

General Studies Academic Program Review (APR) Fall, 2018
Final Version Prepared by Dr. Leslie Rach, General Studies Director

Introduction and Background

The General Studies Program was implemented in 2007 as a response to calls for reform of the General Education curricular design at Gallaudet. The mechanism for design and implementation of GSR was a comprehensive and inclusive--in terms of departmental affiliation--work group called Academic Rigor group. This faculty body was tasked during a few weeks of the summer with creating and devising implementation strategies for an intensive and bold overhaul of the General Education curriculum.

Though several members of the group had expertise in curriculum design, most did not. At the time, it was not clear nor publicly articulated that Higher Education theory and practice includes a concentration in research about the design of the core college experience, that General Education is a disciplinary field in and of itself. Thus, the faculty selected indicated an institutional mindset that GSR could and should be redesigned by representation of disciplinary fields and years of teaching experience. In a sense, everyone serving on the Academic Rigor groups was an "expert." In hindsight, this may have led to later problems explicating and defending the mission of the program, a program that was carefully thought out, modeled, and shaped by some of the most forward-thinking higher education institutions at the time.

The new curriculum was intended to enhance academic rigor at the institution by focusing on student outcomes and skills (outputs) instead of an array of courses (inputs). An input, or distribution model has a central flaw in resulting in a disparate and unique set of skills for each student, making any meaningful assessment of learning a challenge. The current GSR program is developmental in the sense that students build competencies through the program through a coherent curriculum that is facile, vibrant, and responsive to timely content and topical concerns. An additional concern to be addressed in the design and implementation of General Studies was the number of credit hours allocated to General Education. Accreditation mandates stipulated that the GSR be limited and reduced in credit hours so that students could explore possible majors earlier and concurrent with their General Education program, and so that they could consider double majors, or majors and minors, making themselves more versatile and marketable.

The mission statement of the GSR curriculum states that the program is designed to “provide a rigorous academic program that prepares students for successful learning in a complex world where traditional academic disciplines are interrelating, merging, and overlapping.” The program provides students with a high-quality sequence of coursework intended to prepare them for their chosen majors, for lifelong learning, and for challenging careers. The General Studies program begins with Freshman Foundations (GSR 100-level courses), continues with Integrated Courses (interdisciplinary GSR 200-level courses) and concludes with a Capstone Course (GSR 300).

Gallaudet University has five Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that were established for all undergraduate students and that represent the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students should acquire to successfully complete the requirements of the General Studies program, the undergraduate majors, and the baccalaureate degree. The five SLOs are:

- Language and Communication
- Identity and Culture
- Critical Thinking
- Knowledge and Inquiry
- Ethics and Social Responsibility

The report consists of four components—as mandated by the Academic Program Review (APR)—critical features of the program, strengths and needs of the program relative to the university, strengths and needs of the program relative to the academic discipline, and strengths and needs of the program relative to its own mission and student learning outcomes.

The first component, critical features of the program, focuses on who our students and faculty are, including student and faculty profiles. It discusses the demographics of our students and their graduate studies or employment after graduation. This component also discusses the curriculum, the GSR program and its faculty and courses, and the support it has received. The second component, strengths and needs of the program relative to the university discusses the alignment of the GSR program’s mission with Gallaudet University’s mission statement. It also discusses the program’s direct and indirect contributions to the university and to its constituents, including other programs

and departments. The third component, strengths and needs of the program relative to the academic disciplines discusses the purpose and position of the GSR program, its outcomes, its intellectual place at the university, and its response to the mandates of liberal education. The final component, strengths and needs of the program relative to its own mission and student learning outcomes demonstrates the GSR program's assessment plan and outcomes, and use of the assessment data in relation to the outcomes. It also looks at the effectiveness of the program's teaching and training of students in comparison to previous academic years.

Each part of the report, in answering the APR questions, had a short list of recommendations. To facilitate the use of this report for those not involved in its writing, the recommendations have been moved to the beginning of the report. Because the purpose of the report is to guide a program review that is forward thinking, it made sense to front load the recommendations. Of note though, the recommendations did come from the analyses done in the 3 main analytic sections of the APR, Parts II, III, IV. Part I of the report is primarily about the students we serve, and the faculty who teach.

Recommendations from Part II Regarding General Studies' Relationship to the Gallaudet Mission:

- A task force should take on the work of revising the Gallaudet Mission. Here is an example of language that might be beneficial:

"Upon graduation, the Gallaudet Scholar will be identifiable by their ability to *connect* knowledge through critical thinking from the humanities, arts, and sciences. They will be prepared to *discover* and engage a diverse world with cultural understanding and competency. They will be effective communicators in both American Sign Language and written English. They will be able to *influence* the world with sound ethical reasoning that strives to create social justice."

• Insure at least one course at the 100, 200, and 300 level syllabus highlight and provide multiple opportunities for students to strengthen the habits, skills, and mindset that lead to broad and positive citizenship.

Recommendations from Part III Regarding General Studies' Place Relative to the Academic Discipline:

- Advisors (professional and faculty Advisors both) and other academic support units must have a clear and consistent approach to explaining GSR to students.
- Every major/discipline needs to be 'at the table' when the curriculum is re-designed to provide input into the pathway
 - bring knowledge of employment trends in the field and broadly applicable foundational knowledge tied to the real-world and current and future trends in the discipline (academic vitality)
- Increase attention and credit given to life experience/work credit: how well does GSR align with students with substantive life experience and/or adult degree completion students returning to complete a degree? (i.e. nontraditional/transfer students). Use Lumina's Degree Qualifications Profile as a guide
- Scaffold the process of revising and rolling out the curriculum
- Reduce dependency on adjunct and temporary instructional staff; capitalize on existing faculty and professional staff resources while reevaluating and conceptualizing workload /teaching load of tenure track faculty, professional staff, and administrators. Include the role of the Gallaudet regional centers.
- Make high impact practices more transparent and equally valued as a learning experience equivalent to the classroom learning.
- Be presented to students with a more transparent purpose; guided pathways (i.e. students need to understand how GSR benefits them in the major/any major); consistent messaging
- Provide opportunities for exploration in the major (with topics that are relevant to all students)
- Provide Guided Pathways: be sequenced/structured in ways that students can understand the value of GSR as it aligns with various majors (and broadly, as a Liberal Arts degree pathway) and see how the structure for the various disciplines should look (GSR/Major/Free Electives); avoid unnecessary delays to graduation
- Address individual student strengths, knowledge, skills, experiences, and goals; be adaptive to student skills (i.e. adaptive learning)
- Be offered in a variety of formats, including technological formats: online, face-to-face, hybrid
- Be taught by engaged instructors who are invested in GSR and know their course content and can explain how it aligns with GSRs broad outcomes
- Ensure consistent and effective bilingual teaching and learning practices in ASL and English; students state a desire to improve English language skills (not just content); enhance training for faculty in bilingual teaching practices

Recommendations from Part IV Regarding Strengths and Needs of the Program Relative to Its Own Mission and Student Learning

- Increase intentionality and transparency in explaining how specific course work satisfies course objectives and university SLOs
- Implement an electronic portfolio of student work in GSR courses that they would carry through to the major until graduation; serving both individual and program assessment
- Find ways to accelerate the GSR curriculum when indicated for some students
- Oversee staffing patterns in some departments so that faculty can be released for GSR courses
- Enhance interdisciplinary
- Promote and incentivize faculty teaching GSR as a way of recruiting students to their majors
- Identify and commit best faculty to teach GSR classes
- Commit university resources to a permanent GSR infrastructure, including a core group of full-time faculty, to ensure consistency of content and SLOS and strengthen the program
- Restore original interdisciplinary courses, and return to intentionally designed interdisciplinary curriculum by implementing current designs that go beyond individual courses (pathways or clusters or signature work)

Part I Critical Features of the General Studies Program

Student Profile

The profile of students in General Studies (GS) mirrors our overall undergraduate student population in terms of demographics and readiness for college in that the program serves all students from First Year Seminar (GSR 101) through the Capstone course (GSR 300). The majority of students finish their GS Requirements prior to their senior year. To understand the student profile, entrance scores and graduation rates are important metrics.

Over 13 years (2003-2016), the six-year graduation rate has increased from 29% to 42%. Our graduation rate is double that of our peer institutions (open admissions universities) graduation rate of 29% (ARA, pg 59, 90). Comparisons with the National Center for Education Statistics data for 4-year public and private colleges and universities indicate that 4-year public colleges have a six-year graduation rate of 58%

and private colleges at 65% respectively (X). Gallaudet University reports that similar data from ACT Educational Services indicates that institutions with Open Admissions (ACT scores in the range of 16-21) at 4-year public colleges and universities have an average six-year graduation rate of 29%, and 4-year private colleges and universities have an average six-year graduation rate of 61.6%. Full demographic information -- which reflects the composition of the General Studies program since it serves all students-- is in the appendices.

