

September 20, 2019 Update

Our Freaky Fun Friday General Education Redesign workshops are underway! Today was somewhat small perhaps because of the job fair on campus, the climate action march, and generally good weather.

Those who came today focused mainly on the drafted Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). What are SLOs? They are the qualities and skills a Gallaudet graduate should have after completing their General Education courses. In the past, these were typically phrased with “Students will...” but after looking around at other universities and seeing how to communicate in a more student centered way, we’d like to flip the perspective and say:

As a Gallaudet Scholar, my General Education will equip me to:

1. Be a bilingual communicator in ASL and English.
2. Understand intersectional identities, articulating my own experience and respecting the experiences of others.
3. Engage a complex world as a responsible global citizen in collaboration with others.
4. Be a critical thinker who connects varied information to solve problems in innovative ways.
5. Understand the natural world through scientific methods.
6. Make ethical judgments and act with wisdom.
7. Use digital information technology effectively and responsibly.
8. Be intentional in understanding and cultivating my health and well-being.

These SLOs are curated from the summer work group models with some rephrasing. Some are split to stand alone others are integrated where overlapping occurs. The phrasing is not yet settled.

So how do we connect the SLOs to the three models the summer work group developed?

There’s a few ways we could build out models to ensure the SLOs are delivered to students, but one attractive idea is to use the Pathways model general structure as it retains a flexibility to customize student selection of courses. We could then retain elements that have garnered positive feedback and interest from the hybrid model including the Big Questions course for first year students and case studies teaching for upper level courses. We can also keep an eye on not letting the total credit hours become too large, which is a feature of the adaptive model that has gotten attention.

There is a general recognition that ASL, English, and Math (AEM) skills are foundational in the first semester. Also that some extended orientation to college resources, transitioning to college life, and self care skills are essential. And lastly, that a need to be able to explore various academic disciplines is needed. Together, these could be a foundational stage as the Pathways model has phrased it. The 'second stage' could be reimagined as students selecting departmental courses that a) all have bilingual aims built in, b) satisfy two other SLOs from above. The ultimate aim being that a student's general education is completed when they have taken any combination of courses that satisfy each of the SLOs at least twice. This could reasonably be done with 5-7 courses.

Lastly the Bison Hoofprint from the Pathways model has gotten a good deal of positive feedback from students. This could be incorporated at any time students feel ready to tackle such an option but ideally with the advisement of waiting until one's second or third year so as to build a stronger sense of their skills and interests in this. The credits associated with this would vary as a full semester of credits at another university would transfer quite a few credits back into their Gallaudet degree, while an internship may only carry 1-3 credits depending on the nature of the internship. Note that these high impact experiences may be fulfilled as part of major requirements (for example, internships for a Deaf Studies major), or be programs that are complementary to a major, (for example, Peace Corps certification for an International Studies major). If a major program will satisfy both the requirement to have some sort of Hoofprint, this will complete the requirement. If a student wishes to add an additional footprint outside of their major, that might also be an option available to them should the opportunity be reasonable in their schedule and progress to graduation.

Lastly, we'd like to institute a General Education Council (whose name would eventually take on whatever name the curriculum is given). The purpose of this council would include; 1) approval of departmental courses to ensure they meet the SLOs they are proposed to satisfy, 2) develop or adopt meaningful assessment for the SLOs, 3) act as a liaison forum between departments and programs to foster better coordination of interdisciplinary courses, 4) oversee changes adaptations to the curriculum as needed, and 5) be of support to a General Education director (a full time position to oversee the delivery of the curriculum). The director should be a faculty member and the council be comprised faculty from each undergraduate department with Student Success staff (including Academic Advising and Career Center) involved.

Many details remain to be worked out and discussed. And many departments are working to submit feedback on how details can work from their programs. So there's more to be done! Get involved and join us next Friday!