical period and draw on a variety of cultural texts (from art, literature, music, philosophy, religion). Cultural interpretation courses will involve strong emphasis on writing assignments that teach skills necessary for effective critical thinking. Enrollment limited to 30.

**Socio-cultural Analysis**

Socio-cultural Analysis courses engage students in the examination of socio-cultural systems and phenomena over time and across cultures. Students will learn to evaluate and use theories and conceptual frameworks that shed light on human behavior in social contexts through a cross-cultural and historical perspective. This includes the analysis of behavior in various roles, such as community member, family member, consumer and producer.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students’ knowledge and skills will be developed in relation to the following Course Outcomes.

Students will:

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2 The stated enrollment limit of 40 presents unparalleled staffing problems for USM science departments. To meet the enrollment cap suggested for the SE courses will require about 35% more sections of SE than we currently offer of K courses. This could only be accomplished with a significant increase in natural science faculty lines.
1. Have knowledge of socio-cultural systems over time and across the world;
2. Be able to describe and employ theoretical and/or conceptual frameworks as well as disciplinary methods to understand human behaviors in social contexts;
3. Understand the partial nature of these frameworks;
4. Be able to evaluate claims about human behaviors in socio-cultural contexts;
5. Be able to describe the effects of behaviors in various roles, such as community member, family member, consumer, and producer through a cross cultural and historical perspective;
6. Demonstrate the skills of analysis as specified in outcomes 2.1-2.6, 3.1, 3.4, 3.6, and 3.7 of the Vision, Goals and Outcomes for General Education at USM.

Course Characteristics: Socio-cultural Analysis courses will involve strong emphasis on writing assignments that teach skills necessary for effective critical thinking. Enrollment limited to 30.

**Mid-Career Integrative Seminar**

Mid-Career courses are theme-based courses designed by faculty teams on topics that require students to frame, analyze, and evaluate ethical issues, dilemmas, and actions, including their own action. These courses reinforce and build on the cognitive and developmental skills introduced in the Entry Experience as they engage students in critical reflection on their roles as citizens, family members, producers, and consumers. As the only course through which almost all USM students will pass, all Mid-Career Seminars will use at least one text from an agreed upon list in order to create a campus-wide common language for ethical analysis, discussion, and action.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students completing a Mid-Career course should be able to:

1. Integrate the disciplinary perspectives and knowledge gained in prior coursework, especially courses in general education, in the context of a new topic that addresses human cultures and the natural world;
2. Use higher level cognitive skills and critical thinking as described by Bloom and Perry such as analysis—both quantitative and qualitative—synthesis, and evaluation;
3. Engage with and critically reflect on, both orally and in writing, the ethical dilemmas and issues inherent in the course topic by framing questions, clarifying values, and evaluating their own and others’ actions;
4. Recognize and understand that different disciplines frame and evaluate these issues differently;
5. Identify, find, and evaluate additional information on the topic;
6. Articulate orally and in writing their understanding of their own social and ethical rights and responsibilities in their roles as citizens, family members, consumers, and producers in the context of the course topic;
7. Understand that knowledge, including their own, has ethical consequences and implications for how one acts.
8. Act on that knowledge on the basis of their own ethical reflection and in spite of any ambiguity and uncertainty. Such action should be meaningful, possibly public, such as writing a letter to the editor or a legislator; sharing knowledge through public presentations, symposia, or service learning; organizing and participating in co-curricular activities and events; or otherwise altering how one acts as a citizen, family member, producer, or consumer;
9. Develop common points of reference which can be applied in the Clusters and Capstone.

Course Characteristics:

1. Theme-based and designed by faculty-teams on topics that address human cultures and the natural world;
2. Explicitly introduce ethical issues and problems in the context of the course topic;
3. Reinforce the early levels of Bloom’s taxonomy introduced in the Entry Year Seminar (knowledge, comprehension, application) and emphasize the later stages (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation);
4. Employ quantitative and qualitative analysis and use writing as a tool of learning and assessment;
5. Reinforce information literacy skills;
6. address general education content areas related to citizenship and social responsibility and introduce systematic and reflective self-appraisal;
7. include co-curricular experiences as a form of learning;
8. use a core text chosen from a limited list of texts (e.g., three). The use of a core text is intended to facilitate the creation of a learning community across all sections of the course regardless of topic. The USM Core Curriculum Committee\(^4\) will develop a process for recommending and reviewing possible texts. *Habits of the Heart* is recommended for the pilot stage.
9. Enrollment limited to 30.

