

Clarification on questions raised in the GE Faculty Meeting - 19 9 19

Question 1 - no questions raised.

Question 2 - Linked Courses and the First Year Experience

1. What does "linked" mean?

- ★ In essence, "linking" the two first-year experience courses ("First Year Seminar" and "Writing and Rhetoric") means that students will be forced to commit themselves to a specific pair of courses rather than choosing each of these courses ("First Year Seminar" and "Writing and Rhetoric") independently. A faculty member teaching a section of "First Year Seminar" will partner up with a faculty member teaching a section of "Writing and Rhetoric," and they will together devise a plan to make their courses synergistic.
- ★ Linked courses include a wide variety of options:
 - our current Conversations programs are "linked courses";
 - two faculty could decide to work together on the same topic to have the same cohort of students study together over two courses - one in fall, the other in spring semester;
 - two faculty could consider linking their courses within the same term [team-teaching] and having a double-cohort of students.
 - Other models are also possible. By keeping this open-ended, we give faculty more space to experiment and innovate.

2. What happened to the "Grand Challenges" proposal?

- ★ The GE Task Force is quite intrigued by the Grand Challenges proposal. We recognize its potential for encouraging students to engage with the OLE Questions and for fostering integration and reflection. In our report to the faculty in advance of the August 29th meeting, we indicated our support for the piloting of Grand Challenges. We see piloting--rather than a full rollout of Grand Challenges as a general education requirement for all students in 2021--as the logical next step for a few reasons. Before explaining these reasons, for the benefit of those faculty who are less familiar with "Grand Challenges," here is a brief overview of "Grand Challenges" in the words of the proposers themselves:

We envision the St. Olaf community will collectively select grand challenges representative of the major issues facing societies here and throughout the globe. Faculty will then develop courses around these interdisciplinary grand challenges, which could be offered across the curriculum (i.e. embedded in the First-Year Seminar; within a 300-level course within the major, etc). During their time on the Hill students might take 2-3 "Grand Challenges" courses, which could easily fulfill other GE at the same time.

On the most basic level, "Grand Challenges" outlines the development of a variety of sets of courses with a thematic overlap but dispersed disciplinary locations. In this respect, these could be described as mini-concentrations. In the original proposal document, the proposers offered three example themes: "Global Climate Change," "Gender and Sexuality," and "Class, Power and Privilege." In each cases, developing a suite of "Grand Challenge" offerings that address a particular topic would be much like developing a new concentration. A group of faculty will need to come together and agree upon a shared vision; they will need to examine existing courses and select a few of these to include on their list; they will also need to consider making modifications to existing courses (or, if they don't teach these courses themselves, urging others to make such modifications); and they might decide to create entirely new courses as well. Finally, they will

need to work with multiple department chairs and program directors to ensure that the courses (and versions of courses) that they have identified will be offered in the year(s) covered by the Grand Challenge. In each case, department chairs and program directors will need to balance the needs of their majors and concentrators with the needs of Grand Challenges and their other commitments to general education. The process outlined in this paragraph would need to be replicated for each “Grand Challenges” cluster.

The logistical challenges outlined above have informed the task force’s recommendation to pilot the Grand Challenges model prior to making it a college-wide initiative. We think that the First Year Experience courses represent a natural place to start experimenting with Grand Challenges offerings. These courses (“First Year Seminar” and “Writing and Rhetoric”) are open-ended in terms of topic, they invite faculty collaboration, and the two course requirement for First-Year Experience lines up with the 2-3 courses envisioned for Grand Challenges.

3. CH/BI (“Chubby”) is a linked-course sequence, and it runs into conflicts with other linked-course sequences such as conversation programs. How to deal with pre-existing learning communities and avoid time conflicts?

- ★ If the faculty vote on October 3 to allow **only** linked versions of the two First-Year Experience courses, the college will have to work to ensure that schedule conflicts between CH/BI and First-Year Experience courses are kept to a minimum. Some schedule conflicts are inevitable, but while certain pairings of CH/BI and a particular linked-course sequence might prove unworkable, there are a few steps that the college can take to ensure that CH/BI students aren’t placed at a significant disadvantage. For instance, we can set the schedule for CH/BI before we finalize the schedule for the First-Year Experience courses. This will allow us to ensure that we have a variety of options for CH/BI students for their First-Year Experience courses. We can then direct CH/BI students to these options so that they do not have to switch linked-course sequences midyear because of a conflict with CH/BI lab or lecture.
- ★ If the faculty vote on October 3 to allow **either** linked **or** unlinked versions of the two First-Year Experience courses, we will still want to take steps to ensure that CH/BI students, like their non-CH/BI peers, can choose from a variety of options, including some linked options. However, there will presumably be less of an issue as CH/BI students will be able to choose unlinked First-Year Experience courses during both semesters.

