

Supplemental Material

Pages 5, 6, 8, and 9 from the General Education Task Force Report*

And the Auburn University General Education Outcomes

*The complete report is available at:

http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/pdf/GETF_Report0903.pdf

Part III: Alabama Articulation and General Studies Committee Guidelines

The Alabama Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC) was created in 1994, through ACT 94-202 of the Alabama state legislature, for the purpose of simplifying transfer credit across Alabama's public universities and colleges. The statute creating the AGSC also directed it to create a general studies curriculum that would apply to all of the state's public colleges and universities, setting minimum standards for all campuses, including rules for course scope and approach. In addition, AGSC monitors and oversees the Statewide Transfer & Articulation Reporting System (STARS), which provides transfer guides/agreements for students in state two-year institutions transferring to degree programs in the state's four-year institutions. It also provides guidance for students in other transfer situations, such as a four-year institution to a four-year institution transfer.

The AGSC has created a statewide general studies and articulation program. The agreement covers coursework in the freshman and sophomore years. Under the guidelines, the four-year institution into which a student transfers from a junior college is required to give credit for up to half of the total bachelor degree program hours, to a limit of 64 semester hours of work completed. For students transferring from another four-year institution, transfer work beyond that total is evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

The AGSC divides the coursework for the freshman and sophomore year into five areas. General Studies comprise areas I through IV. Area V covers pre-professional and pre-major studies and electives.

The areas and the semester hours associated with them are:

- Area I Written Composition (6 semester hours)
- Area II Humanities and Fine Arts (12 semester hours)
- Area III Natural Sciences and Mathematics (11 semester hours)
- Area IV History, Social, and Behavioral Sciences (12 semester hours)
- Area V Pre-professional, pre-major, or elective (19 to 23 semester hours)

Within Area II, at least 3 semester hours must be in literature and 3 semester hours must be in the arts. Courses must be broad in scope and content. Courses in the arts must emphasize history or appreciation, not performance. Within Area IV, at least 3 semester hours must be in history and at least 6 semester hours from among other disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences. Additionally, students must complete one 6-hour sequence, either in literature or in history.

For Engineering, at the option of the institution, the following division may be elected:

- Area I Written Composition (6 semester hours)
- Area II Humanities and Fine Arts (9 semester hours)
- Area III Natural Sciences and Mathematics (11-12 semester hours)
- Area IV History, Social, and Behavioral Sciences (9 semester hours)
- Area V Pre-professional, pre-major, or elective (24-25 semester hours)

Students in Engineering must complete 6 semester hours in a particular discipline within the areas of humanities and fine arts or history, social, and behavioral sciences. Restrictions on transfers within Area III are also in place, requiring higher levels of mathematics for Engineering as opposed to other transfers, and requiring specific science courses.

Although institutions are not strictly bound by AGSC policies in setting Core requirements for their own internal students, institutions must provide suitable transfer credit for AGSC-approved courses and abide by the STARS transfer guides. Further, institutions that deviate from these guidelines could cause problems for students who wish to transfer out of the home institution to a different state university or college. Auburn's current Core Curriculum complies with AGSC general studies curriculum. However, under Auburn's current Core, choices within the AGSC areas are more restrictive than at many other state institutions. Auburn University requires students to complete the literature sequence in Area II and to take a course in Philosophy (Ethics or Logic) in Area II. In Area IV, it requires completion of a two-course sequence in World History, Technology & Civilization or The Human Odyssey. Also, choices in social sciences are more restricted than in other institutions. In Area III, Auburn University requires completion of either (a) two 4-hour courses in a single sequence in biology, chemistry, physics, or geology or (b) Concepts of Science plus a four-hour course in biology, chemistry, physics, or geology. Auburn has not elected to use the special core requirements for Engineering.

To have a course designated for statewide approval under the general studies curriculum, institutions submit a course proposal to the AGSC/STARS Administrative Office. The proposal is forwarded to the appropriate academic committee for review. If the appropriate academic committee approves the course, it is brought to AGSC for final approval. The full list of AGSC-approved courses for the two-year institutions and each of the four-year institutions can be found here:

<http://stars.troy.edu/stars/crslists.htm>

Part IV: General Education and College-Level Competencies

This Task Force not only examined the general education programs of specific universities but also considered national trends in general education, especially in their relationship to the guidelines set by regional accreditation associations like SACS.

Most American models of general education emphasize (1) essential knowledge that students should acquire, (2) essential skills and modes of inquiry that students should learn to practice and apply, and (3) essential attributes of a college-educated citizen that students should come to exhibit. In practice, however, different models of general education emphasize these elements in differing degrees.