**Thematic Clusters**

Thematic Clusters provide students with greater depth in a topic distinct from the major and give them the opportunity to juxtapose competing and complementary ways of framing complex issues and problems at a more advanced level than the earlier Mid-Career courses and in a way that allows them to integrate their learning across the cluster courses.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students completing a Thematic Cluster should be able to:

1. have a deeper and more varied knowledge of an issue or topic that is distinct from what they encounter in the major;
2. understand and be able to articulate how subjects are approached and framed from different disciplinary perspectives;
3. pose questions orally and in writing from more than one perspective or discipline;
4. find, evaluate, and use information at a more advanced level;

**Cluster Characteristics:**

Clusters will include between 5 and 12 existing or new courses from different departments at the 200-level or above.

1. Students must take a total of three courses in the cluster from at least two different prefixes and can count only one course from the major department that also counts toward the major.
2. Each cluster will propose a 3-year rotation schedule for cluster offerings. A cluster must be available for a minimum of 5 years.
3. The cluster requirement will be waived if a student takes a minor of at least 15 semester hours. In order for a minor to substitute for a cluster, departments provide a brief explanation of how the minor requires students to integrate their knowledge and learning.
4. Writing is employed as part of learning and assessment.
5. Cluster faculty will meet regularly to plan and assess the cluster’s coherence, to share syllabi, and to articulate explicit sites for overlap and integration. Clusters are encouraged to integrate the cluster’s courses and materials. Such integration could take a variety of forms: a distinct course, a sequence of assignments within or across courses, sequencing of courses, journaling, etc.
6. Each cluster is encouraged to develop co-curricular activities and opportunities for the practical application of what is learned in the cluster.
7. Any prerequisites for the cluster must be clearly identified. Individual course prerequisites will continue to be established by the home department.
8. Students may transfer in two cluster courses that fit the Cluster’s theme and satisfies its outcomes. Appeals of decisions regarding transfer credit for the cluster or for additional transfer credit toward the cluster requirement will be decided by the Cluster Coordinator. Continuing students wishing to take a cluster

\(^4\) See section on administration and governance.
course at another institution must get prior approval from the Cluster Coordinator for the course to satisfy the cluster requirement.

9. Clusters will be regularly reviewed by the appropriate administrative unit for quality, coherence, and viability.

Capstone

As the concluding learning experience in the USM Core, the Capstone integrates disciplinary learning with general education and the perspectives of other disciplines. Similarly, the Capstone integrates academic learning generally with life, career, and citizenship.

Learning Outcomes

Students completing the Capstone will be able to:

1. Demonstrate understanding of their own and other disciplinary perspectives and the ability to apply them to a problem, issue, or project.
2. Demonstrate the ability to collaborate, ideally with community partners, and use multiple disciplinary perspectives in identifying and addressing a problem, issue, or project.
3. Demonstrate significant learning in a substantial number of the goals and outcomes of the Guidelines and Criteria for General Education at USM:
   - Demonstrate informed understandings of human cultures and the natural world by their work that addresses a problem, issue, or project.
   - Demonstrate analytical, contextual and holistic thinking about a complex issue, problem, or project.
   - Demonstrate effective communication using multiple literacies and forms of expression in addressing an issue, problem, or project.
   - Demonstrate critical reflection upon and informed action in their roles as citizens and members of their fields or professions in their work to address an issue, problem, or project.
   - Demonstrate ethical action to contribute to the social, environmental, and economic welfare of local and global communities by working with others to address an issue, problem or project.
4. Demonstrate, orally, or in writing, strategic thinking about practical issues to be encountered after college.
5. Demonstrate in-depth understanding of information literacy skills in finding, evaluating, and using information sources.

Course Characteristics

1. Courses must provide opportunities for integration of the student’s major with general education, and of academic learning with life, career, and citizenship.
2. Courses must bring students together around a common issue, problem, or project. It is strongly encouraged that courses embrace civic engagement in the form of service learning, in collaboration with a community partner.
3. Student work in the courses must result in a final product of high quality, whether written, performance based, or practice oriented, and provide evidence of significant learning in a substantial number of the goals and outcomes identified in the Guidelines and Criteria for General Education; these final products must require in-depth use of information literacy skills in finding, evaluating, and using information sources.
4. Courses may be in the major or in the USM Core. If in the major, as an existing Senior Seminar, Internship, etc., they must include the characteristics and outcomes identified here, and may carry additional course credits as appropriate to the additional demands of the course.
5. Courses must offer opportunities for strategic thinking about practical issues to be encountered after college.