Admissions criteria

New students at Gallaudet have an average ACT score of 17 for English, 18 for Math and 20 for Reading, which has remained constant over five years from 2011-2015.

Enrollment

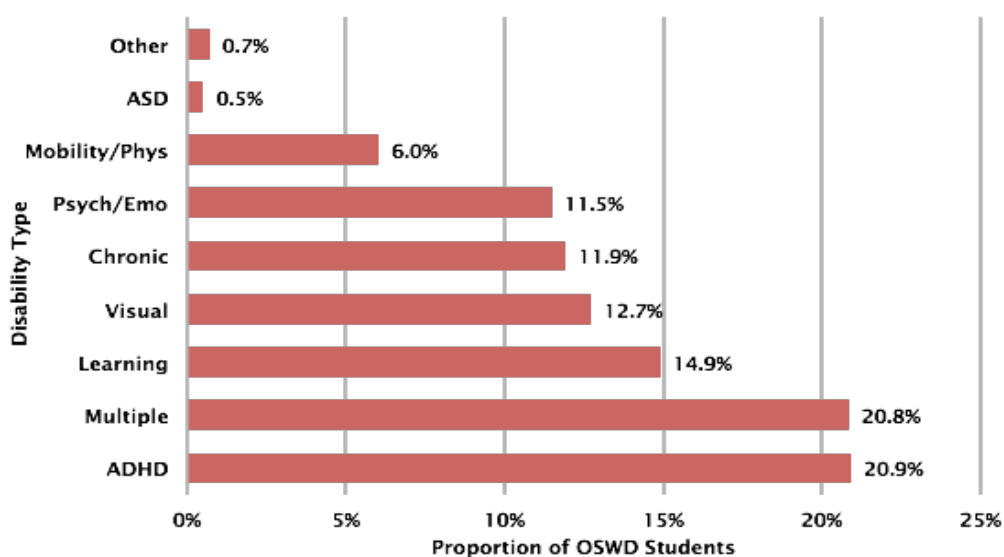
In the fall of academic year 2016-2017, Gallaudet's enrollment totaled 1,623 students: 1,121 undergraduates, 445 graduates and 57 English Language Institute students. The entering class size totaled 358 students. The gender ratio was around 55% female, and whites were around 52% of total enrollment and entering class size. Around 70% of students are full-time, and the rest part-time (ARA pages 8 & 37). The number of full-time undergraduates has remained steady at around 1,100 from 2003 through 2017 (ARA, page 15,16). Information is available in appendices

Accommodation strategies for students of all abilities

According to a recent trend data report, OSWD served 147 students in the academic year 2000-2001, and steadily increased to 307 students served in 2016-17, an increase of 108%. (OSWD, July 2017). General Studies serves all Gallaudet undergraduate students, so the accommodation data from OSWD is an accurate reflection of the students requiring accommodations who are taking General Studies courses. Some specifics follow:

OSWD Students : 2007—2016

Disability Breakdown by Type



Tesar and Shaumayer, 2017

Number of graduates

We do not have graduates from the GSR program because it is not a major program. (See ARA pages 70, 108, 109 & 111, However we will report the university overall graduation rates. The number of undergraduate degrees awarded per year has remained steady at around 215 from 2011-2016 (ARA - Undergraduate Degrees Awarded Per Year).

The number of first-time cohorts declaring their majors in their third year has remained steady at around 77 from 2009 through 2015. However, we only look at those with 50 credit hours not their junior classification because of the Declaration of Major policy. The number of first-time cohorts in their third year with 50 or more credits has ranged between 45 and 67 while those with less than 50 credits has ranged between 8 and 13 in the seven-year span.

The General Studies curriculum includes four components:

- 1) Freshman Foundation courses (4 courses, total 12 credits): GSR 101, 102, 103, and 104
- 2) Career Development (1 course, total 1 credit): GSR 110
- 3) Integrated courses (5 courses, total 20 credits): GSR 150, 210, 220, 230, and 240
- 4) Capstone Experience (1 course, total 4 credits): GSR 300

Freshman Foundation

The Freshman Foundation is the first General Studies component. Under this component, students take four Freshman Foundation courses:

First Year Seminar (GSR 101)

Critical Reading and Writing (GSR 102)

American Sign Language and Deaf Studies (GSR 103)

Quantitative Reasoning (GSR 104)

Career Development (GSR 110)

Integrated courses

GSR 150: Introduction to Integrated Learning

GSR 210: Comparing Multicultural Perspectives

GSR 220: Methods of Multiple Disciplines

GSR 230: Scientific & Quantitative Reasoning in Context

GSR 240: Ethical Decisions and Actions

Capstone

GSR 300

For the last 3 years, the number of GSR courses offered has steadily increased, with cross-listed GSR 200/departmental courses becoming more prevalent. In addition, Fall of 2016 data indicate a spike in new students, with the number of GSR 100 level courses increasing by about 37%. Around 60% of all entering students declare their major by the start of their third year from 2009-2015 (Appendix, Retention to Third Year table).

Programmatic climate

The program has been stripped of all full time faculty resources except for the director, has no representation in faculty governance, and has been forced to rely on faculty allocations that come after departments are fully serviced. This is true despite the MSCHE exit report recommendation for more support for General Studies in 2013. Turnover of adjunct hires is predictably high, and training efforts are a series of on ramp, catching speed, and exits instead of scaffolded and increasingly sophisticated understandings of pedagogy, campus resources, policies, and best practices by well-intentioned and knowledgeable part time employees. The fact that there is not widespread understanding nor valuing of General Education as a disciplinary content area, staffing decisions have privileged the academic departments over General Studies. The climate can probably best be understood vis a vis the overall campus climate; campus climate studies should be carefully considered and General Studies morale interpreted in this context.

Activities that support diversity among students and faculty

There is a structured peer mentoring program in place that trains student peer mentors to mentor First Year students taking freshmen GSR courses. Collaboration between Student Success, and GSR 310--the Peer Mentoring class and GSR 101 is inherent in the GSR 101 course structure, where each instructor has a Peer Mentor to help facilitate class and to work directly with new students. The Peer Mentoring program is academic in integrated through both curricular and co-curricular activities. It should be noted that the Peer Mentors work with first year students, but they (the Peer Mentors) themselves are mentees of the GSR 101 faculty members, and Student Success staff. As selected and trained paraprofessionals, they get teaching and work experience, making them more desirable and marketable professional graduates.

Interactions with other departments, units, or professional development and research programs that strengthen the program or other university offerings

Over the years, there is an increasing number of cross-listed courses that satisfy both General Education and Program Major or Minor requirements. Outcome based curriculum allows for great innovation and experimentation with course topics that are timely and relevant for students. The General Studies Director participated in an awarded micro-grant from the Folger Shakespeare Library with Dr. Jill Bradbury to infuse the First Folio into 6 GSR 200 level classes in a variety of content areas. GSR

partnered with various units to produce content to accompany the First Folio for instructional purposes (CBTL, First Year Seminar, English Department). Under the direction of Dr. Bradbury and Dr. Rach, the faculty members who participated in the First Folio micro grant project produced instructional material for the Folger Library.

General Studies plans, develops, leads, and sponsors a teaching and learning day at the beginning of every semester, TLDD. This is a series of concurrent workshops/trainings on topics for faculty/instructors both veteran and new. The day has grown over the years to include topics that are timely such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (Inclusive Course Design Syllabus Template), Academic Integrity, Using Rubrics for Assessment, Using Blackboard tools, Course Evaluations for teaching and learning, Research and Scholarly Activity Portfolios, Engaged Teaching, Studio Approaches for Feedback, and many more.

