

A General Education Core Curriculum at IUPUI

Spring 2012

This document is informed by discussions involving members of a campus-wide task force on a General Education Core Curriculum involving the following representatives: Enrica Ardemagni, Sarah Baker, Tom Davis, Margie Ferguson, Andy Gavrin, Susan Hendricks, Linda Houser, Stephen Hundley, Kathy Johnson, Betty Jones, Carole Kacius, Danny King, Jennifer Lee, Peggy Daniels Lee, Amy Maldi, Kathy Marris, Deb Mesch, Lisa McGuire, Bill Orme, Pamela Rettig, Jennifer Stewart, Kathy Visovatti-Weaver, and Jeff Watt (Notes from Spring, 2012 meetings are listed on the website: <http://gened.iupui.edu>)

Earlier versions of the document were informed by conversations involving faculty engaged in curriculum committees across the Schools of Liberal Arts, Science, and University College.

The steering committee (Sarah Baker, Tom Davis, Margie Ferguson, Kathy Johnson, Kathy Marris, Jeff Watt) has been engaged in helping to coordinate the process for campus review and discussion, as well as drafting the current document.

Traditionally general education has been at the core of many higher education institutions, providing students with broad exposure to multiple areas of study and helping students prepare to become socially responsible and civically engaged leaders ready for the world beyond the college experience. Though IUPUI schools do not currently share a common set of general education courses, the [IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning](#) (PULs) have provided the essential ingredients for the undergraduate education experience at IUPUI and have formed a conceptual framework for all students' general education. Given the increased pressure from the state to encourage undergraduate degree completion and facilitate a state-wide course transfer process, IUPUI must continue to be a state leader in the development of a thoughtful, comprehensive general education for all students. The task force reflected on current strengths and weaknesses of General Education at IUPUI, as well as on potential opportunities and threats related to the creation of a General Education Common Core. These responses are summarized in Appendix 1. Most members of the task force agreed that it would be advantageous for IUPUI to move towards adopting a 30-credit Common Core that reflects the Principles of Undergraduate Learning, is based on learning outcomes, and that would enhance the ease with which students could transfer into the institution and move across similar degree programs.¹ This Common Core would represent an 'entry point' to general education at IUPUI, which would then be supplemented by additional general education expectations articulated by schools conferring undergraduate degrees. **There was not complete consensus however, and some members strongly advocated that IUPUI adopt IU Bloomington's 'Common Ground' model of General Education in order to exhibit unity with IU Bloomington and to enhance the ease with which students transfer across our campuses.** The Common Ground model aligns well with our Principles of Undergraduate Learning and is already being implemented in certain core schools. Though the remainder of this document represents the view of the majority of task force members, we strongly recommend that the IUPUI campus community continue to examine IU Bloomington's Common Ground model and seriously consider it as an alternative framework for General Education.

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The IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning comprise a common, campus-wide articulation of expectations for baccalaureate degree recipients. They align closely with AAC&U's LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) [Essential Learning Outcomes](#) and provide a common framework for assessing student learning and evaluating academic programs. Students are introduced to the Principles of Undergraduate Learning in their first year seminars, which are then reinforced and applied throughout their introductory courses, co-curricular learning experiences, and coursework within the major, often culminating in a capstone experience. Although the PULs initially were approved by the IUPUI Faculty Council in 1998, they continued to be revised and refined until their most recent approval in May 2007.

IUPUI's statement on general education is tremendously important for articulating the philosophy and ideals that should ultimately differentiate our alumni from those graduating from other postsecondary institutions in the state, as well as nationally. **Principles that should inform the creation of a General Education Common Core include the following:**

¹ It is important to note that a Common Core would enhance students' progress toward degrees as long as students do not change to a very different major. Although students could readily change majors within some domains (e.g., social sciences, life sciences), shifting across these domains or across professional schools will likely result in the need to take additional courses from the Common Core that provide a foundation for study in the new major. Early intrusive academic advising supported by the Personal Development Planner (PDP) will help to address this issue.

- Our general education program must foster in our students the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary for life-long learning as engaged, culturally competent citizens. Integrative learning should be emphasized in the Common Core and extended throughout degree programs.
- A Common Core should culminate in the creation of knowledge that is both broad and specialized, as well as the development of ‘ways of knowing’ and intellectual competencies that students practice and ultimately apply to contemporary problems.
- While a Common Core should primarily fall outside of the students’ major degree program, it should lay a foundation for learning that is infused throughout the students’ four years of study. For example, competencies in written communication, information literacy, and ethics may begin to be developed through gateway courses outside of the major (or through dual-credit courses in high school), but then applied and advanced further through courses within the major. The capstone experience should be a culminating experience within the major taken by students in the senior year.
- Because of significant variations across schools in terms of credits taken with the major program of study, coupled with [recently drafted recommendations from the Indiana Commission on Higher Education](#), an IUPUI General Education core should include **30 credit hours**, which could then be further adapted to suit the requirements of each school.