Diversity Requirement
All students must satisfy a diversity requiring by successfully completing a designated diversity course within the USM Core, the major or minor, or university electives. Courses carrying the diversity designation will engage students in critical examination of and self-reflection on issues of difference and diversity. In the context of the general course topic, diversity courses will develop theoretical sophistication about issues related to diversity and foster the interpersonal skills necessary for understanding and working with diverse populations within the U.S. and in other parts of the world. Diversity courses will take a variety of forms. The following list of possible topics or approaches is suggestive rather than exclusive:

- historical or theoretical treatments of race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic class status, sexual orientation, and disability;
- studies of religious traditions or ethnic, racial or other subcultures;
- examinations of the political, social, or economic systems of particular regions, cultures, or countries;
- analyses of the effect or impact of public policy on specific issues related to difference or diversity;
- interpretations of cultural texts, practices, or belief systems in which these issues are given cultural expression;
- theories of difference, globalization, post-colonial identity and culture, etc.

**Learning Outcomes**

Courses carrying the diversity designation will have the following learning outcomes in common:

Students will:

1. Recognize that one’s individual experience, thinking, and culture provide only one of many possible perspectives;
2. Apply appropriate terminology and disciplinary perspectives to an understanding of human cultures;
3. Apply appropriate disciplinary expertise to analyze U.S. and global cultures and sub-cultures;
4. Understand the political and ideological consequences of difference as manifest in access to resources, power, and the production of knowledge;
5. Understand how issues of diversity and difference within the United States impact the global community and vice versa;
6. Reflect on how the political and ideological consequences of difference affect them as citizens, family members, consumers, and producers;
7. Engage in effective and respectful dialog with others that honors diversity and recognizes forces that work against doing so; and
8. Recognize and construct orally and in writing well-reasoned arguments using the standards and criteria of the discipline or practice and audience-appropriate forms of communication

**Course Characteristics and Policies:**

1. Where possible, diversity courses should provide opportunities for student to experience or act upon the issues of diversity in addition to reading about them.
2. As with all other courses in the USM Core, diversity designations will be applied to courses upon faculty review of course content, learning objectives, etc. by the USM Core Curriculum Committee.
3. As with the current W designation for approved writing intensive courses, diversity designations may be applied to qualifying courses both in the general education curriculum and in the majors, minors, and other programs of study.
4. Students may satisfy their diversity requirement by taking any diversity course, regardless of whether it also satisfies a major requirement, a USM Core requirement, or an elective.
5. Transfer credits for the diversity requirement will be evaluated by the Transfer Affairs Office in consultation with the USM Core Curriculum Committee.
6. Enrollment is limited to 30.
Study of a Second Language

In order to encourage and support exposure to and competence in a second language, the Planning Group recommends:

1. that existing foreign language requirements be enforced;

2. that faculty in relevant programs and departments (e.g., the department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures (MCLL), the Department of Linguistics’ ASL/Interpretating Program) be involved in the design of one or more clusters involving competency in a language other than English, possibly including study-abroad, cultural literacy, and area studies;

3. that MCLL and other relevant departments coordinate with other departments and programs that may have particular interest in having their majors and students complete such a cluster.
SECTION III: USM Core Assessment

Introduction

How do we know whether a course, a program of study, or an entire curriculum is achieving stated goals? Questions about the effectiveness of a curriculum depend, like all empirical questions, on the collection of data. Curricular assessment refers to a process of defining learning objectives, offering a program of study related to those objectives, collecting information about student learning in the program of study, analyzing that data in relation to the defined learning objectives, informing ourselves and others about what the data tell us about student learning and about the effectiveness of the program, and making appropriate changes to the curriculum itself. Good assessment is therefore a process, not merely a test or other measurement tool arbitrarily applied.

The Vision, Goals and Outcomes for General Education at USM guided the design of curricular objectives and curricular components in the USM Core. Similarly, the Vision, Goals and Outcomes, and the requirements they state for a meaningful assessment program, guided the design of the USM Core Assessment Program described below. Many details and logistical issues must be determined at a later date (for example, as the curriculum itself and its assessment program are actually implemented). Here we provide an outline of a plan for meaningful assessment.

Assessment Methods

Assessment of the USM Core curriculum involves initial review of course proposals and course syllabi, and ongoing periodic review of and re-approval of courses. These reviews will be provided by the new USM Core Curriculum Committee and will be coordinated by the Office of Undergraduate Education.

Assessment will involve a combination of direct and indirect assessment mechanisms. Direct assessment refers to those types of assessment which directly measure student learning (for example, assessing student performance on a task). Indirect assessment refers to those types of assessment which measure student learning indirectly (for example, by asking students their impressions and opinions about their learning).