Involvement of students and faculty in outreach efforts (e.g. industrial and public-sector interactions)

All GSR 300 classes include a service learning project, and in addition, GSR has had a number of courses that involve community partners. GSR has been a leader in the number of course offerings that include Entrepreneurship and Innovation since its formal inception at Gallaudet. Because GSR 150, 200, and 300 are 4 credit courses, many of them incorporate field trips and experiential learning. Below is a non-exhaustive list of examples:

GSR 210 trip to Comicon in Baltimore
GSR 220 Sales Pitch Competition
GSR 230 History and Science of the Chesapeake Bay
GSR 240 South Carolina Low Country Trip
GSR 300 First Folio Docent Project

Faculty profile

The number of GSR instructors over the past ten years break down according to the following numbers by faculty rank (n=134):

PROFESSOR	67
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ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR	31
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR	17
SENIOR LECTURER	0
LECTURER I	8
LECTURER II	4
INSTRUCTOR	7

OIR also provided breakdowns of 'Exceptions' used as GSR instructors in the past ten years which I take it to mean anyone who does not fit the above faculty status. Below is the number of Exceptions who served as GSR instructors in the past ten years (n=126)

Staff	44
Adjunct	43
90 Day Temporary	16
Call-In, Substitute, or Incidental	8
Interpreter	6
Students	5
Teacher	2
Unknown	2

OIR was not able to provide information about new and retiring faculty nor average age. But 260 GSR instructors are broken down by gender and race/ethnicity as shown below:

American Indian/Alaska Native	4
Asian	14

Black/African American	34
Hispanic/Latino	12
Non Hispanic/Latino	3
Unknown	4
White	189

Female	160
Male	100

Number of deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing faculty members; faculty's ASL proficiency levels

The data on number of deaf, hard of hearing, hearing faculty is listed below:

Deaf	147
Hard of Hearing	21
Hearing	90
Unknown	2

Teaching/course evaluations

General Studies uses formative teaching evaluations that are systematized and routinized. They are delivered through respondus in Bb, and instructors get the aggregated results quickly so that they can make course changes, and incorporate

student feedback early. In this way, GSR has been a leader in creating and maintaining a mechanism for formative feedback from students. In addition, GSR does end of course evaluations, again with the data aggregated and delivered directly to the instructors. The underpinning of these systematic course evaluations is an emphasis on good and responsive teaching. Also, the GSR Director is willing and able to put unique items of institutional value on the course evaluations to align with university initiatives. For example, in some semesters, NSSE type indicators were put on the GSR 101 evaluations to gather more information from students on high impact practices in First Year courses. In 2017, the GSR 300 course evaluation was modified to include questions about Civic Engagement in response to a request from a Faculty Fellow. Because the emphasis is on teaching and learning, not on reward or punishment, the course evaluations are a resource for program planning and assessment in addition to being valuable to teachers.

Average course load

Full time course load is 3 x 4 credit classes for regular faculty. For Full-time temporary faculty (there are currently 2 positions in GSR), a full course load is 4 classes. The adjunct faculty course load varies from 1-3 courses, depending on their availability and the program needs. GSR has 5 faculty program coordinators, each teaching a full load one semester, and a reduced load (by one course release) the other semester.

Faculty hires

The GSR Director has asked for autonomy in hiring sufficient faculty to support the many courses in the program. The Director has explicitly asked for faculty positions, and has provided rationale for hiring. In addition, the Director has asked the Provost to make sure all faculty hired are suitable for teaching General Education, and that all calls for faculty applicants have language stipulating the job will include teaching General Studies. A review of recent faculty postings indicates that this has not happened, and to date, the General Studies Director is not permitted to recruit and hire full time regular faculty.

Approaches to recruiting or supporting students

All students participate to some degree in General Studies. The Director is active in Open Houses, and there is strong collaboration between GSR and Student Success via

GSR 101, 310, the Peer Mentoring Program. General Studies faculty/instructors are always highly represented in Starfish tracking use. General Studies faculty have added student support language to the Gallaudet Syllabus Template, and have model language for syllabi regarding Starfish, CAPS, OSWD, TIP, etc.

PART II Regarding Program Quality—Strengths and Needs of the Program Relative to the University

This section evaluates the strengths and needs of the GSR program relative to the University as a whole. Because the GSR program is a stand-alone program without a department and yet the core of our liberal arts education curriculum, our study required us to make some adjustments to the scope of these questions. Here we focus on the relationship between the Undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and official statements of the University that express its mission, vision, and values. Consequently, some of the findings with regard to the first question may also be relevant to strategic goals related to content for question two. The response to the second question focuses on the GSR contributions to faculty training and development that enhance our institution's ability to meet strategic goals related to academic vitality, diversity and campus climate, and student success. In the case of GSR, the third question overlaps the section of this report that addresses the GSR program's effectiveness in preparing students for further study in their majors.

The General Studies Requirements program (GSR) is a unique program within the university as it is not housed under a specific department and is a collaborative and integrated effort to create and deliver the core requirements for liberal arts education for our degree program.

For this reason, we have chosen to examine four official statements that express the mission and values of the university as a whole and undergraduate studies in particular. They are; 1) The Gallaudet University Mission statement, 2) The Undergraduate Studies Mission statement, 3) the Gallaudet University Vision statement, and 4) The Gallaudet University Credo. As a point of analysis, we also chose to examine these statements in relation to the five Undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that guide the GSR curriculum. (See these statements in the “for reference” section at the end of this question response.)

History of the Program and Relationship to SLOs

The University established five undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) in 2007 to guide curriculum development, course design, and assessment. These SLOs were communicated by a set of sub-SLOs that further elaborated the type of skills and learning outcomes expected of students that would exemplify and embody “empower[ing] its graduates with the knowledge and practical skills vital to achieving personal and professional success in the changing local and global communities in which they live and work” (from the Gallaudet Vision Statement).

In Part IV, a thorough review of the outcomes assessment is presented and analyzed. To briefly summarize, the data on the 5 learning outcomes show a steady achievement of student benchmarks as they progress through their sophomore and junior years.

The decision to make changes from a distribution model to a scaffolded outcome-based model was largely driven by a need to be more intentional in articulating the SLOs, sub-SLOs, and assessment materials in the curriculum. Any future General Education design should carefully consider the SLOs for clarity of language in communicating their purpose to students, how they might integrate various courses, and their relationship to assessment tools as well.

To examine the mission statements of the University in relation to the undergraduate SLOs, a keyword analysis was done to see where language from the SLOs appears in the mission statements. This analysis, as well as conversation with the self study team sub-group for this section of the APR, identified a number of weaknesses in the alignment between these statements and the SLOs.

Undergraduate Studies Mission

Federally chartered in 1864, Gallaudet University is an institution of higher learning that promotes the intellectual and professional advancement of deaf and hard-of-hearing students from diverse and multicultural backgrounds in a bilingual environment using both American Sign Language (ASL) and English. The mission of Undergraduate Studies at Gallaudet University is to be the premier center of learning for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Our graduates will become respected members and leaders of their communities throughout the United States and the World.

Undergraduate Studies at Gallaudet University provide all students with a rigorous and integrative education that promotes competence and in-depth knowledge in both the General Studies and major curricula. General Studies courses are predominantly taught as thematic interdisciplinary course, addressing the Gallaudet University Student Learning Outcomes. Major-level courses continue to expand on these five learning outcomes and also provide students with discipline-specific competence, preparing them for competitive careers and/or graduate education.

As the Mission statement for the university is intended to be a short and concise expression of our purpose, it follows that there will not be a high occurrence of key words. However, the lack of any reference to two of our Student Learning Outcomes (critical thinking and ethical judgements) indicates a potential weakness or mismatch in what we communicate in our mission statement vis a vis what we have established as our educational outcomes. The missing outcomes of critical thinking and ethics and social responsibility is a pattern repeated in our other statements as well. The university may wish to revisit the mission statement as well as other official statements to align them with our SLOs more intentionally.

The Undergraduate Mission statement is more verbose and more aligned with the undergraduate SLOs than the University Mission statement. This is to be expected. However, an explicit reference to critical thinking is lacking and SLO 5 is only referenced in leadership without the ethics and social justice emphasis. Again, this points to a loose alignment.

Gallaudet Vision Statement

Gallaudet University will build upon its rich history as the world's premier higher education institution serving deaf and hard of hearing people to become the university of first choice for the most qualified, diverse group of deaf and hard of hearing students in the world, as well as hearing students pursuing careers related to deaf and hard of hearing people. Gallaudet will empower its graduates with the knowledge and practical skills vital to achieving personal and professional success in the changing local and global communities in which they live and work. Gallaudet will also strive to become the leading international resource for research, innovation and outreach related to deaf and hard of hearing people.

The Vision statement aims to articulate outcomes and how they are to be achieved for the University as a whole. Though we see a lack of SLOs 2 and 5 appearing in this statement and only vague references to knowledge without articulating specifics such as humanities, fine arts, natural sciences, social sciences, etc.

Gallaudet Credo

Gallaudet's Vision Statement expresses what the University aspires to become and achieve as the world's premier academic institution for deaf and hard of hearing people. Implicit in our vision are core values that serve as guiding principles for the way members of the campus community teach, study, work and live. The Gallaudet Credo identifies and realizes those core values.

