



## Transforming General Education: Gaining Momentum for a Flexible, Relevant, Coherent Core

Beginning in Spring 2022, UNO embarked on a journey to redesign our general education curriculum. This process, which started as a series of campus surveys, focus groups, and discussions, has matured and gained momentum over the past year. During Fall 2023, a variety of progress has been made as a result of increased collaboration between the General Education Committee, the Faculty Senate, and faculty at large. Collectively, their work centers on three questions in particular: 1) What foundational knowledge, skills, and context do all our students need? 2) How will that be organized so that it is cohesive and consistent at both the course and general education program level? 3) What assessment (student and the program-level) is needed that can both guide the future of the program and provide clear evidence of what it is and is not accomplishing. Skillfully addressing these questions will strengthen our university; leading our students to greater success at UNO, engaging them in an exploration of the enduring grand questions of humanity, inspiring them to find their calling, and enabling them to change the world by equipping them to address questions that haven't even been asked yet.

It is imperative that faculty have a central role in any revision to the general education program and there are a variety of ways for faculty to get and/or stay involved in the process. These activities are intended to facilitate that ongoing exploration and ultimately to help campus cohere around the core elements of a revised general education curriculum. Please contact Matt Tracy at [mtracy@unomaha.edu](mailto:mtracy@unomaha.edu) if you are interested in learning more about any of these initiatives or the process of general education reform.

- 1. Reading Circles:** Matt Tracy, and Connie Schaffer from the Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE) are hosting reading circles during the Spring 2024 semester to explore the value and transformative potential of the liberal arts and how this might inform the structure of a new general education curriculum at UNO. Nearly two dozen people have already signed up and all are welcome. This initiative will launch with a kick-off breakfast on Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> at 8:30 AM at MBSC Dodge Room. Please [sign up using this link](#).
- 2. Gen Ed as an HLC Quality Initiative:** Academic Affairs requested, and received approval from the Higher Learning (HLC) Commission, to designate general education reform as a formal [HLC Quality Initiative](#). This provides access to additional expertise while demonstrating UNO's commitment to quality improvement, meaningful general education reform, and academic excellence while voluntarily holding ourselves accountable with external stakeholders.
- 3. Gen Ed Assessment Seminar:** Aligned with the HLC Quality Initiative, a small group of faculty including representatives from the General Education Committee, Faculty Senate, and the Center for Faculty Excellence, will participate in an [HLC virtual seminar series](#) in February designed to improve UNO's general education assessment processes. This will help campus identify and incorporate assessment best practices in an updated curriculum.
- 4. Teagle Foundation Planning Grant Proposal:** A team of experienced educators led by Dana Richter-Egger, Connie Schaffer, and William Melanson, with the support of the General Education Committee,

submitted in December a concept paper for a [Teagle Foundation planning grant](#) for additional support in laying the groundwork for successful general education reform. The Teagle Foundation aims to support institutions interested in reinvigorating the role of the humanities in general education while increasing the coherence and relevance of this part of the undergraduate curriculum. If selected (Feb 2024 decision), the team will submit a full proposal due in April. If awarded, this planning grant will help facilitate the revision of our general education program and potentially help to open the door to a much larger implementation grant which could be submitted as early as December 2024.

More is being planned to convene stakeholders for additional conversation. Be on the lookout for future workshops, guest speakers, etc. and share your feedback with the committee. Informed by all of these activities, the [General Education Committee](#) will continue its work with the goal of drafting an updated general education model by the end of this academic year for campus and Faculty Senate feedback. Following this iterative process, the Committee will draft an implementation plan with the goal of phasing in a new curricular model beginning in Fall 2025.



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