A common General Education core is long overdue on our campus, which has many school-specific curricula that only casually overlap (e.g., though courses in writing, math, and science are included in the majority of undergraduate degree programs, the specific courses ‘counted’ and the level of competency required is not constant). Such insular determinations of core curricula pose challenges to students transferring across schools, as well as to students entering IUPUI as transfer students (who make up a significant percentage of our student body). This ultimately impedes students’ progress towards their degree goals and poses systemic challenges to advising and degree auditing procedures. **In our conception of a General Education Common Core, we collectively endorsed the importance of flexibility in establishing that students have met competencies aligned with the Principles of Undergraduate Learning.**

We also welcomed this opportunity to reflect upon the ‘branding’ of an IUPUI degree, given the institution’s rapid growth during the last decade and its evolution as Indiana’s premier urban research and academic health science university. **Some characteristics that could set IUPUI graduates apart based on their educational experiences include the following:**

- Our students should engage in transformative ways of knowing throughout their undergraduate experience. Such ways of knowing are characterized by critical thinking and the capacity to engage in problem solving that is flexible and adaptive, ultimately resulting in the capacity to create new knowledge.
- Our students should be able to identify and to formulate responses to ‘big questions.’ Such responses should be characterized by the capacity to integrate and synthesize information and to reason deductively.
- On our urban and dynamic campus, students must be engaged citizens and participate in experiential learning opportunities involving community stakeholders. Co-curricular learning through the [RISE to the IUPUI Challenge Initiative](#) should be a hallmark of undergraduate education.
- As global citizens, students must develop and practice cultural competency, value diversity, and be able to operate with civility in a complex world.

A common model of General Education at IUPUI that spans all academic units housing undergraduate degree programs should be straightforward for faculty and advisers to administer, and for students to understand:

- It must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate both professional schools (that adhere to accreditation standards which typically are based on competencies) as well as an integrated ‘liberal education’ model that can extend General Education throughout all 4 years of students’ experiences.
- Prerequisites should be required sparingly outside of the major in order to reduce obstacles to student progress.
- General Education should accommodate the diverse array of IUPUI undergraduate student cohorts. Our model also should readily accommodate transfer credits earned by students while at other public institutions of higher education (e.g., [Ivy Tech Community College’s Transfer General Education Core](#) – see Appendix 2).
- Advising practices and portfolio tools such as the Personal Development Planner should be used to support students as intentional learners, providing them with guideposts and opportunities for reflection that help motivate them to pursue their academic and career goals. These practices should also help to enhance students’ competencies in the area of self-reflection and prepare them for life-long learning.
- Finally, a common model of General Education must be assessed regularly, both to support student learning through effective pedagogical practices, as well as to serve necessary program review requirements. Ideally, common rubrics should be adopted across courses aligned with the same ‘competency’ domain in order to demonstrate that students have acquired the knowledge or skills that they were intended to learn. Such rubrics should be simple, easy to use, and provided to students at the beginning of the semester to support their learning.

As an urban campus rich with opportunities for experiential and co-curricular learning, we recommend that the RISE to the Challenge initiative be formally integrated with General Education, such that every IUPUI graduate earn at least 2 transcript designations for experiences in research, international experiences, service learning, or other forms of experiential learning (e.g., internships, clinical experiences, practica). RISE experiences reflect ‘[high-impact practices](#)’ (Kuh, 2008) that align well with PUL 3 - *Integration and Application of Knowledge*. They also provide rich opportunities for reflection and analysis, and likely play a pivotal role in helping students to integrate and apply knowledge and skills across clusters of courses. Reflections associated with RISE experiences should be assessed rigorously and stored as direct evidence of student learning, ideally in a portfolio. Given the impact of such co-curricular learning experiences on student persistence and success, schools should be encouraged to consider challenging students to complete more than the requisite two experiences, whenever possible, and successful completion of RISE experiences must continue to be designated on students’ transcripts.