The Gallaudet University campus community includes students, faculty, teachers and staff, all of whom share certain common goals and values that we all believe enrich our academic environment. The community's primary goal is to prepare students to be informed, literate, productive and responsible citizens. In pursuit of this goal, community members pledge to uphold the following values:

We believe that education is a dominant influence on our lives and recognize that learning is a lifelong quest. Therefore we will practice academic and personal integrity and work to create a positive and welcoming environment that is open to the free exchange of ideas among members of our community.

We believe that every person should be treated with civility and that our community is strengthened by the broad diversity of its members. Therefore, we will promote and applaud behaviors that support the dignity of individuals and groups and are respectful of others' opinions. We will especially discourage behaviors and attitudes that disrespect the diversity of individuals and groups for any reason including religion, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, hearing status, or language and communication preference.

We believe that as members of the Gallaudet community we are the recipients of a proud and rich heritage, as well as contributors to and benefactors of our institution's bright future. Therefore, we will strive to bring credit to our community and ensure that the institution flourishes and succeeds in its mission.

The Credo is to be an expression of our shared values that lie at the foundation of our mission and institutional identity. Thus, we see more of SLO 5 appearing here. However, SLO 2, critical thinking, remains absent in explicit ways. As a strength, this is probably where we see the most explicit listing of identity groups that allows various people to "see themselves" in the statement, although it remains incomplete as we acknowledge the multitude of self-identification categories in our campus community.

Summary Review

The alignment with the mission/vision is not as tight as it should be. GSR assignments and rubrics should continue to reinforce the bilingual portion of GU's mission, as well as

provide more activities, assignments, and evidence of basic research skills for undergraduates. However, all GSR faculty should be more intentional in stating that these assignments align with the University Mission agreed upon in 2007. The SLOs are what drives our curriculum and educational tasks on campus as well as co-curricular goals that extend beyond the classroom.

As the SLOs are designed to be specific and measurable and the University Mission statement needs to be a more broad statement of institutional goals, the university may want to revisit our mission statements to align them with these SLOs rather than change the SLOs to become vague and general.

It is worth noting that the mission statements also include language about careers, employment skills, professional development, and service that do not appear in explicit ways in the SLOs. This is where we may want to revisit the SLOs to incorporate these elements.

A repeated trend in the mission statements is a lack of explicit reference to SLO 2, critical thinking, and SLO 5, ethics and social responsibility. This seems troublesome given how significant these are for higher education and successful citizenship.

Another trend is that while bilingualism is highlighted, along with explicit mentions of ASL and English, they seem to be primarily used in descriptive ways of what we use for teaching and how people communicate. The acquisition of communication skills to be an effective communicator is not as prominent in explicit ways.

This may be in part due to a general tone of the mission statements being more descriptive than aspirational. They tend to talk about “who we are and what we do” more than what we aim to be and what kind of scholars we wish to produce.

Gallaudet Undergraduate SLOs

SLO 1: Language & Communication—Students will use American Sign Language (ASL) and written English to communicate effectively with diverse audiences, for a variety of purposes, and in a variety of settings.

SLO 2: Critical Thinking—Students will summarize, synthesize, and critically analyze ideas from multiple sources in order to draw well-supported conclusions and solve problems.

SLO 3: Identity & Culture—Students will understand themselves, complex social identities, including deaf identities, and the interrelations within and among diverse cultures and groups.

SLO 4: Knowledge & Inquiry—Students will apply knowledge, modes of inquiry, and technological competence from a variety of disciplines in order to understand human experience and the natural world.

SLO 5: Ethics & Social Responsibility—Students will make reasoned ethical judgments, showing awareness of multiple value systems and taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions. They will apply these judgments, using collaboration and leadership skills, to promote social justice in their local, national, and global communities.

Examining Student Experiences Related to the Gallaudet Mission

In the 2010 NSSE report GU first year students were reporting higher scores than their peers on ‘understanding yourself’, ‘understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds’, ‘solving complex real-world problems, developing a personal code of values and ethics’, and ‘a deepened sense of spirituality’.

Of note, GU NSSE (2008 and 2010) ratings seem to indicate that our students rated community partnerships and service-learning lower than first year students in our peer institutions. Additionally, there is no tangible evidence that the GSR curriculum is intentionally reinforcing the GU vision of becoming ‘the university of first choice for the most qualified, diverse deaf and hard of hearing students in the world’

“The Student Experience in Brief” for Gallaudet University (2012) reported this information: “26% of first year students frequently participate in community-based projects; 48% never participate in such activities. “The NSSE at Gallaudet AY 2014-2015” presentation also states that that one of the lowest performance items compared to first year is having discussions with diverse others.” Yet, this report (2014) also rated student-faculty interactions higher than peers.

With these recent ratings in mind, it appears that faculty might easily capitalize on students’ good will about student-faculty interactions to challenge their students with assignments and requirements that will strengthen the areas that are rated lower by Gallaudet students but have proved to be high impact and engaging practices.
(Ransom, 2009)

Citizenship and social justice, like charity, begin at home but we might challenge our faculty and students' imaginations by recognizing the intersectionality of all of our students, they are not just deaf. Gallaudet's location in the District of Columbia and the communities immediately outside our campus offer Gallaudet students' rich opportunities to productively interact with deaf and hard of hearing individuals who are not enrolled in Gallaudet or have ties to the university initially, e.g. working class African Americans, Latino groups, Asian American groups, LGBTQA communities, etcetera. If designed carefully, Gallaudet undergraduate students will grow in understanding themselves better, as well as others' identities and cultures, and the community partners will gain (at a minimum) the human resources our students provide.

Part III: Strengths and Needs of the GSR Program Relative to the Academic Discipline

Program Outcomes in General Education Aligned with Standards Established by AAC&U (national level)

AAC&U states that "general education must become the integrative center for the most important learning outcomes - from the first year until the degree" (Gaston, 2015, p.6). General education and the major field of study both have a role in contributing to the liberal education of students, and "by aligning more clearly focused general education curricula with major programs more cognizant of and responsive to general education outcomes, higher education can ensure that students receive the benefits of a liberal education defined in terms of learning proficiencies and demonstrated accomplishments" (Gaston, 2015, p. 8). Clearly, these two components of liberal education must align with each other to provide a coherent pathway that begins with general education instilling the broad knowledge and skills in each of the outcomes and the major deepening the development of this knowledge and skills into the area of specialization. To gain a sense of expected outcomes in general education at the national level, one turns to the AAC&U and their work on identifying Essential Learning Outcomes, to research by Hart Research and Associates on the outcomes employers believe that colleges and universities should focus on, to the Lumina Foundation and their publication of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) outlining proficiencies required for colleges degrees at the associate, bachelor's, and master's levels, and to more local research by Hanover research outlining best practices in general education programs.

In 2007, the AAC&U published the [Essential Learning Outcomes \(ELOs\)](#) which "advanced a clear, widely shared, and eminently applicable consensus about what a liberal education should offer." (Gaston, 2015, p.6) The ELO's were developed "through

a multiyear dialogue with employers and with hundreds of colleges and universities about needed goals for student learning; analysis of a long series of recommendations and reports from the business community; and analysis of the accreditation requirements for engineering, business, nursing, and teacher education.” (AAC&U, 2015, p. 28; Gaston, 2015, p. 37;). These ELO’s, in abbreviated form, include:

- Knowledge of Human Culture and the Physical and Natural World
- Intellectual and Practical Skills, including
 - Inquiry and Analysis
 - Critical and creative thinking
 - Written and oral communication
 - Quantitative Literacy
 - Information Literacy
 - Teamwork, and problem solving
- Personal and Social Responsibility, including
 - Civic knowledge and engagement – local and global
 - Intercultural knowledge and competence
 - Ethical reasoning and action
 - Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
- Integrative and Applied Learning

Hart Research Associates (2013), in an online survey among employers conducted on behalf of AAC&U, shared that employers believe that “colleges and universities should place more emphasis on a variety of key learning outcomes to increase graduates’ success in today’s global economy.” The following areas were identified by employers as being the most critical:

- Critical thinking and analytic reasoning
- Complex problem solving and analysis
- Written and oral communication
- The application of knowledge and skills in real-world settings
- The location, organization, and evaluation of information from multiple sources
- Innovation and creativity (Hart Research Associates, 2013, p. 8).

Hanover Research (2016), in an analysis of “Best Practices in General Education Programs” noted that among the seven universities selected for the analysis, one of the key findings in these programs was that “more and more, institutions are aligning general education program with competencies that employers highly value, such as critical thinking and communication.” (Hanover Research, 2016, p.4).