Direct assessment mechanisms in the USM Core will include the following: questions on course questionnaires, Culture, Nature, Citizenship and Ethics Case Study Writing Prompt, Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). Indirect assessment mechanisms will include course questionnaires, SIRII course assessment forms, and continuation of our participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

Goals/Outcomes to be Assessed:

Through a combination of program assessment methods, information will be gathered in relation to the five Goals for General Education at USM. The general strategy will be assessment of a selection of outcomes for a three (or so) year period, and then new selection and/or replacement of outcomes as needed.

The Collegiate Learning Assessment (see below) is best suited to assessment of the kinds of learning associated with our goals 2 and 3 (analytical thinking and effective communication). The other “home-grown” assessment mechanisms (Culture, Nature, Citizenship and Ethics, course questionnaires, etc.) will also provide information relevant to goals 2 and 3, but they will be especially designed to yield information related to goals 1, 4, and 5 (human cultures-natural world, citizenship, ethical action).

See Administration and Governance section.

SIRII course assessment forms have been used in pilot courses. If the University as a whole or CAS as a whole elect to use a standardized course assessment form other than SIRII, the use of SIRII for USM Core course assessment will have to be revisited.
The assessment strategy described here focuses on the developmental nature of the curriculum and of student learning. Thus, assessment at Entry level will focus on introductory capacities such as description and explanation. Mid-career Assessment will focus on a higher level of cognitive complexity (analysis and synthesis). Capstone assessment will focus on integration of general education with the major at a higher level of cognitive complexity (evaluation).

Culture, Nature, Citizenship and Ethics Case Study Writing Prompt (see Appendix for examples)

This direct assessment mechanism would be created by us to measure student learning in relation to the USM goals 1, 4, and 5. Generally speaking, assessment using a case study writing prompt involves the selection and presentation of material providing a description of people, circumstances, processes and/or events which represent an illustrative example within a particular area or topic of study. The 'case' is thus a descriptive account detailing a range of relevant information on the 'subject' in order that students can obtain a clear contextual picture of relationships and experiences and use this as a reference point for writing in response to specific questions on the relevant learning outcomes. Our case study would relate to the thematic content and learning goals/outcomes of human cultures and the natural world, citizenship, and ethics.

In order to capture the developmental nature of the curriculum and of student learning with this assessment mechanism, a single prompt (that is, the case study which students read before performing the assessment task itself) would be utilized at all three levels (introductory, developed, advanced). Similarly, a single set of questions would be used at all three levels of assessment, and these questions themselves would range from more simple to more complex. Finally, a single rubric which captures this range of complexity for assessing performance would be utilized at all three levels to capture a range of performances from introductory to advanced levels of sophistication. A single measure approach provides a constant yardstick against which to measure changes in student performance.

To ensure participation, completion of the Case Study Writing Assessment will be required before a student registers for courses in the next stage of the curriculum. Thus, students will have to complete their EYE level writing assessment prior to registering for Science Explorations, Socio-cultural Analysis, Creative Expression, or Cultural Interpretation courses. Students will have to complete their mid-career writing assessment prior to registering for clusters. Students will have to complete their capstone writing assessment prior to graduation. Student status on completion of these pre-requisites can be tracked in DSIS/PeopleSoft, as are other requirements.

Case Study Writing Prompts will be completed independently (not in class) by students and submitted to an e-mail account designated for each level of assessment (entry, midcareer, capstone). If resources become available for a more complete electronic portfolio, this would replace an e-mail system for collecting student writing samples.

Faculty teams will read and evaluate writing samples. See “Analysis” below.

Course Questionnaires—direct assessment: Course questionnaires already exist and are in use for EYE courses. Direct assessment of learning outcomes and program goals through course questionnaires will involve construction of items such as “give an example of…” or “describe the relationship between…” appropriate to the course in question. Such items have already been created for EYE questionnaires and are being used for Fall 2007 EYE courses.

Course questionnaires—indirect assessment: Course questionnaires already exist and are in use for EYE courses. Indirect assessment of learning outcomes and program goals through course questionnaires will involve development of course questionnaires for all other components of the curriculum. SIRII’s are already in use in EYE courses; this program would be expanded to include all other courses in the curriculum.

Collegiate Learning Assessment: Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) is an assessment program of the Council for Aid to Education. An excerpt from the website describing the CLA appears below. We would utilize
CLA and NSSE in alternating years. This means no new expenditures would be involved, since we would move from an annual to semi-annual NSSE, alternating with CLA.