When Auburn University's Core Curriculum was adopted in 1991, the dominant model of general education emphasized essential knowledge that students should acquire or, more simply, what college graduates should know. Since that time, the national conversation has shifted markedly toward a more outcomes-based approach to general education, reducing the emphasis on subject-matter "coverage" and highlighting instead the college-level competencies that graduates should develop. For example, in *College Learning for the New Global Century* (2007), the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) has called for rebuilding the entire undergraduate curriculum around essential learning outcomes like knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural worlds, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative learning. This influential agenda for general education retains an emphasis on things students should know but shifts the center of gravity toward the skills and attributes that students should develop. At the same time, general education is now often being reconceived as a process that occurs across the entire undergraduate curriculum, including the major field of study and co-curricular experiences, rather than as a process concentrated in broad survey courses taken in the first two years of college.

The 2008 SACS *Principles for Accreditation* contains two standards related to general education. These standards represent an attempt to balance two models of general education, one based on essential broad knowledge, the other on essential college-level skills. Core Requirement 2.7.3 requires each baccalaureate program to have a general education component that is based on a coherent rationale, that includes at least 30 semester hours, and that requires each student to take at least one course in the humanities or fine arts, one in the social and behavioral sciences, and one in the natural sciences or mathematics. These courses must "ensure breadth of knowledge" and must not focus on the "skills, techniques and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession." In counterbalance, Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1 reflects the more recent emphasis on essential outcomes: "The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which graduates have attained them." Auburn University will have to demonstrate its compliance with both of these standards when it is next reviewed for reaffirmation in 2013. Any changes designed to make the Core Curriculum more flexible and inclusive need to remain mindful of this upcoming accreditation review.

Auburn's current Core Curriculum appears to meet the first of these two standards, since it includes more than 30 semester hours, requires students to take at least one broad-based course in the requisite academic areas, and is supported by an articulated rationale, which appears in the bulletin. The University has also taken recent steps to comply with the newer SACS standard on "general education competencies." Seven general education outcomes have been formally identified: information literacy, analytical skills and critical thinking, effective communication, informed and engaged citizenship, intercultural knowledge and diversity awareness, scientific literacy, and aesthetic appreciation and engagement. Some of these outcomes are skills and habits of mind that nearly any college-level course on any subject should emphasize, skills such as analysis and critique. Others – for example, scientific literacy – are more closely tied to specific fields of study. In any case, all baccalaureate graduates should attain these outcomes, no matter what the student's academic program or concentration. Studies are now being planned and conducted to identify the extent to which Auburn graduates have attained these general competencies. To be fully compliant with the SACS standard, information from these assessments will need to be analyzed and used to make educational improvements.

This Task Force considered whether making the Core Curriculum more flexible and inclusive would jeopardize our compliance with these two SACS standards. We determined that a careful revision need not endanger our accredited status. While the current Core requirements are compatible with the SACS breadth standard, there is little danger that a more flexible and inclusive Core would be any less compatible, provided that the new Core continues to be supported by a coherent rationale and that new courses made available also "ensure breadth of knowledge" and are not focused on a particular profession or occupation. Similarly, making the Core Curriculum more flexible and inclusive need not present problems with respect to the standard on "general education competencies." The Core Curriculum – current or expanded – should intentionally advance students towards attainment of these general education goals. Core courses may also achieve other important purposes, but this Task Force believes that each Core Curriculum requirement and course option should be clearly mapped to one or two of the University's general education goals. Core instructors should know what general education outcomes their courses are supposed to introduce or reinforce, and students should be able to select among Core options without losing opportunities to advance toward the University's goals for their general education. Course selection options should not allow students to opt out of achieving these goals. In general, available courses satisfying the same Core Curriculum requirement should probably address the same general education goals, so that pathways through the Core Curriculum will not allow detours around essential outcomes. If the Core expands, it will be critical to improve coordination and communication among participating departments to ensure that the institution is able not only to assess the extent to which graduates have attained these general education competencies but also to analyze and use the results of these assessments to make demonstrable improvements.

The current Core Curriculum and the Auburn University general education outcomes are described in detail at:

http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/undergrad_studies/core.html

http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/undergrad_studies/ccoc_genedoutcomes.html

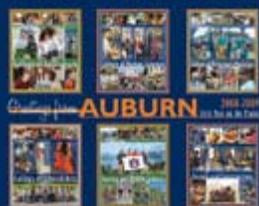
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Auburn University General Education Outcomes

General Education Goal	Outcomes
Information Literacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will be information literate.
Analytical Skills and Critical Thinking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will be able to read analytically and critically. 2. Students will be able to critique an argument effectively. 3. Students will be able to construct an effective argument. 4. Students will be able to apply simple mathematical methods to the solution of real-world problems. 5. Students will be able to select and use techniques and methods to solve open-ended, ill-defined or multi-step problems.
Effective Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will be able to write effectively. 2. Students will demonstrate effective oral communication skills.
Informed and Engaged Citizenship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will be informed and engaged citizens of the United States and the world.
Intercultural Knowledge and Diversity Awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will understand and appreciate the diversity of and within societies of the United States and the world.
Scientific Literacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will understand and appreciate methods and issues of science and technology.
Aesthetic Appreciation and Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will understand and appreciate the arts and aesthetics as ways of knowing and engaging with the world.