In 2014, the Lumina foundation released the Degree Qualification Profile (DQP) “that complements the ELO’s by specifying in concrete terms what degree recipients at the associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s levels should be able to do with their learning and how they should be able to demonstrate what they can do.” (Gaston, 2016, p.6). These proficiencies focus on

- Knowledge, both broad and integrative knowledge as well as specialized knowledge
- Intellectual skills, including analytic inquiry, use of information resources, engaging diverse perspectives, ethical reasoning, quantitative fluency, and communication fluency
- Civic and global learning
- Applied and Collaborative Learning

Program Outcomes at Gallaudet (local level)

In examining the purpose and position of the GSR Program in terms of program outcomes, Gallaudet University has 5 [Student Learning Outcomes](#): Language & Communication, Critical Thinking, Identity & Culture, Knowledge & Inquiry, and Ethics & Social Responsibility. These SLO's were established in 2007 when the current General Studies Program was established. As noted earlier in the report these SLO's were "expanded by a set of sub-SLOs that further elaborated the type of skills and learning outcomes expected of students that would exemplify and embody "empower[ing] its graduates with the knowledge and practical skills vital to achieving personal and professional success in the changing local and global communities in which they live and work" (from the Gallaudet Vision Statement). " In examining the Gallaudet University SLO's in comparison to national trends as outlined above, Gallaudet's SLO's are in alignment with expected and needed learning outcomes as articulated by AAC&U, Hart Research and Associates, Lumina, and Hanover Research.

Intellectual Place in the Discipline: General Education as a Discipline AND within the Discipline

For this report, General Education as an Academic Discipline will be viewed both from the framework of General Education as its own academic discipline as well as from the framework of General Education in alignment with major programs of study or academic specializations.

General Education (as its own academic discipline) is "the part of liberal education shared by all students" (Gaston, 2015, p.4). In the AAC&U's General Education Maps and Markers (GEMs), general education is presented as "the nation's largest educational program" (AAC&U, 2015, p.6), a curriculum that is offered broadly within and across institutional boundaries and required of students pursuing liberal education regardless of the type of institution they attend. While general education "provides a platform for fostering proficiencies that span all fields of study" (Gaston, 2015, p.4), it plays a critical role in the broader liberal education curriculum and the important need to ensure "the alignment of both broad or general education and a major or specialization." (Gaston, 2015, p.4) While viewed as a means for helping students build broad and

integrative knowledge across disciplines, general education cannot be viewed separately from the major specializations and must be clearly aligned and coordinated with the major. General education should provide ‘a platform and a context for focused study within a discipline’ (Gaston, 2015, p. 11). With this understanding, the major has a critically important role as “sustainer and developer of liberal learning,” building upon the foundations of general education (Gaston, 2015, p.12).

This understanding is further reinforced in the Lumina Foundations Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) which outlines the expected outcomes for three levels of degrees (associate, bachelor’s and master’s degrees). While the DQP “emphasizes the degree, it implicitly asks faculty to provide field-specific learning outcomes and expectations in their areas of specialized knowledge” through the tuning process, “which encourages the development of disciplinary-level outcomes” (Adelman, Ewell, Gaston, & Schneider, DQP, p. 4). Of the five learning categories that the DQP uses to organize the learning outcomes or proficiencies at each degree level, one of the categories is Specialized Knowledge, which “addresses what students in *any* specialization should demonstrate with respect to the specialization beyond the vocabularies, theories and skills of particular fields of study.” (Adelman et al., DQP, p.5).

National and Local Need for General Education/General Studies

In response to the national and local need for the discipline of General Education, as outlined above, general education is considered the foundational component of a liberal education and is the “nation’s largest educational program” given its importance in colleges and universities across the nation. In addition, employers are reporting the need for employees that are able to demonstrate skilled proficiencies and demonstrate the desired outcomes as outlined in the first section of this report. Hart Research Associates (2013, p. 5) found that employers believe that “students are best prepared by an engaged liberal education that includes and integrates both broad-based knowledge and skills and specific skills and knowledge in a major or field of study”.

Gallaudet University is the world’s only university exclusively for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students; as a minority-serving institution, GU has a responsibility to graduate students who can effectively demonstrate desired proficiencies, skills and outcomes in their chosen career. Therefore, it is incumbent on Gallaudet University to provide a liberal education curriculum that addresses both broad foundational learning and depth-specific focus in the selected major field of study. Not only do we need to focus on achievement of desired outcomes, but given our unique population as well as the growing population of “the new majority students –first generation college students and students from historically underserved populations” (AAC&U, 2015, p. 2), we need to ensure that our curriculum is accessible and equitable in intentional and systematic ways. This initiative provides consistency with current trends related to adaptive learning addressing individualization of teaching and learning as well as capitalizing on

the digital revolution/ current academic technology. Intrinsic to this approach is assessment of student proficiencies on admission, and providing them with the pathways that optimize their development and learning. Currently, we assess student's bilingual English and ASL and math proficiencies upon admission for placement purposes, and then expect students to pass specific courses, and inherently demonstrate specific proficiencies. However, there is no systematic tracking of development or individualized approaches to teaching to support pathways to learning.

Developed in 2007 in response to MSCHE accreditation requirements, Gallaudet was one of the early leaders in adopting an outcomes based general education program. While well-intentioned and forward-thinking, it has not been without its challenges and the original curriculum has changed over time. The proposed General Studies Curriculum (Council for Undergraduate Education (CUE), 2007) was "developed in response to five needs:

1. to provide our students with a high-quality sequence of general studies coursework that is designed to prepare them for coursework in their chosen majors, life-long learning, and challenging careers;
2. to closely align the general studies curriculum to current empirically supported best practices in the higher education community;
3. to give students and departments more flexibility and discretion to customize their own programs to meet the demands of a fast changing and highly integrated professional world and evolving accreditation requirements.
4. to reflect Gallaudet University's new mission statement that makes it explicit that we are a bilingual institution;
5. to meet the requirement by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) that Gallaudet University substantially reduce its required general studies credits from 60 to between 30 and 45."

The GSR Curriculum Proposal was informed by research on best practices in higher education, a survey of successful programs at other colleges and universities, and through work with an outside consultant experienced in curricular design (CUE, 2007). The completed proposal focused on the theme of providing an intentional curriculum that helps students integrate what they learn. The proposal then outlined the five Learning Outcomes and explained the 3-Staged Curriculum model starting with the Freshman Foundations courses (12 credits), followed by the Integrated Learning Courses (24 credits), and concluding with a Capstone Experience.

Embedded in each of the elements of this 3-Staged Curriculum Model are elements of the General Education Maps and Markers (GEMs) Principles and Guidelines for transforming a general education curriculum, particularly given the focus on an

integrative curriculum. Gallaudet's GSR curriculum was on the 'right track' at its inception in 2007 being proficiency based and its focus on integrative learning. At this time the constructs of agency and self-direction must be addressed. This is reflected in our data as students are not able to articulate the relationship between the SLOs from GSR through the major. This is where equity, digital revolution, individual pathways/adaptive learning, and transparency of assessment must be addressed. As we reviewed the curriculum and identified the need for a systematic way to track individual students' development over time, we became increasingly cognizant of the need for a more explicit recognition of how diversity, equity and inclusion must be embraced in general education curriculum transformation. This is consistent with current scholarship and practice in higher education.

In general, the GSR curriculum follows the heart of Liberal Arts education where students are learning critical thinking skills, writing, quantitative reasoning, as outlined in the program outcomes sections above. Courses provide cross and interdisciplinary content, guiding students in discovery of interests and focus for deciding majors. However, as noted, "implementing GEMs requires a clear understanding of the students higher education serves, the problems students and institutions face, and the tools and resources needed to respond effectively to them." (AAC&U, 2015, p. 11).

Local need for the program is tied to retention and graduation rate. The program seeks to provide students with an intentional understanding of the learning outcomes and the pathways towards achieving these outcomes, individualized to tap into to their strengths and develop in needed areas of growth through their college career. Development of proficiencies should be demonstrated through progressive e-portfolios that document the development of the students' signature work, high impact practices, and experiential learning opportunities. It is important that students understand the purpose of general education/liberal education as being "a useful and meaningful component of a coherent baccalaureate ... that is transparently purposeful, substantive, clearly aligned with their personal goals, and expressive of explicitly defined institutional learning goals" (Gaston, 2015, p.5). When students grasp this understanding, they are more likely to be motivated and to persist towards a clear goal ... "a strong link between well-designed curricular pathways on the one hand and persistence to completion on the other ... college awareness leads to clearer aspirations that lead to increased persistence" (Gaston, 2015, p. 5) ... "those who have a clear sense of why they are doing what they are doing perform more effectively ... if general education and liberal learning outcomes are stated explicitly, students should work with greater motivation and a stronger sense of commitment. In turn, graduates should gain greater confidence in the proficiencies they have developed, in the value of their degrees, in their preparedness to contribute to society, and in their readiness for further learning." (Gaston, 2015, p.5).