Description from the CLA website:

“The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) is an innovative approach to assessing your institution’s contribution to student learning developed by CAE with the RAND Corporation. Our measures are designed to simulate complex, ambiguous situations that every successful college graduate may one day face. Life is not like a multiple choice test, with four or five simple choices for every problem. So we ask students to analyze complex material and provide written responses. The CLA measures are uniquely designed to test for reasoning and communications skills that most agree should be one outcome of a college education.

Most CLA participants assess their institution cross-sectionally, testing a sample of first year students in the fall and a sample of seniors in the spring. You receive two reports, the first after fall testing that looks at how your entering class compares to other CLA participants (adjusted for SAT or ACT scores). Then after testing of seniors in the spring, you receive a full Institutional Report that evaluates your schools value-added on a comparative basis. Testing every year allows you to measure for effects of changes in curriculum or pedagogy. You also receive an annual CLA in Context report that looks at the results nationally and helps your institution consider ways to utilize the CLA results.

The CLA focuses on a set of common areas that comprise what is central to most notions of collegiate education. These areas are: critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and written communication.

The CLA combines two types of testing instruments: Performance Tasks: Students must complete a “real-life” activity (such as preparing a memo or policy recommendation) by using a series of documents that must be reviewed and evaluated. Completion of these instruments does not require the recall of particular facts or formulas; instead, the measures assess the demonstrated ability to interpret, analyze and synthesize information. Writing Prompts: Evaluate students’ ability to articulate complex ideas, examine claims and evidence, support ideas with relevant reasons and examples, sustain a coherent discussion, and use standard written English.” See addendum section for examples of these tasks.

Individual program components will be assessed as follows.

**EYE:** Direct assessment: CLA, Culture, Nature, Citizenship, and Ethics Case Study Writing Prompt (introduction complexity—description and explanation); limited number of items on course questionnaire. Indirect assessment: course questionnaire and SIR II.

**College Writing:** Direct Assessment: Sample from the common assessment mechanism (student writing samples) already used in three existing USM courses (ENG 100, ENG 101 and ENG 1xx). Indirect Assessment: course questionnaire and SIR II.

**Quantitative Reasoning:** Direct assessment: QR faculty will develop their own assessment strategy and mechanism; program assessment will focus on sampling of these. Indirect assessment will occur through course questionnaires. Assessment of the quantitative reasoning component should be tied to student completion of the requirement. One possibility is the creation of an in-course assessment mechanism tied to a final exam or project which students complete as part of a quantitative reasoning course. An alternative is an assessment external to the course which must be completed before the requirement itself is shown as completed on the students’ transcript. These logistical decisions will depend on the type of assessment designed by the faculty involved.

**Science Explorations, Creative Expressions, Cultural Interpretation, Socio-cultural Analysis:** Indirect assessment will occur through course questionnaires and SIR II for first 3 years. During this period faculty teaching courses in each of the 4 areas will select outcomes for assessment and design an assessment mechanism. Starting with year 4 we will perform sample assessment of each component. After three years, additional outcomes will be selected desired. Additional direct assessment will be obtained through limited items on course questionnaires.
Mid-career: Direct assessment will involve expanded Case Study Writing Prompt for increased cognitive complexity (analysis and synthesis) and inclusion of knowledge of ethics and citizenship. Additional direct assessment will be obtained through limited number of items on course questionnaires. Indirect assessment will involve course questionnaires and SIR II.

Clusters: Clusters will be indirectly assessed through course questionnaires and SIR II, with particular attention to demonstrated capacities for synthesis.

Capstone: Direct assessment will involve the CLA and Expanded Case Study Writing Prompt for increased cognitive complexity (evaluation) and integration of general education with major. Indirect assessment will involve course questionnaires and SIR II.

Transfer Students and Assessment: Where transfer students would fall in the institutional assessment process will, of course, depend on their point of transfer. That is, transfer students will enter into and engage in the assessment program depending on the number of credits they transfer in and their corresponding placement in the curriculum. Transfer students will not complete assessment tasks associated with program components which have been waived for them through transfer assessment (for example, a transfer student with 24 or more credits does not have to complete an Entry Year Experience course and therefore does not have to complete the Case Study Writing Prompt which follows completion of this course). Meaningful program assessment will require the capacity to analyze the data yielded by transfer students separately from that of other students.

Analysis of Program Assessment Data:

Assessment data yielded by Course Questionnaires and SIRII will be compiled and analyzed by the Office of Academic Assessment.

Analysis and reports of CLA data are provided by CLA.

Faculty teams (supported through stipends) will be formed to create assessment criteria for the Culture, Nature, Citizenship, and Ethics Case Study Writing task. Three teams will construct three sets of criteria for application at the three levels of assessment: EYE, mid-career, and capstone. These teams will then review samples of student written responses to the Case Study task. This review will result in numerical scoring (based on the agreed upon criteria) of the student work. These scores will then be compiled for summary analysis by the Office of Academic Assessment.