Question 3 - Ethics

1. Could the distributed model of Option A include distributing ethics throughout the major curriculum?
 - ★ Yes. As stated in the GE Task Force proposal for Ethics in the Major distributed in advance of the August 29 faculty meeting, one of the most significant differences between Ethics in the Major and EIN is that departments and programs would be able to propose that their majors be allowed to fulfill the requirement with modules distributed across two or more classes.
2. Small departments may not have the expertise to offer ethics content: how will this be dealt with?
 - ★ In part for this reason, the proposal for “Ethics in the Major” includes an opt-out for departments and programs. Small departments can simply direct their majors to take a course in another department from the college-wide ethics list maintained by the Curriculum Committee and the Registrar’s Office. In these cases, the ethics requirement will function just like a general education requirement. See “D” on page 7 of the “Five Questions” document distributed in advance of the September 19 GE Faculty meeting.

3. Need clarification of how much ethics is required for ethics in the major: how many hours?
 - ★ The proposal for “Ethics in the Major” specifies that students must complete one course or its equivalent (distributed across two or more courses).

4. With Ethics in the Major, what happens when a student pursues more than one major?
 - ★ It will depend upon how each department/program has decided to approach the Ethics in the Major requirement. If both majors have decided to opt out of offering their own ethics courses, the student could potentially fulfill the ethics requirement for both majors with a single course. If both majors have decided to opt in to offering ethics (in a single course or distributed across two or more courses), the student would likely need to complete the ethics requirement twice. If one major has decided to opt out and one major has decided to opt in, the student would likely complete the requirement just once (with the major that has opted in).

8. If a department relies on another department to provide the course, would the major effectively grow by a course?
 - ★ Possibly. If the faculty votes for ethics as a GE requirement, all students will be required to complete an ethics course, which may or may not be a course offered as part of their major. In the case of a department relying on another department to provide the course, it seems likely that students will take this course outside of their major. If the faculty votes for “Ethics in the Major,” departments and programs will have to determine how their students will fulfill the ethics requirement. Departments might revise their major in a way that avoids adding an additional course. In some cases, such as the one outlined in the question, a department might choose to simply allow their students to fulfill the ethics requirement with any course on the college-wide list. In these instances, the requirement will function in exactly the same way as an ethics general education requirement. In both cases, students will need to complete the same number of courses to graduate. While it is technically true that the major might grow by one course in the “Ethics in the Major” scenario, from another perspective, this is a case of a department *opting out of* requiring additional coursework in their major.

Question 4 - Writing

1. How many writing requirements will there be?
 - ★ At least three courses - the first is Writing and Rhetoric in the First Year Experience; the second is Writing Across the Curriculum; and the third is Writing in the Major. Departments will have the option to determine how they structure their Writing in the Major requirement, with some departments perhaps opting to have it fulfilled by one stand alone course while others may choose to spread it out over several courses.

2. What constitutes writing? What about a discipline that relies heavily on other means of communication, such as graphs?
 - ★ Departments and programs should determine what best fits “Writing in the Major”, according to the discipline. One of the key objectives of “Writing in the Major” is to acknowledge discipline-specific forms of writing and communication, and to provide instruction and experience in them. While the Curriculum Committee will be responsible for approving each department or program’s plan for Writing in the Major, departments and programs are strongly encouraged to outline a course of study that is highly relevant to their students. Work with graphs and other data visualizations is certainly legitimate. For majors where graphical writing is important, faculty could design courses that incorporated this type of work.

Question 5 - Portfolios

1. Workload issues: will we need more resources to oversee portfolios?
 - ★ Resources would be necessary to train students to create portfolios and to train faculty in utilizing them as tools for advising. Students might also need assistance from the Piper Center to develop the vocation component of their portfolio.
2. What happens if the portfolio is required and then students don't complete it? Does this mean that students wouldn't graduate?
 - ★ If students are required to complete a portfolio in any format as part of the new general education curriculum, and they fail to do so, they will not graduate.

Additional questions

1. What does the "Creativity" requirement entail? Clarification needed on where literary analysis fits in.
 - ★ Literary analysis could be put forward as a course fulfilling the 'Creativity' requirement if the analysis deals with the creative process. See the wording below from the latest iteration of the Creativity requirement, shared by the GE Taskforce earlier this month with the Associate Dean of Fine Arts and the Associate Dean of Humanities who were asked to gather feedback from their faculties:

CREATIVITY AT ST. OLAF

The Creativity requirement asks students to explore "making and doing" - creation as an embodied experience whether it be in the form of a studio art project, a theatre production, a short film, a dance or music piece. Likewise, students can also fulfill this requirement by study of the creative processes of "making and doing".

Many options are available to enable students to choose a creative outlet that suits their style and interests, but the overall goals of the Creativity requirement are the same for all courses across the college. Upon completion of the Creativity requirement, students will be able to:

1. *cultivate, improvise, adapt, and apply flexible strategies as an iterative, reflective process for creative inquiry in disciplinary or interdisciplinary contexts;*
2. *integrate cognition and action to design experiences that include embodied, applied solutions to open-ended problems;*
3. *engage deeply and thoughtfully on how different creative strategies yield novel results.*