GSR Program Alignment with Major Programs

To review General Studies at Gallaudet, we surveyed Department Chairs and Department Program Coordinators in the various major programs of study and asked them to share their insights about the Student Learning Outcomes as well as to learn how current GSR courses aligned with the major programs of study. We also surveyed graduating seniors to gain a sense of their understanding of the value of General Studies. We then held three focus groups, each consisting of approximately fifteen current students to gain an understanding of the students' perception of the role of the General Studies "GSR" Curriculum in the broader liberal education curriculum. The methodology and results will be discussed below.

In surveying faculty, questions were asked about: reflection of and fit with the University SLOs in the department and/or program required courses, department/program beliefs about importance of the AAC&U knowledge and skill areas for graduates, how the GSR curriculum serves or benefits their department/program(s), what the program/major needs from the GSR curriculum to prepare students for the major, and how their department/program determines which faculty will teach GSR courses. Respondents were also asked to re-envision the GSR program to ideally/optimally align with their major(s) and what would motivate or inspire their faculty to teach GSR courses.

The departments /programs that completed the survey where: ASL and Deaf Studies, English, History, Philosophy, Religion, and Sociology, Science, Technology and Mathematics, World Languages and Cultures, Education, Government and Public Affairs, Physical Education and Recreation, and Social Work. There were 27 responses in all, 11 department chairs and 16 program directors and a total of 16 programs were represented.

The table below shows the how many respondents felt each SLO was strongly reflected in their program's required courses.

SLO	Strongly Reflected in Required Courses
Language and Communication	(19) 79.17%
Critical Thinking	(20) 83.33%
Identity and Culture	(14) 58.33%

Knowledge and Inquiry	(16) 66.67%
Ethics and Social Responsibility	(12) 52. 17%

Not surprisingly, participant ratings of the importance of the AAC&U knowledge and skill areas and in the study's survey varied based on their disciplines. The following AAC&U knowledge areas were rated *very critical* across departments/programs:

- Humanities,
- World Cultures,
- Social Sciences,
- Diversity in the United States, and
- Knowledge of Technology.
- American History.

The following AAC & U skill areas were rated *very critical* across departments/programs:

- Writing,
- Critical Thinking and Analytical Reasoning, and
- ASL Communication Skills.
- Intercultural Skills and Abilities,
- Information Literacy Skills,
- Research Skills and Projects,
- Ethical Reasoning Skills,
- Integration of Learning Across Disciplines,
- Application of Learning Beyond the Classroom, and
- Civic Engagement and Competence.

Chairs and Program Directors responses to the changes and additions they would make to the University SLOS may be conveyed by the following themes:

Language and Communication:

- Ability to write in the manner required by the discipline of their major
- More courses in both ASL and English for students who display weaknesses in either, prior to entry into the major/ upper division
- Proficiency in both ASL and English for a variety of both social and academic purposes and wide range of contexts; i.e., pragmatic competence / bilingual mastery of communication register

Critical Thinking:

- Ability to express sustained argument supported with evidence and recognize the difference between original ideas and borrowed ones
- Ensure that this is part of every Gallaudet University course

Identity and Culture:

- Add emphasis to developing respect for and understanding of those with identities different than their own
- Broaden and deepen understanding of diversity beyond deaf identity and racial identity, including religion (or secular beliefs), gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and the concept of intersectionality
- Incorporate the notion that development of cultural competence can both stimulate the development of critical thinking and, conversely, critical thinking is involved in the development of cultural competence

Knowledge and Inquiry:

- Added emphasis to developing knowledge and skills and English literacy for researching peer-reviewed articles, using library resources and applying APA format
- Amend the statement to include the word “culture” in the part of the statement “...in order to understand human experience, [culture], and the natural world.”

Ethics and Social Responsibility:

Original: Students will make well-reasoned ethical judgements, showing awareness of multiple value systems and taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions. They will apply these judgements, using collaboration and leadership skills, to promote social justice in their local, national, and global communities

Suggested wording changes and explanation from one faculty member:

Students will make well-reasoned ethical judgments, showing awareness of multiple value systems and moral theories; they will apply these judgments collaboratively to promote justice and flourishing." [Awareness of multiple value systems can include moral theories, but it might not, so I think we need to make that explicit. I would drop the "taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions" bit, since that is hard to observe in a meaningful way, and anyway, a prominent moral theory (utilitarianism) covers consequences. The second sentence of the original SLO can be streamlined.

Working collaboratively requires leadership skills (as well as the humility to not always be the leader) and promoting justice in every possible community just means promoting justice. I would remove the word "social" as that tends to limit service activities to our own species, rather than, say, animal rights or environmental conservation.]

When asked how GSR serves or benefits their department or program, some key themes seen in the responses were that it provides common knowledge base, basic foundations of critical thinking, and basic English, ASL and technology literacies.

Consider the components of GSR. 100 level has skill building classes in ASL, English, Math, Critical Thinking. Also, FYE is housed in GSR and is a collaboration between Student Success and Academic Affairs. GSR 150 (introduction to integrated learning), 200 level classes explicitly address SLO 1 plus one of the other (SLO 2, 3, 4, 5) SLOs, and 300 is a capstone experience course, combining service learning, civic engagement, and incorporates all 5 SLOs.

GSR development day supports faculty from across campus by offering workshops on pedagogy, resources for student success, innovative or timely course infusions (GIEI, First Folio, MCTI).

GSR has been successful in allowing students to accomplish the core learning and skills infusion while exploring majors and minors earlier. More room was needed in the old GS curriculum structure for students to explore majors earlier; hence the GSR reduction in credits from 50+ to 37, which was actually an MSCHE mandate. Reducing the number of credits has resulted in an increase in student early declaration of major and double majors-or majors and minors. Please refer to the data in Part I of this report. The old GSR curriculum had students circulating in English and Math Developmental courses for multiple semesters. Please see the faculty chair/program director survey results in Part III of this report for more information.

There seems to be a "hunch" or assumption among some that the GSR program is a two- year program, while others believe most undergraduates actually finish their GSR requirements over a four-year period.

Deciding whether or not this program is in actuality a two-year program preparing students for their majors and minors, or more often is a curriculum happening alongside the students' majors/minors is important to what expectations we have of GSR going forward, and how to offer courses and market the program (for prospective students,

parents, and internal constituents) going forward. This decision will also play a role in our ability to tailor and align GSR with students who have different career goals, different life experiences, and support our abilities to assess students when they are admitted, when they enter their majors, and finally close to their graduation. The majority of GU students are completing GSR 200 and/or GSR 300 course within their first two years of matriculation. (Buchko, L. OIR, Internal Report, June 2017). Most semesters there were none, or one graduating student who completed GSR 200 and/or 300 in the last two or three semesters before graduation. Three semesters seem to be exceptions; they are Fall 2011 when 17% of GSR graduating seniors took GSR 200 and/or GSR 300 in the two or three semesters before graduation. The other two other semesters- Summer 2012 (48%) and Spring 2015 (28%) this was the case. In trying to discern why these exceptions --especially the high rate for the summer 2012 cohort-- occurred by looking through other material (e.g. Hulsebosch, Student Success/GSR Presentation to Academic Affairs Senior Administrators, 2015)

Student Survey Findings

In surveying graduating seniors in the Spring of 2017, students were asked to review the current University Student Learning Outcomes and identify how well the SLO's were reflected in their major required courses, to identify the main skills they believe are most critical for graduates from their major, to identify the main knowledge areas are most critical for graduates from their major, to share how the GSR Curriculum served or benefitted their learning in the major, to describe their most memorable GSR assignment, to offer suggestions for changing the GSR curriculum, and to share what they felt was missing from the GSR curriculum.

Based on the small self-selected sample, of the five SLOs, students clearly saw language and communication, critical thinking, ethics and social responsibility reflected in their majors. Overall, results indicate a need for increased transparency about the connection between the courses and the SLOs, increased transparency about course relevance to the majors and real world learning, earlier instruction an APA format, more challenging English and Math (statistics). Among the AAC&U skills, students identified critical thinking skills, writing skills, ethical reasoning skills, and application of learning beyond the classroom as very critical skills. Among the AAC&U knowledge areas, students identified Technology, Humanities, Science, Mathematics, and Diversity in the United States as very critical. Social Sciences and languages other than English and ASL were most likely identified as somewhat critical.