Communication of Program Assessment Data:

Summary Program Assessment Reports will be available to interested parties through USM’s website (in much the same manner as the Factbook and other institutional level reports have been made available to interested parties). More particular audiences will have access to different elements of assessment data, depending on their role in curriculum improvement. For example, the USM Core administrative body will supply the General Education council with annual or semi-annual summary assessment reports and more detailed reports as required by the Council.

Students: Students who participate in the CLA will have access to their individual scores if they sign the necessary waiver in advance of participation. Students will have access to general, summary USM Core Assessment Reports through the Office of Undergraduate Education and the Office of Academic Assessment and the University website.

7 It may be helpful to remind the reader that while programmatic assessment does collect data from individual students the data are not used to evaluate the performance of individual students, or to determine their individual progress through a course of study. The data are used to assess the program itself.
Faculty: Data from indirect assessments yielded by the Course Questionnaires and the SIRII will be shared in reports to course faculty in the semester following instruction of a course. These reports will be prepared by the Office of Academic Assessment with assistance from the Office of Undergraduate Education. These reports will identify data by course. Only individual faculty will receive Course Questionnaire data identified by their individual section. If USM adopts SIRII as the primary course evaluation measure, departments may receive individual course SIRII reports as appropriate.

Data from direct assessments (CLA and the Case Study Writing Prompt) will be communicated to faculty in the form of a written summary report on an annual basis.

Administrators and Staff: the majority of administrators and staff involved in curriculum improvement only require reports of assessment data of the general and summary kind (for example, summary reports rather than course-section level data or reports). Administrators and staff directly involved in program assessment and improvement (for example, the Associate and Assistant Provosts for Undergraduate Education, the Director of Academic Assessment) will generate and be recipients of the widest range of assessment data as necessary to fulfilling their functions in program improvement.

“Assessment at Work” Day: Annually or semi-annually the Offices of Undergraduate Education and Academic Assessment will host an assessment day for purposes of communicating with the University community about assessment at USM. One function of this event will be communication of recent assessment data to participants.

Professional Development:

Realization of the USM Core Assessment plan will require ongoing professional development for both faculty and staff. The general strategy will be in-house education by faculty and staff already versed in assessment and attendance at workshops, conferences, etc. as appropriate by interested faculty and staff.

Curricular Improvement

Communication of assessment information to those closely involved in curricular improvement (faculty planning and teaching courses and staff who support them in this work) will produce curricular improvements at both the course and program level.

Faculty regularly and conscientiously make improvements in course content and pedagogy based on direct information about student learning and information about students’ opinions. This will continue to be one of the most important mechanisms for curricular improvement in the USM Core.

Communication of assessment data to faculty and staff involved in curriculum improvement may result in modifications of the curriculum as a whole or its components. Such modifications might include changes in approved course learning outcomes and characteristics, changes in sequencing and/or prerequisites of program components, changes in course characteristics, etc. If warranted by assessment findings, these modifications may be made on a pilot or testing basis for a short period. However, more permanent curriculum improvements which take the form of program modifications will be achieved through formal proposals before the USM Core administrative body, with appropriate oversight and approval by the General Education council and, where called for, the Faculty Senate.

Costs and Resources:

Seeking external funding to support this assessment plan is a top priority. Resource needs include funding for faculty stipends—both for professional development and compensation for their assessment of student written
work. The plan proposed here may also require and additional staffing for the Office of Academic Assessment. Funding is being sought or will be sought through the following sources:

1. Davis Educational Foundation. We have applied for a grant from the Davis foundation to cover part of the costs of professional development for assessment. A site visit by Davis is scheduled for Oct. 25, 2007 and we should know by the end of November whether we have received the grant.
2. Teagle Foundation (later)
3. Title III

**Conclusion:** This assessment proposal was recently reviewed by Peggy Maki, a leading national expert on curriculum assessment. Maki’s response was very positive:

> You are all doing a fine, fine job and this is just excellent
> because it also focuses on integrated learning--that's really what I
> think we should be doing because that's how people think in
> reality--they don't separate writing from thoughts about a
> subject...Okay, keep me posted and good luck on this well thought out
> development. Send my best to everyone for this exemplary approach that
> will yield useful results about learning--I guarantee.

