Vision, Goals, and Outcomes for General Education at USM
Approved by the Faculty Senate 2009

General education at USM is a coherent, integrative and rigorous liberal education that will enable our graduates to be world-minded, intentional, life-long learners. General education engages the academic community in substantive learning experiences that both illuminate and transcend the perspectives of various disciplines, and systematically fosters the values and dispositions, knowledge, and skills essential for students to demonstrate

1. Informed understandings of interrelationships between human cultures and the natural world;
2. Analytical, contextual, and integrative thinking about complex issues;
3. Effective communication using multiple forms of expression;
4. Critical reflection upon, and informed action in, their roles as participants in multiple communities; and
5. Ethical action to contribute to the social and environmental welfare of local and global communities.

Goals and Outcomes

1. To demonstrate informed understandings of interrelationships between human cultures and the natural world

Students will be able to

1.1 Understand the complexity of interrelationships within and among ecosystems and diverse human cultures;
1.2 Understand the values and histories underlying quests for human meaning;
1.3 Describe and employ approaches used in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, fine arts and the professions; and
1.4 Value and appreciate the diversity of human cultures, the natural world, and the complexity of the interrelationships between them.

Students will have knowledge of

1.5 The creative processes and expressions of human imagination across cultures;
1.6 Socio-cultural systems and phenomena, and evaluations of theories that shed light on human behaviors in social contexts;
1.7 Diverse ecosystems and the interrelationships between humans and the rest of the natural world;
1.8 Natural processes as discovered through scientific inquiry; and
1.9 The human processes by which perceptions of the natural world are shaped by class, gender, religion, ethnicity and nationality.

2. To demonstrate analytical, contextual and integrative thinking about complex issues

Students will be able to

2.1 Employ quantitative and qualitative analyses to solve problems, identify the component parts and interrelationships of complex issues, and evaluate information using accepted criteria;
2.2 Recognize and construct well-reasoned arguments; and
2.3 Understand and work effectively with diverse viewpoints, uncertainty and ambiguity, and remain open-minded towards alternatives.

Students will have knowledge of

2.4 Different types of cognitive complexity; and
2.5 Intellectual criteria for sound reasoning and logical discourse including processes of quantitative and qualitative analyses

3. To demonstrate effective communication using multiple forms of expression

Students will be able to

3.1 Express themselves clearly through writing, speaking and non-verbal communication using a variety of media and technologies;
3.2 Identify, select, and employ forms of communication appropriate to their audience, objectives and situation;
3.3 Critically evaluate information communicated through various media and frame relevant questions;  
3.4 Engage in open and reasoned discussion with diverse individuals; and  
3.5 Understand the variety of perspectives and forms of expression, and the limitations of each in contributing to knowledge and understanding.

Students will have knowledge of  
3.6 Criteria for analytical reading and effective communication; and  
3.7 A variety of works from the major fields of knowledge.

4. To demonstrate critical reflection upon and informed action in their roles as participants in multiple communities:

Students will be able to  
4.1 Analyze their roles as citizens, family members, consumers and producers, and assess their responsibility for action in these roles and in service to their communities;  
4.2 Clarify their understanding of their own values, assess alternatives in terms of their consequences, frame decisions, and evaluate their actions within ethical frameworks and as participants in multiple communities;  
4.3 Take deliberate action despite ambiguity and uncertainty, after consideration of alternatives and their consequences.

Students will have knowledge of  
4.4 The ethical dimensions of perspectives used in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and fine arts;  
4.5 The values and histories underlying different views on the roles of citizen, family member, and participant in multiple communities, and the interrelationships among them in different times and societies;  
4.6 How values shape communication, interpretation, and action; and  
4.7 The effects of action/inaction and external factors on the roles of citizen family member through cross-cultural and historical perspectives.

5. To demonstrate ethical action and contribute to the social and environmental welfare of local and global communities:

Students will be able to  
5.1 Employ effective approaches to decision-making and distinguish between ethical and unethical action;  
5.2 Engage with integrity in informed civic action;  
5.3 Collaborate with diverse individuals and groups to find solutions to complex problems; and

Students will have knowledge of  
5.4 Civic processes and the values upon which they are based;  
5.5 The context of and connections among local, state, regional, national, and global political and natural systems over time;  
5.6 The systems of values and ethics, both historical and contemporary, underlying diverse societies and political systems; and  
5.7 The ideals of democracy, egalitarianism, social and economic justice, sustainability, environmental stewardship, and compassion.

Proposals for General Education pathways must show that the curriculum addresses all goals and outcomes described above to some degree. However, this requirement is not intended to impose undue burdens on faculty developing individual courses for any General Education pathway. Individual courses are not expected to address every goal and objective, but should relate substantively to at least one goal and some of the objectives listed below that goal.