History and path forward for implementation of UNLV’s General Education reform efforts

In fall 2011, after UNLV Faculty Senate approval of the proposed revised general education curriculum, UNLV commenced implementation through both development of new First Year and Second Year Seminar courses, and curricular revisions to include the First Year and Second Year courses in all undergraduate majors.

The curriculum revisions are effective for freshmen admitted under the 2012-2014 and subsequent undergraduate catalogs. Implementation of the curricular revisions will be phased in over a four-year period, according to the following schedule:

1) In spring 2012, First Year Seminar courses were designed or revised to intentionally address the UULOs and were approved by UNLV’s Faculty Senate General Education Committee.
2) First Year Seminar courses were resourced and scheduled starting in fall 2012 for freshmen and transfer students with less than 30 credits.
3) In academic year 2012-2013, Second Year Seminar courses will be newly designed or revised to address the UULO’s, and will be submitted for review and approval by UNLV’s Faculty Senate General Education Committee.
4) Second Year Seminar courses will be resourced and scheduled to be offered starting in fall 2013 for all sophomores and transfer students with less than 60 credits.
5) Unit-level evaluations of existing courses and learning experiences, such as portfolio assembly and presentation or evaluation, or mandatory co-curricular learning experiences (for example clinical hours) and performance requirements (such as juried exhibitions or performances) to serve as Milestone and Culminating Experiences in the majors will commence in spring 2013, with first implementations in Fall 2014. Where necessary, courses and co-curricular experiences will be modified or created to address these requirements.

The distribution credit requirement is similar to what was previously described for the pre-Fall 2012 curriculum. Breadth is attained through requiring all majors to complete 9 semester credit-hours in three distribution areas: 1) Humanities and Fine Arts, 2) Life and Physical Sciences and Analytical Thinking, and 3) Social Sciences. As described below, starting in fall 2013 courses currently meeting the Distribution requirement will be evaluated and modified to better address the UULOs.

UNLV will employ same philosophical basis for the courses in the Core and Distribution components as previously, with the following changes:

- The First Year and Second Year Seminar courses intentionally address all five UULOs and, primarily prepare students for work and citizenship:
  1. The First-Year Seminar (FYS) introduces students to UULOs through reading, writing, and critical thinking.
  2. The Second-Year Seminar (SYS) engages students more intensively with the learning outcomes through reading, writing, and critical thinking. This course will reinforce the
UULOs of global awareness, ethics, civic engagement, oral and written communication and critical thinking introduced within the First-Year.

- Students are prepared for work through the two college-level courses in English composition, through critical thinking in the Analytical Thinking course, and for numerical skills in the course in mathematics.
- Students are prepared for citizenship through courses in U.S. and Nevada constitutions, and distribution courses, one that designated as multicultural and one that is designated as international.
- Students are prepared for personal fulfillment through completion of courses in the three distribution areas of Fine Arts and Humanities, Analytical Thinking and Life and Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences. Completion of the distribution courses addresses the first UULO of Intellectual Breadth and Lifelong Learning.

Improved integration is attained through the Vertical Model\(^1,2\) that intentionally and progressively addresses the UULOs at the beginning, middle and end of an undergraduate student’s academic career, via:

1) At the beginning, introduction to the UULOs in the First Year Seminar, English composition, and U.S. and Nevada Constitution,
2) In the middle, via reinforcement of the UULOs in the Second Year Seminar and the Milestone requirements
3) At the end, through enhancement of the UULOs in the Culminating Experience.

This integration effort is starting up through:

1) In spring 2012, intentional course design or redesign of First Year Seminars in a faculty institute and workshops that established course learning outcomes, design syllabi and assignments, and develop course assessment plans,
2) In fall 2012, intentional course design or redesign of Second Year Seminars, in a faculty institute and workshops that will establish course learning outcomes, design syllabi and assignments, and develop course assessment plans.
3) Starting in fall 2012, evaluation of distribution courses, and the multicultural and international-designated courses by the Faculty Senate General Education Committee to determine how they currently meet the UULOs, and re-alignment of these courses to better address them,
4) In spring 2013, evaluation and alignment of courses or learning experiences in all majors, through the Milestone and Culminating Experiences, and
5) For existing general education core courses (for example, English Composition, Constitutions, Mathematics) evaluation of course syllabi to identify where these courses are meeting the UULOs, and if needed, modification of course syllabi and course-level assessment plans.

Scheduled implementation of the revised general education curriculum to attain the UULOs is being phased-in over a four-year period for the freshman cohort entering Fall 2012, as

\(^1\) See the main page for the UNLV General Education Task Force, at http://provost.unlv.edu/getf/ and

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follows:
1) Fall 2012 – initial offering of First Year Seminars, with World Literature serving as a substitute for Second Year Seminar for transfer students,
2) Fall 2013 – first offering of Second Year Seminars, and offering of any needed revisions to distribution courses,
3) Fall 2014 – first offering of designated Milestone Experiences in all majors, and
4) Fall 2015 – first offering of designated Culminating Experiences in all majors.

UNLV is applying $600,000 of new funding to First Year Seminars in academic year 2012-2013 to provide instructional resources needed to deliver the seminars in small (enrollment of 25 or less) class settings, and will be applying $400,000 of new funding to provide resources needed to deliver Second Year Seminars in small (enrollment of 25 or less) class settings. Faculty, part-time instructors and graduate assistants are completing development workshops on the learning outcomes, course design, assignment design and assessment of student attainment of the UULOs.

It is expected that implementation of Milestone and Culminating Experiences, most of which will be through revisions and assessment of existing courses and learning experiences can be resourced at the department level with modest increases in funding support.

A new program-level academic assessment of the General Education learning outcomes will be initiated starting in fall 2013, to evaluate how student learning gains from completion of all general education courses can be identified.