In addition to disseminating a survey to graduating seniors, three focus groups of approximately 15 students each were set up within three GSR summer school course sections. The focus group was led by Office of Institutional Research. The focus

groups were facilitated using a script to ensure consistency across all focus groups and students responses were transcribed using CART to provide the data for analysis. The questions for the focus groups, similar to the survey, were:

- How is the General Studies curriculum (GSR) benefitting your learning? Tell us what you believe is the intended value of the GSR program/courses?
- Tell us about your most memorable GSR assignment? Why was this a valuable learning experience for you? (e.g. class project, service-learning project, film project, or research)
- How would you change the GSR program/curriculum? What does the GSR program/curriculum need that you believe would make it 'worthwhile' for your learning?

Focus Group Findings

The most valuable GSR experiences involve self-discovery, interactive teaching and learning, are most tied to individual goals and experiences, are provided by instructors who are both knowledgeable in their fields and experienced teachers, connect with real-world experiences (i.e. high impact practices).

The focus group results indicate that students experience general education as a series of courses they must 'get out of the way' before they can declare a major; in general, there is a lack of understanding regarding the purpose of general education courses and how these courses are aligned with their major programs of study. This is not an uncommon perception of General Education (Gaston, 2015, p.5).

While GU has Student Learning Outcomes that align with the AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes, it's apparent that there is not a coherent understanding on the part of the faculty and students as to how these different elements fit together starting in General Studies and continuing to the major. Most students are not able to clearly articulate a common understanding of the outcomes nor are they able to describe the connection between General Studies and their major field of study (i.e. the pathway from General Education to the major) using the existing learning outcomes-based approach.

So, first we must have outcomes. As a result of receiving a bachelor's degree at Gallaudet University, a student should be able to articulate the outcomes they have achieved and to **document** and demonstrate the development and accomplishment of these outcomes through an **e-portfolio** of their work and the completion of a **Signature Work**. In order for students to accomplish this, the institution must provide clearly defined **pathways** starting with entry into the institution (either as a new student or a transfer student) and subsequently into the major program of study and onward to graduation. When students arrive at the Institution, they should have a clear understanding of the various pathways available to them and these pathways should be

individualized (**adaptive learning**) to the student based on both their interests as well as on their assessed proficiencies. Students should understand their areas of strength and areas in need of further development upon entry and how the various pathways will help them utilize their strengths while providing opportunities to develop needed proficiencies as they progress towards their degree. Student should be able to **document** the development of their proficiencies through **e-portfolios**. The student pathways should incorporate aspects of both the curriculum and co-curriculum, tying in **high impact practices** and **experiential learning opportunities** that encourage application of their learning in intentional and meaningful ways.

How is the GSR program, and subsequently Academic Discipline, assessed by experts in the field?

The GEMs books/guides: Purple Book with Design Principles and Guidelines for General Education

- Proficiency
- Agency and Self-Direction
- Integrative Learning and Problem-Based Inquiry
- Equity
- Transparency and Assessment

In reviewing General Education outcomes, AAC&U offers an understanding of “how higher education should communicate the liberal education outcomes it expects of students and of how it should ask students to demonstrate these outcomes” (p. 19).

Three initiatives developed by AAC&U offer a framework for addressing outcomes:

- the Essential Learning Outcomes (ELO's) for identifying learning objectives and outcomes
- the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubrics for assessing progress toward expected outcomes
- the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP), a baseline set of reference points and proficiencies indicative of what students should know and be able to do at each degree level

AAC&U developed a list of [Essential Learning Outcomes](#) as a guide for colleges and universities.

AAC&U also developed a series of VALUE rubrics for measurement and documentation of student progress relative to the ELO's (GEMs, p.6) (explain this further; in what ways are we assessing achievement of outcomes; what is lacking? Tie into pathways, assessment of students upon entry, adaptive learning to promote strengths and develop proficiencies, clear pathways from Year 1 to graduation, transparent development of desired outcomes over time using portfolios; the 'learning centered' paradigm; the high impact practices tying the co-curriculum to the curriculum; the signature work connected

to demonstration using an interdisciplinary approach of addressing significant issues or problems)

Outcome Assessment/Rubrics at GU

The University established five undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) in 2007 to guide curriculum development, course design, and assessment. These SLOs were communicated by a set of sub-SLOs that further elaborated the type of skills and learning outcomes expected of students that would exemplify and embody “empower[ing] its graduates with the knowledge and practical skills vital to achieving personal and professional success in the changing local and global communities in which they live and work” (from the Gallaudet Vision Statement).

Initially, the GSR program exclusively used in-house developed rubrics aligned with the sub-SLOs to assess student outcomes. Later, the AAC & U rubrics were adopted.

As explained earlier in the report, the decision to make these changes was largely driven by a need to be more intentional in articulating the SLOs, sub-SLOs, and assessment materials in the curriculum.

Any future General Education design should carefully consider the SLOs for clarity of language in communicating their purpose to students, how they might integrate various courses, and their relationship to assessment tools as well. For example, the Lumina Foundation [Degree Qualifications Profile](#) identified learning outcomes (proficiencies) of each degree level (i.e. Associates, Bachelors, and Masters) according to 5 categories that outline what students should be able to do in each category at each degree level:

1. Specialized Knowledge
2. Broad and Integrative Knowledge
3. Intellectual Skills
4. Applied and Collaborative Learning
5. Civic and Global Learning

Part IV Strengths and Needs of the Program Relative to Its Own Mission and Student Learning Outcomes

This section of the self-study report focuses on the General Studies Requirements program (GSR) assessment plan and outcomes. As previously stated, the GSR program serves all undergraduate students with the goal of feeding students into majors, ideally in their second year of studies. The courses are foundational with emphasis on development of academic language proficiency in American Sign Language (ASL) and English in accordance with the university’s bilingual mission. Five

student learning outcomes (SLOS) were introduced at the inception of the GSR program in 2007, and subsequently adopted as Gallaudet University Student Learning Outcomes in 2009-2010, marking a change from program-specific SLOs to university-wide SLOs. In turn, these university-wide SLOS were complemented by SLOs specific to the major or discipline of study. The SLOs drive program and course level assessment, including curriculum mapping and individual students' achievements in individual GSR courses. To ensure that the SLOs are included in all GSR course syllabi, GSR program coordinators review each instructor's syllabi and provide feedback for inclusion and assessment of the SLOs. The SLOs are assessed through artifacts, including essays in ASL and English, exams (in either language or both), quizzes, presentations, or creative products (in either language or both).

To assess the SLOS, the GSR program adopted seven (7) of the sixteen value rubrics designed by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (<http://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics>). These rubrics are shown in appendix 1B to this report. The AAC&U rubrics were developed beginning in 2007 by "teams of faculty experts and other educational professionals from member institutions" (<http://www.aacu.org/value-faqs>). They were created with an eye to Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), "a national public advocacy and campus action initiative," which emphasizes "the importance of a quality twenty-first-century education" for the future (<http://www.aacu.org/value-faqs>). LEAP emphasizes "rigorous specialized knowledge mastery," and "the critical need for students to know how, when, and why to use their knowledge to solve problems and apply it in typical as well as new and innovative circumstances" (<http://www.aacu.org/value-faqs>). LEAP as "a national advocacy" gave birth to VALUE, which stands for Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (<http://www.aacu.org/value-faqs>). Indeed, the sixteen learning outcomes incorporated into the VALUE rubrics derive from LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes for undergraduate and associate levels and are "aligned with the Degree Qualifications Profile" (see: <http://www.aacu.org/qc/dqp>) (<http://www.aacu.org/value-faqs>). The rubrics are designed for use "in the classroom, on educational web sites, and in campus intra-institutional publications" as well as commercially (with permission) (<http://www.aacu.org/qc/dqp>).

AAC&U rubrics list at least four areas of skills evaluated. For instance, in Written Communication, "Context of and Purpose for Writing," "Content Development," "Genre and Disciplinary Conventions," "Sources and Evidence," and "Control of Syntax and Mechanics" are listed. Development of each skill is described in four columns under

“Capstone 4,” “Milestones 3, 2,” and ending with “Benchmark 1.” Capstone is considered a full mastery of the skills, for example, for Context of and Purpose for Writing, capstone level is achieved when a student “Demonstrated a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.” The score would be a four (4). Benchmark, on the other hand, is considered a beginning mastery of the skills, for example, this level is achieved when a student “Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned task(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).” Milestones, as the word implies, mastery is in the neighborhood of beginning and advancing in developing a skill. Words including “adequate,” “awareness,” “develop,” and “attempt” are used to demonstrate developing mastery.

The AAC&U rubrics are used to assess students’ meeting the SLOs. They are not used for evaluating the GSR program for improvement. Rather, they are used to track students’ learning. Higher scores demonstrate learning and/or mastery; lower scores demonstrate emerging mastery.

