

To: CAS Chairs and Program Directors
From: General Education Planning Group
Date: October 5, 2006
Re: General Education Implementation

For the past two years, the General Education Curriculum Planning Group has been developing a new curricular model for general education at USM that we believe offers significant new opportunities for students and faculty. For example, under this new Liberal Education curriculum,

- Departments and Programs will be able to create more dedicated introduction to major courses;
- Full-time faculty will have the opportunity to switch from introductory to intermediate and upper-level courses that draw more directly on their areas of research;
- all faculty will have new opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in other departments and disciplines either to develop new courses or to coordinate existing courses into Thematic Clusters;
- and students will acquire abilities and knowledge through their Liberal Education at USM that will make them better critical thinkers, creating opportunities to enrich and improve majors.

In order to assess its work thus far, the Planning Group will pilot sections of Entry Year Experience courses this fall and will introduce more pilots of EYE and other Liberal Education courses in AY 2007-2008. The transition to full implementation to the new curriculum will take place over the next 5 years. During this period and, indeed, for some time after, most Departments and Programs will continue to offer sections of their current core letter courses in addition to Liberal Education courses, which may be a combination of new 100- or 200-level courses, existing courses adapted to the new curriculum, and existing or new 200- and 300-level major courses open to non-majors in Thematic Clusters. In addition, some departments may want to offer capstone courses in the major that also fulfill Liberal Education capstone requirements.

Because the transition to the new curriculum will require substantial planning from everyone involved, the Chairs' Liaison Committee, a subcommittee of the CAS Chairs' Committee, has recommended to Dean Malhotra that each Department and Program prepare interim (for pilots in AY 2007-2008) and long-range plans outlining its participation in Liberal Education at USM. To facilitate the creation of these plans, the Liaison Committee recommends the following schedule of work for Fall and Spring 2006-2007:

December 1, 2006: Interim Plan for AY 2007-2008

February 1, 2007: Data Analysis

April 15, 2007: Final Report

Attached is a summary of the different stages in this work and guidelines designed to help departments think through some of the issues involved in implementation. These materials can be used either as worksheets or as starting points for discussions within Departments and Programs. Obviously, each unit will have considerations unique to itself. What is important is that each unit articulate what those are and begin the work of identifying its own contribution to Liberal Education and what it will need, or have to do, to make it.

To understand the full impact of these changes on your faculty, students, and major, Departments and Programs at this stage will need to get fully up to speed on the new curriculum.. **Planning Group Chairs Jane Kuenz (x4530) and Michael Hillard (x6409) will be available throughout the year to brief or update Departments or Programs about any aspect of the curriculum and to address questions or concerns about preparing plans for its implementation.**

SUMMARY

Interim Plan

In 2007-2008, 55 sections of pilot courses will run in USM's new Liberal Education curriculum. The majority of these will be entry year (EYE), team-designed interdisciplinary courses. While individual faculty members have expressed interest in teaching these courses, their participation will have to be balanced with the curricular obligations of their home departments and programs. Therefore, we are asking Departments and Programs to develop an interim plan for participation in Liberal Education. This plan will be for AY 2007-2008 only and should

- identify on an ad hoc basis faculty interested in participating in pilots for Fall or Spring of 2007-2008;
- determine how many courses the Department or Program can allocate to Liberal Education in their Fall 2007 and Spring 2008 schedules;
- estimate additional resources needed in order to fulfill the proposed Interim Plan for 2007-2008 (e.g. part-time, full-time fixed length hires, etc.); and
- articulate any concerns or questions the Department has about its participation next year.

Deadline: December 1, 2006

Data Analysis

In order to conduct preliminary planning and prepare a Final Report in the spring, Departments and Programs should collect data in Fall 2006 that can be used to project the number and kinds of courses they will need to offer both during the transition to Liberal Education and after it is fully implemented. Data about the can be collected directly from students in those courses in the form of a brief survey. This data will be analyzed and distributed to Departments so that they can determine how much teaching power will be available for courses at all levels of the Liberal Education curriculum.

Deadline: February 1, 2007

Final Report

The object of data collection and analysis is to help Departments and Programs prepare plans for their ongoing participation in Liberal Education beyond 2007-2008. Developing this plan will require addressing two broad questions: 1) What capacity does your department have to contribute to the new curriculum? (Or, put differently, what is the fit, with existing resources, between your department and new curriculum?); and 2) Under ideal conditions, what would your department/program *like* to be able to do to participate in Liberal Education? In

answering these questions, Departments will need to examine a range of issues, including

- student needs and preparedness for the major and whether or how these have been affected by the shift from a distribution to integrated model of general education;
- major requirements and prerequisites, and, more specifically, how they can be satisfied within general education courses or whether they are necessary at all;
- existing resources, especially faculty teaching time, and any new resources necessary to participate in general education;
- faculty interests regarding course development; and
- advising practices that respond to an integrated model of general education.

Final Report to Dean: April 15, 2007.