Moving Towards a Common Core and a More Integrated Framework for General Education at IUPUI

This report serves as a ‘call to action’ for all schools at IUPUI to review current curricula in relation to the principles stipulated above. We propose that a 30-credit Common Core be considered immediately by all schools. We further propose that the IUPUI Faculty Council create a Common Core Curriculum Committee (CCCC) that includes faculty representatives from all schools that confer undergraduate degrees. The CCCC would be responsible for:

- Determining whether the learning outcomes for a particular course are sufficiently well-aligned with particular competencies to be included within the Common Core
- Reviewing the Common Core regularly to ensure that it aligns well with best practices in General Education

- Recommending potential modifications of the Principles of Undergraduate Learning to the IFC Academic Affairs committee, as the Common Core evolves
- Communicating information about desired core competencies to school curriculum committees to help ensure that all undergraduate degree programs share a common framework
- Providing support on an as-needed basis to school committees engaged in curriculum analysis or revision.

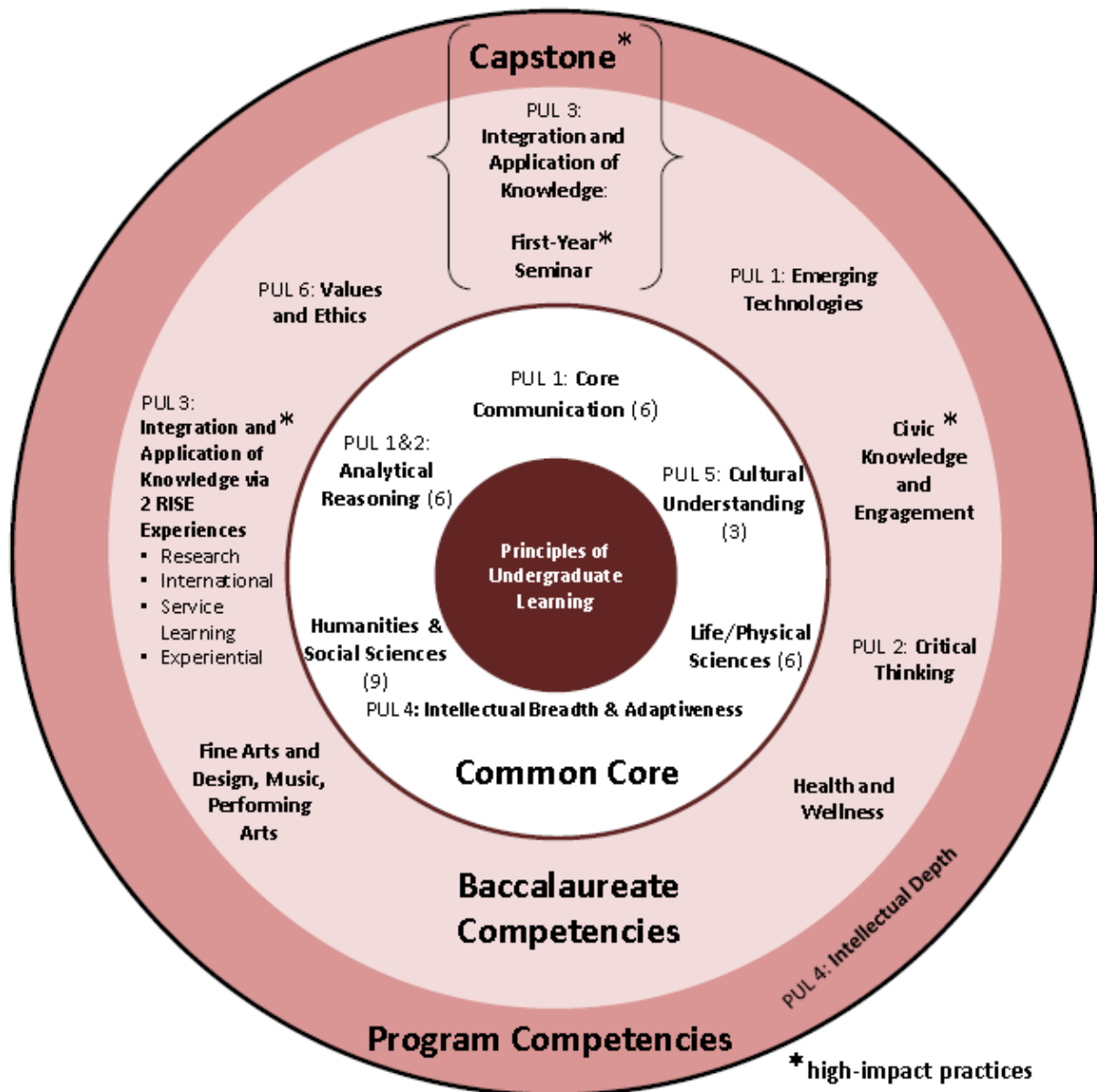
While the immediate focus of our work is establishing a Common Core that would help to ease the transition of students into IUPUI and across programs, we believe that this work would best be accomplished against a richer backdrop of considerations that would enhance general education beyond the first year. Decisions regarding school-specific curricula fall outside the scope of our task force, but we would urge faculty curriculum committees within schools to discuss the recommendations we have provided and potentially re-evaluate school-specific baccalaureate competencies in light of the proposed framework.