The rubrics are used to assess the products submitted by students. First, GSR instructors communicate assignments to their students. An instance of this is an assignment description detailing expectations for the assignment, including length, font, letter size, number of citations, citation style, due date(s), points or grade percentage for the assignment, and criteria (or checklist) for a grade of A. Ideally, the rubric chosen for this assignment is also distributed. The instructor could go over the description and rubric together and make time for questions and discussion. The instructor may or may not think to include the SLO (and sub-SLOs) in the assignment description. At the end, students’ products are assessed using the rubric and graded according to the criteria (checklist) listed in the description. AAC&U warns against using its rubrics for grading, “The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading.”

Program assessment plan

The GSR program phased in the AAC&U rubrics sometime in fall 2009. In fall 2007 through fall 2008, the program used “in house” rubrics for writing and ASL. It decided to adopt the AAC&U rubrics because it was thought it would be good to map onto the national assessment context, and it was appreciated that the AAC&U rubrics have been developed by a community of assessment scholars and practitioners. Additionally,

AAC&U provided rubrics for GU SLOs other than SLO #1, which was an additional bonus. The GSR program began using AAC&U for all GSR courses in fall 2010. This was a huge shift from 2006, before the GSR program was born. Back then, there was no measurement of student learning outcomes for the General Education courses in a programmatic or institutional manner. Any assessment of written language assessment or reading assessment was done for placement in courses, and in order to determine "fit" for some major programs as a disciplinary focus for students; for example, some majors had English 102 or English 103 as a prerequisite, and these credit courses used English language placement tests as up-front prerequisites. The general education program as a whole had no systematic assessment of Student Learning Outcomes, as no program level outcomes existed.

While GSR adopted AAC&U rubrics, the ASL rubric is unique to Gallaudet. As discussed above, the Gallaudet University Student Learning Outcomes 1 and 2 drive the General Studies Program and inform the design of all courses offered in the program. Each of these outcomes is assessed throughout the program in different courses, beginning in GSR 101: First Year Seminar and ending in GSR 300: General Studies Capstone.

Gallaudet Undergraduate SLOs

1. Language and Communication

Students will use American Sign Language (ASL) and written English to communicate effectively with diverse audiences, for a variety of purposes, and in a variety of settings.

2. Critical Thinking

Students will summarize, synthesize, and critically analyze ideas from multiple sources in order to draw well-supported conclusions and solve problems.

3. Identity and Culture

Students will understand themselves, complex social identities, including deaf identities, and the interrelations within and among diverse cultures and groups.

4. Knowledge and Inquiry

Students will apply knowledge, modes of inquiry, and technological competence from a variety of disciplines in order to understand human experience and the natural world.

5. Ethics and Social Responsibility

Students will make reasoned ethical judgments, showing awareness of multiple value systems and taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions. They will apply these judgments, using collaboration and leadership skills, to promote social justice in their local, national, and global communities.

Clear statement of program outcomes - The GSR Program Review Team that focused on the program outcomes noted that the five SLOs are the same as the institutional outcomes. Indeed, they are stated broadly and clearly with each SLO on individual banner hung all around the cupola in the I. King Jordan Student Academic Center. Underneath the banners is Starbucks coffee shop with tables and chairs. Student cannot help but notice the SLOs, which is positive. While GSR instructors must adhere to the SLOs, they are allowed to choose the sub-SLOs for their courses. (GSR courses with multiple sections use the same SLOs across the board.) At the end of each semester, instructors submit scores for each of their students on two or three specific rubrics, depending on the GSR course. To accomplish this, they go into GSR Total Package on Blackboard, which lists individual GSR courses, separated by bars on the viewer's left. They select the course, which takes them into the page with links to rubrics and templates. They download and print the rubrics, one for each student. After collecting and assessing students' products, instructors complete the templates in Excel with individual columns with students' full names, Student IDs, Course (GSR xxx), Section Number, and each column dedicated to the skills identified in the rubrics. Each area of skill is given a score, ranging from one (Benchmark), two and three (Milestone), and four (Capstone). The completed rubrics, bundled with their graded products, are returned to students. The completed templates are uploaded on Blackboard. The GSR director collects all templates, aggregates the data, and submits the aggregated data to the Gallaudet Institutional Research for inclusion in the Annual Report of Achievement, a public document.

Recent assessment of program outcomes, including Senior Assessment of program and institutional SLOs

Using rubrics that go across all classes, the GSR Program assesses students' abilities to present in academic American Sign Language and write clearly in English. Some courses use additional rubrics to assess other skill areas. Since the program focuses on students in first and second years, senior assessment, done in the semester the seniors are graduating, is conducted separately and outside of the GSR program. Senior

assessment at the department level does include the AAC&U Written Communication and Gallaudet University ASL Presentation rubrics, as used by the GSR program. However, there currently is not a practice of systematically assessing and tracking increasing competence in ASL and English from first year through graduation to monitor attainment of the SLOS. Rather, aggregated results are prepared for annual reporting.

Below is a list of the rubrics used in GSR courses:

GSR Course	Title	Rubric(s) used
GSR 101	First Year Seminar	AAC&U Written Communication GU ASL Presentation
GSR 102	Critical Reading and Writing	AAC&U Written Communication GU ASL Presentation AAC&U Critical Thinking
GSR 103	American Sign Language and Deaf Studies	AAC&U Written Communication GU ASL Presentation GU ASL Video Assignment
GSR 104	Quantitative Reasoning Approach	AAC&U Written Communication AAC&U Quantitative Literacy GU ASL Presentation

GSR 110	Non-Credit Career Development Workshop	None
GSR 150	Introduction to Integrated Learning	AAC&U Written Communication GU ASL Presentation AAC&U Critical Thinking
GSR 210	Comparing Multicultural Perspectives	AAC&U Written Communication GU ASL Presentation AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence
GSR 220	Methods of Multiples Disciplines	AAC&U Written Communication GU ASL Presentation AAC&U Inquiry and Analysis
GSR 230	Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning in Context	AAC&U Written Communication GU ASL Presentation AAC&U Inquiry and Analysis
GSR 240	Ethical Evaluations and Actions	AAC&U Written Communication GU ASL Presentation AAC&U Ethical Reasoning

GSR 300	General Studies Capstone	AAC&U Written Communication GU ASL Presentation AAC&U Civic Engagement
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The subcommittee for the GSR Program Review looked at data going back four years in the Annual Report of Achievements (AY 2012, AY2014, AY 2015, and AY 2016). Most of the data focuses on the first university SLO that focuses on language and communication. Since Gallaudet University is a bilingual university, this can be considered a strength of the assessment program. Looking at the ASL Public Presentation Rubric scores from 2014, 2015, and 2016, the data shows that students, as a whole, made improvement with their ASL presentations from GSR 100 through GSR 200 and then GSR 300.

Explanation of how assessment findings are used continually for program improvement

Clearly the GSR program has taken action to assess as shown in the Annual Report of Achievement each year. Faculty in the program are asked to always assess SLO #1 Language and Communication. As mentioned before, faculty at each level within the program use the AAC&U Written Communication Rubric and the GU ASL Presentation Rubric to rate students. Systematic measurement of student performance at the individual level is missing from the data reports, and there is no way for students to carry their scores from one course to the next, or to track their own progress on the SLOs. A student centered assessment tool is needed to demonstrate not only individual growth, but program contributions to student ALO attainment.

The potential for assessing SLO#1 is great, as this SLO is continually assessed throughout the GSR program and again during senior assessment. It's unclear whether the SLO is assessed in individual major-level programs. If we want to assess individual students' competence in both languages during the entire time they are students here, we can. However, if we do that, we would be tracking individual students as opposed to using the results to discuss program improvement.

The General Studies Program has evolved over the last nine years to include scaffolded learning opportunities that support and provide assessment mechanisms for each of the SLOs. Curriculum mapping and routine assessment of student skills, as used in authentic academic tasks, has been the cornerstone of program improvement. It is critical to keep in mind that these scores are from university faculty and instructors in real classes with actual student work. Thus, they reflect student competencies in the context of the academic environment where students work and perform daily. The two Language and Communication assessments: ASL and English offer the most information as the skills are continuously taught, reinforced, and supported, and opportunities for mastery on the indicators are possible because all General Studies courses include learning opportunities and assessment of ASL and written English outcomes. However, many of the outcomes are assessed once in the program, and so progress or growth on these skills is currently not measured as students matriculate either through the program or into major programs of study. Institutional assessment on all outcomes in major programs, using the AAC&U Value Rubrics would be a step toward understanding student progress on all outcomes during their academic careers.