Implementation of this proposed assessment plan faces as many obstacles as implementation of the curriculum itself (political, logistical, financial). One of the most important challenges is creating faculty interest, investment, and involvement in finding out about what students are learning beyond their own individual courses. We need to translate faculty’s deep concerns about student learning in their own courses to concern and involvement in student learning across the curriculum. We’ve said repeatedly that faculty as a whole are responsible for the curriculum as a whole. The same is true of assessment of the curriculum. Assessment works best when those who actually teach students are at the center of assessing student learning.

**Addendum: Assessment Examples:**

**Collegiate Learning Assessment:** These examples are from the CLA website. Visit [http://www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm](http://www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm) for more details.

**Sample Performance Task**

You are the assistant to Pat Williams, the president of DynaTech, a company that makes precision electronic instruments and navigational equipment. Sally Evans, a member of DynaTech's sales force, recommended that DynaTech buy a small private plane (a SwiftAir 235) that she and other members of the sales force could use to visit customers. Pat was about to approve the purchase when there was an accident involving a SwiftAir 235. You are provided with the following documentation:

1: Newspaper articles about the accident
2: Federal Accident Report on in-flight breakups in single engine planes
3: Pat's e-mail to you & Sally's e-mail to Pat
4: Charts on SwiftAir's performance characteristics
5: Amateur Pilot article comparing SwiftAir 235 to similar planes
6: Pictures and description of SwiftAir Models 180 and 235

Please prepare a memo that addresses several questions, including what data support or refute the claim that the type of wing on the SwiftAir 235 leads to more in-flight breakups, what other factors might have contributed to the accident and should be taken into account, and your overall recommendation about whether or not DynaTech should purchase the plane.

**Sample Writing Prompts**

The make-an-argument prompt presents an opinion on an issue and asks the students to address the issue from any perspective they wish, so long as they provide relevant reasons and examples to explain and support their views on topics such as: "Public figures such as actors, politicians, and athletes should expect people to be interested in their private lives. When they seek a public role, they should expect that they will lose at least some of their privacy."
The break-an-argument prompt requires students to critique an argument by discussing how well reasoned they find it; they must do so by considering the soundness of the argument's logic (rather than agree or disagree with the position presented). An example prompt is: -The following is from an editorial in the Midvale Observer, a local newspaper. "Ever since the 1950's, when television sets began to appear in the average home, the rate of crimes committed by teenagers in the country of Alta has steadily increased. This increase in teenage crime parallels the increase in violence shown on television. According to several national studies, even very young children who watch a great number of television shows featuring violent scenes display more violent behavior within their home environment than do children who do not watch violent shows. Furthermore, in a survey conducted by the Observer, over 90 percent of the respondents were parents who indicated that primetime television programs between 7 and 9 p.m. should show less violence. Therefore, in order to lower the rate of teenage crime in Alta, television viewers should demand that television programmers reduce the amount of violence shown during prime time."

Culture, Nature, Citizenship and Ethics Writing Prompt Examples
The examples below are very incomplete illustrations of the types of prompts which might be developed for use in assessment. As listed here, the examples do not contain the elements necessary for the types of assessment described above. They are included merely to illustrate the idea behind this assessment mechanism and to aid further discussion.

Example 1: Land Use
A land developer is planning to expand a local shopping mall. The proposed expansion includes a piece of land which a neighboring school uses to study aquatic plants and animals.

As a reporter, write a newspaper article that gives both the arguments for and against the shopping mall expansion. Discuss the range of issues (e.g., social, economic, environmental, etc.) which are involved. Discuss the range of perspectives (e.g., developers, school personnel and students, community members, etc.) which are involved.

Example 2: Recycling
Your school has placed recycling bins around the campus, but students rarely use them. Cans, bottles and paper usually end up in the regular trash cans – if not on the ground. Write a proposal to your principal on how to improve the recycling process. Keep in mind the following questions as you write:

- Are there enough bins?
- What can persuade students to use them?
- Has the recycling program been adequately publicized (in the school newspaper, on posters, in class discussions)?

Example 3: Competing Perspectives (from publicagenda.com)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective #1: Curb pollution through sensible regulations</th>
<th>Perspective #2: Putting environmental protection in perspective</th>
<th>Perspective #3: Preventing further environmental destruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We've made progress on environmental protection, but we can't let up now.</td>
<td>Human beings, just by going about their daily lives, inevitably affect the environment. That's all right so long as harmful pollution is controlled. But many people act as if environmental protection is</td>
<td>Because a safe and sound environment is the precondition for human life itself, environmental protection must take precedence over other public goals. And the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing awareness has led to sensible limits on our use of natural resources and pollutants that are side-effects of industrial society -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24
- sometimes by government and sometimes by businesses themselves, who understand that it's in no one's interest to commit environmental suicide. Yet it's unrealistic to expect people to make dramatic changes in their lifestyles or give up their jobs. What's needed now are more stringent guidelines on pollution, and stepped-up enforcement of the laws. Through prudent regulation, we can achieve a balance between environmental protection and economic growth.