In the following diagram, we conceptualize undergraduate education at IUPUI to include three types of experiences:

- 1) A **Common Core** (inner-most circle) that includes 30 credits drawn from the domains of Analytical Reasoning, Core Communication, Cultural Understanding, Humanities & Social Sciences, and Life & Physical Sciences. The Common Core would be overseen by the IFC Common Core Curriculum Committee.
- 2) **Baccalaureate Competencies** (middle circle) reflect competencies that are recommended for undergraduate degree programs. These competencies are school-specific, though some schools may choose to share common sets of requirements. Baccalaureate competencies align with the Principles of Undergraduate Learning (e.g., critical thinking, values and ethics), best practices in general education (first year seminar, capstone, fine arts, emerging technologies, RISE experiences) and the specific characteristics of our campus (e.g., civic engagement, health and wellness). These competencies are not course-specific and may be completed within or outside of students' degree programs. Baccalaureate competencies are overseen by School Curriculum Committees.
- 3) **Program-specific Competencies** (outer-most circle) reflect competencies specific to the students' major program of study and should culminate in a capstone experience. The capstone experience should provide a culminating experience and final opportunity for students to integrate, synthesize, and apply their learning within their major plan of study. In some schools, there may be little distinction between Baccalaureate and Program-specific competencies. Program-specific competencies are overseen by faculty from academic departments or programs.

Integrative learning is at the heart of general education at IUPUI. It is introduced in the first year seminar and can be extended throughout the curriculum as students elect to participate in a second year experience (available in some programs), themed learning communities, co-curricular learning opportunities such as RISE, and a capstone. In some schools it may be advantageous to create 'sampler courses' for students beyond the first semester – ideally associated with a RISE experience. Such courses would help to expose students to alternative 'ways of knowing' or frameworks for conceptualizing complex issues. Such courses also may assist in the formulation of 'alternative or parallel plans' for career planning purposes. We believe that an emphasis on Integrative Learning is a distinctive hallmark of undergraduate education at IUPUI and we have emphasized it throughout the following model:

The IUPUI Model of Integrative Learning



In many schools, approximately one-third of students' coursework is completed within the academic major, which may be subject to more specific General Education requirements intended to provide the optimal foundation for careers typically aligned with that field of study. Professional programs subject to accreditation standards may have a significantly higher proportion of coursework completed within the major. As stipulated earlier, the **Common Core** represents core domains of knowledge or 'ways of knowing' that characterize General Education at IUPUI. **Competencies are not discipline-specific, but may be fulfilled through courses that support learning outcomes aligned with the competency (e.g., a course in technical writing may establish a 'core communication skill' competency).** Honors coursework should be strategically developed across the General Education core, as well as within academic majors. The following competency domains are required:

1. Analytical Reasoning (6 credits; PUL 1, 2) – The ability of students to express and interpret information and perform quantitative analysis, including the ability to identify and propose solutions for problems using analytical reasoning. Only math courses that reflect college-level learning outcomes will be included in the Common Core.
2. Humanities and Social Sciences (9 credits, distributed across 2 domains; PUL 3, 4) – The ability of students to examine and understand human experiences, human aspirations and achievements, human expressions along with human characteristics and ways in which individuals and groups are organized, including the ability of students to examine and explain the processes that lead to the production of human cultures.
3. Core Communication Skills (6 credits; PUL 1) – The ability of students to express and interpret information and use information resources and technology, including the ability to:
 - express ideas and facts to others effectively in a variety of formats, particularly written, oral and visual formats;
 - comprehend, interpret, and analyze ideas and facts;
 - communicate effectively in a range of settings;
 - identify and propose solutions for problems using analytic tools and reasoning;
 - make effective use of information resources and technology.
4. Life and Physical Sciences (6 credits; PUL 3, 4) – The ability of students to examine branches of science that study and explore systems and examine key concepts and theories through observation, experimentation, deduction and application.
5. Cultural Understanding (3 credits; PUL 5) – The ability of students to recognize their own cultural traditions, to understand and appreciate the diversity of the human experience, and to demonstrate competence in a foreign language as both a skill and a method of cultural appreciation.

