

Long-Range Planning Committee Final Report 2024-2025

Charge from BFC

The focus of the long-range planning committee will be to take the General Education Task Force Report (Spring 2024) and explore the following questions for redefining general education at IUB.

1. What is the right mix of General Education (GenEd)-required credits and academic major requirements?
2. How can the campus incorporate the elements for a First Year Experience from the 2030 Strategic Plan into the Gen Ed requirements?
3. What framework and principles should guide revisions to the general education curriculum.

Committee Members

- Colin Johnson – BFC Past President (Co-Chair) College of Arts & Sciences
- Vasti Torres – VPUE (Co-Chair) School of Education
- Michael Lundell – Sr. Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (Ex-Officio)
- Cate Reck – College of Arts & Sciences
- Patricia Ingham - College of Arts & Sciences
- Clark Barwick – Kelley School and Hutton Honors
- Karen Gahl-Mills – O’Neill School
- Dennis Groth – Luddy School

Final Report

What is the right mix of GenEd-required credits and academic major requirements?

Current GenEd Program:

Currently the IUB GenEd Program includes both campus-level and school-level requirements. Campus-level requirements (i.e., the Common Ground) are the same for all students, regardless of degree program, and total 29-31 credit hours. The Shared Goals are degree-specific, are set by the degree-granting units, and may total up to an additional 15 cr. A confusing aspect of this current approach is that the Shared Goals are considered part of GenEd, yet the requirements differ by school and sometimes by program. This can result in experiences of GenEd that differ significantly from student to student, depending on what degree-granting unit they eventually end up in, and can also be a barrier if a student changes their major to a different school/college.

External Factors:

The committee considered two external constraints that directly affect campus GenEd policies. First, in accordance with the Assumed Practices of the Higher Learning Commissions (HLC), the IUB accreditation body, IUB must have a general education program requiring a minimum of 30 credit hours. Second, IUB is required by Indiana Code to provide its students the opportunity to earn the Indiana College Core (ICC), a 30 cr. general education “package” that is considered interchangeable with the ICC package earned at any other Indiana public institution.

Furthermore, a student who earns the ICC milestone or certificate at one state institution and subsequently transfers to another state institution is not subject to the ICC requirements at the receiving institution. The ICC requirements vary by institution, and while IUB is able to have general education requirements that described institutionally-unique terms, or that go above and beyond the ICC, the expectations of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and the 120 cr. cap on credit hours required for a baccalaureate degree limit the extent to which additional general education requirements can be added.

Recommendations:

- “Simple is better “ is a constant theme in past reports and it certainly coincides with the experiences of the committee members. This does not necessarily mean that “less is more.” Rather, it means that a revised GenEd curriculum should describe clearly which courses students are required to complete, explain the broadly-applicable value of those courses as sound preparation for advanced study in any academic field, and minimize the amount of cross-referencing between different layers of curricular requirements (e.g. campus, school, major, etc.) students have to do in order to make thoughtful course elections.
- Though the committee acknowledged that the 1000 courses currently included in the Common Core may be too many, there was some shared recognition that this breadth of offerings does provide students with multiple options, depending on their personal interests. Whether there might be other, more effective ways to address the breadth of students’ interests during the early stages of their undergraduate careers, and indeed actively encourage such breadth of interests, was also discussed, and should continue to be discussed.
- The members of the committee recommend removing the Shared Goals from the GenEd Program, leaving them entirely to the degree-granting units. This could help clarify which requirements are campus-wide and which are program-specific. This does not mean that those shared goals should be completely abandoned in a substantive sense. Rather, it means that shared goals should be worked toward by units and unit leaders, not articulated as universal general education requirements, which they really never were in practice anyway, at least in terms of students situated in different units experienced them.
- The committee also suggested that some of the Shared Goals could be moved to and/or incorporated into the Common Ground, suggesting that institutional goals could be delivered throughout the curriculum rather than through an additional “checklist” set of requirements. For example, depending on how the current Common Ground requirements are reconfigured, intensive writing could easily become a structural hallmark of a required GenEd course in the humanities.

How can the campus incorporate the elements for a First Year Experience from the 2030 Strategic Plan into the Gen Ed requirements?

First Year Seminar (FYS):

The committee members made a recommendation that the FYS be expanded for the Fall of 2025 though not a requirement till the completion of the GenEd revision. This was presented as a recommendation in the January 2025 BFC meeting. After this presentation, Vasti Torres, VPUE, created a FYS Working Group of faculty members and requested representation from all

the academic units. The majority of units responded, and the Working Group met every two weeks for the Spring semester to create the framework for the FYS.