Our only concern. Environmentalists have become a special interest group who insist on unreasonable and costly measures, or ones which infringe on private property rights. We certainly should protect the environment, but we need to take a careful look at the laws we've put in place to see that they are not costing us too much in money or jobs for the benefit we're getting. A strong economy is just as important as a sound environment.

Fundamental problem is how Americans live -- we consume too much, waste too much and restore too little. Despite some gains, we're still making an unprecedented assault on the environment, leading to irreversible and perhaps catastrophic effects. Global warming, in particular, is a real threat that requires coordinated global action. The best option is to move toward a sustainable society where we make decisions based on how they impact future generations. Government has to go much further in reducing pollution.

Select one or a combination of the above perspectives and write an argument to support the position you select.
SECTION IV: Governance and Administration of the USM Core

The Office of Undergraduate Education and the General Education Council were both created explicitly to support new general education curricula (pathways), the first as an administrative unit and the second as the governance body. Implementation of the new USM Core will require organizational changes in the GEC, since it will now be responsible for oversight and review of three core curricula: LAC’s, Honors’ and the USM Core. The following proposal describes a new governance structure for the USM Core and the GEC.

USM Core Governance

Upon implementation of the new USM Core, the old Core Curriculum Committee will be replaced by the new USM Core Curriculum Committee, which does the following:
- approves proposed courses and clusters and reviews them periodically; provides assistance with transfer reviews;
- oversees assessment; identifies faculty development needs; oversees policies and procedures.

The committee consists of eleven voting members, serving staggered three year terms, selected from the faculty as follows: one from each CAS division (Humanities, Fine Arts, Social Science and Math/Science); three at-large from CAS, one of which is a part-time faculty member; one each from School of Business, College of Education and Human Development, School of Applied Science, Engineering, and Technology, and College of Nursing and Health Professionals.

Faculty representatives to the USM Core Curriculum Committee will be selected by their respective colleges or schools. The colleges and schools may determine their own selection processes, although election of members is strongly preferred. The committee will include five non-voting representatives from Transfer Affairs, Academic Assessment, Student/University Life, Academic Advising, and the Special Assistant to the Associate Provost of Undergraduate Education.

Current Planning Group members and an additional part-time faculty representative will serve on an interim basis as the USM Core Curriculum Committee until November 1, 2009, when units will select members for the first time. Interim elections may be held as necessary prior to Nov. 1, 2009, to fill any vacancies.

Subsequent elections to fill vacancies must occur prior to November 1 of any academic year.

The eleven full time faculty representatives will nominate a chair (or two co-chairs) from among the committee membership to serve two-year terms. Nominations will be forwarded to the Provost who will make the final decision on the appointment.

USM Core Administrative Support

The Office of Undergraduate Education
Provides administrative and financial support for the USM Core curriculum and special activities, e.g. retreats, workshops, and professional development related to general education.

The Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education chairs the GEC, has budgetary responsibility and provides administrative support for special activities, e.g. retreats, workshops, and professional development related to general education at USM; advocates for and represents the core curricula on the Deans’ Council, Academic Council and to the Provost.

The Assistant Provost provides administrative support for the USM Core Curriculum Committee.

The Special Assistant coordinates the USM Core with Maine Community Colleges; provides liaison between faculty and Student & University Life, Admissions, Transfer Affairs, and Academic Advising; assists with USM Core administrative matters such as course scheduling and student appeals.
The *Administrative Assistant* provides Undergraduate Education office and USM Core support.

**Special Considerations for 2009-2011:**

Governance of the new USM Core curriculum will require the greatest time commitment from faculty and staff in the three years immediately following implementation in 2009-10. The primary tasks during this time will be:

- Recruiting faculty to teach in the new curriculum
- Advising faculty in the development of new courses
- Reviewing and approving courses and clusters
- Implementing the assessment plan
- Marketing the new curriculum (internally and externally)
- Administrative relations (with Advising, Transfer Affairs, Admissions, etc.)
- Developing a process of periodic review and re-approval of courses.

We propose that until November 1, 2009, Planning Group members, and an additional part-time faculty representative, hold the appropriate USM Core Committee positions for this period, and that the current Planning Group co-chairs become co-chairs of the USM Core Curriculum Committee; open positions will be filled by the established selection process of the unit concerned. This will provide continuity and greater efficiency during the new core's "growth spurt." The committee will develop a work plan, recommendations regarding compensation, and a set of bylaws.