A call for FYS Fellows was sent to all faculty-ranks and the volunteers were vetted by the Deans in their respective units. A Canvas training site was created by VPUE and 114 faculty sections were created for the Fall of 2025. A second training will be done at the beginning of the Fall, Teaching First-Year Students, using data from the Before College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE). Classroom assignments were completed in May of 2024 and access to the training site was given to the FYS Fellows. Though things were more rushed than desired, the necessary support is provided to kick-off the FYS for all students. It is estimated that approximately 5,000 first-year students will be able to take FYS in the Fall.

Experiential Learning (EL):

Undergraduate Education (UE) hired a new Sr. Assistant Vice Provost for Experiential Learning, Dr. Paige Andersson, and she spent the academic year working the various constituencies to clarify definitions, create levels of experiential learning, and working with the registrar to set up the infrastructure for the tracking and coding of EL. The LRPC recommended that the information be sent to the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) for consideration of making it a requirement. The information was presented to the EPC members at their last meeting of the academic year and a group of faculty members volunteered to work with Dr. Andersson over the summer to create a viable requirement for students that can be discussed by EPC in the coming academic year.

What framework and principles should guide revisions to the general education curriculum?

This question prompted the most discussion among the committee members. The committee offers the following recommendations and questions for consideration by next year's committee.

Framework Recommendations:

- Again, simple is better. For too long, students and their academic advisors have had to approach the navigation of GenEd as an exercise in trying to “game the system” by electing courses that will satisfy the highest number of curricular requirements possible (e.g. an S&H course that is *also* the introductory course to a specific major, and that *also* satisfies a Shared Goal requirement as articulated by their school, etc.) This sort of instrumentalism is anathema to the spirit of general education as many of the members of the committee understand it, and yet it is actively incentivized by our current GenEd curriculum. It should be actively guarded against moving forward.
- Consider a methodological framework (e.g. core courses, or a more narrowly prescribed suite of courses, that deal with broadly defined and widely applicable modes of intellection such as Interpretation, Argumentation and Critique, Social and Historical Analysis, Calculation and Computation, Observation and Measurement, etc.) for the new GenEd Program rather than basing it on content/disciplinary areas (e.g. Social and Historical Studies). This type of framework could promote more team teaching across disciplines and interdisciplinary approaches to the courses in GenEd. The committee also felt that it was important to consider how GenEd can encompass what is happening in society, which would require the framework to be sufficiently broad to respond quickly. This approach could be combined with the intentional work being done by the First Year

Experience Steering Committee, which seeks to intentionally connect the experiences of students in the first year. (This committee is co-chaired by the VPs for UE and Student Life.)

- Any framework must also take into account the constraints imposed by the Indiana College Core (ICC), bearing in mind, again, that it is permissible, and perhaps even advisable, for IUB to redescribe the requirements mandated in the ICC in institutionally unique terms, at least if part of the aim is to create a GenEd program that feels somehow distinctive. For example, interpretation is clearly a core competency in the humanities. Thus, a required GenEd course on interpretation would almost certainly satisfy the ICC's requirement that GenEd programs include study in the humanities.
- Whatever form a revised GenEd curriculum takes, the IUB campus as a whole must—simply *must*—do a better job of explaining to students what “general education” is, what function it is meant to serve in their program of study, regardless of their intended major, and what value it is likely to have in their longer-term preparation for a meaningful career, and indeed for a meaningful life. At the end of the day, students will only take general education seriously as an essential foundation for modern undergraduate education if faculty and staff take it seriously. To date, many faculty and staff have been much more focused on making the case for whatever specific degree programs they are most closely associated with than they have been on making the case for undergraduate education that encourages both depth of focus and breadth of intellectual curiosity and experience. The former mindset has simply got to give way to the latter if we actually want to prepare our students to thrive in the highly dynamic world into which we will be sending them.

Questions to Consider:

The following questions are complex and illustrate the core of what needs to be discussed in revising the GenEd requirements.

- What should the purpose of GenEd at IUB be for students?
- What is the value proposition that can be made for GenEd?
- How can a GenEd Program shift from a checklist of requirements to having a shared experience that benefits the education of undergraduate students?
- How, and to what extent, should the IUB GenEd Program intersect with the ICC?