Links to Key Readings

1. Kuh, G. D. (2008). *High-impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
2. IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning
3. Lumina Foundation (2001). The Degree Qualifications Profile.
4. National Leadership Council for Liberal Education & America's Promise (LEAP: 2007). *College Learning for the New Global Century*. Washington DC: AAC&U.

Additional resources and documents related to recent campus meetings focused on general education may be found at <http://gened.iupui.edu>

Timeline for Campus Conversations

The Steering Committee proposes a series of campus conversations and discussions in the 2011-2012 Academic year, as described below, with the goal of adopting and implementing a campus-wide General Education curriculum that defines the IUPUI experience for all undergraduate students, facilitates degree completion, and provides the foundation for lifelong intellectual development. We welcome input from faculty, students, and advisors in this process, with the goal of implementation the new IUPUI Experience General Education core curriculum in the fall of 2013.

October, 2011: Steering committee appointed and meets to discuss process and timeline

November, 2011: Meeting to discuss process, timeline and goals with curriculum committees from Schools of Liberal Arts, Science, and University College. Feedback welcomed and encouraged. Recommendation made to open up participation to all schools offering undergraduate programs at IUPUI by requesting that Deans designate one representative from their school to serve on a General Education Core Curriculum Task Force

December, 2011: Steering committee reconvened to draft working model and refine timeline for Spring 2012

January, 2012: School representatives identified for a campus-wide General Education Task Force; draft working model and relevant literature provided as background to pairs of (repeat) meetings in January:

Thursday, January 19th (10-12:00, CE Board Room) and Wednesday, January 25th (3-5 PM, UL 1116)

February, 2012: School representatives reconvene to discuss revised working model

Wednesday, February 1 (10-12, UL 1116) and Thursday, February 2nd (3 – 5 PM, UL 1116)

February 10, 2011: Draft of working model submitted to IFC Executive Committee (representatives encouraged to share drafts broadly with school curriculum committees, department meetings, etc.)

March: Informational sharing at Program Review and Assessment Committee meeting

Friday, March 30, 2011, 10-12: General Education Town Hall meeting (University Library Lilly Auditorium)

April, 2012: Discussion at IUPUI Faculty Council, Information sharing with Undergraduate Curriculum Advisory Committee, Campus Advising Council, Enrollment Management Council and Undergraduate Student Government

May, 2012: Endorsement sought from undergraduate schools and IUPUI Faculty Council

Appendix 1: SWOT Analysis pertaining to General Education at IUPUI

1. What do you consider to be campus strengths that could be integrated into a core curriculum?
2. What weaknesses could be improved?
3. What opportunities could we try to take advantage of through the creation of a common core?
4. How might we proactively respond to threats?

The committee divided into groups and then reconvened to discuss their responses:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RISE • Urban campus • Life and health sciences • PULs (should remain the core) • PDP (Personal Development Planner) • Common Theme • Built in reflection • Service learning • Diversity of students • Reputation of schools • Translational science • Innovation • Applied sciences • Number of professional schools (that are also well regarded) • Center for Teaching and Learning • University College and first year experience programming/curricula • Opportunities to receive degrees from two institutions (IU and Purdue) that offer a huge variety of programs and course work • Independence of individual schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer issues • Accreditation/external mandates • RCMs and budgets • Faculty incentives • Artificial separation between general education and courses in the majors • Developing curriculum by design • Grade inflation • Lack of ongoing individual curricular analysis (may vary by program) • No commonly understood core of courses • Perception and communication problem with undergrad education (and sequencing of courses) • Few traditions (except in older schools – e.g., Herron, Nursing) • Difficult for students to engage in urban setting • Students more committed to their core school than to the university • Diversity of schools and finding agreed-upon core
Opportunities	Responding to Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting rewarded for graduation rates • Facilitating collaboration between schools and encouraging teamwork • Teaching faculty and administrators about LEAP, PULs, student learning, etc. • Providing something beyond first-year experience (perhaps second-year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State mandating first few years • Dual credits • Demonstrating successes • Assessment • Students who come for baccalaureate degrees who already have associate degrees from years ago. Are we creating

<p>experience)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simplifying advising for University College• Diversity of students (help students navigate system)• Core schools (learn from bad and good in other schools)• Use University College as an “upstream resource”• Learn best practices from other schools• Encourage faculty to examine entire curriculum• Increase efficiency to slim down curriculum to get closer to 120 hours and to goals of PULs• Transferability issues• Equality of course with other institutions (for transfer issues)• Bridging schools• Teach our students to engage in global thinking (PULs)• Encourage students to get a minor or certificate	<p>barriers? Can they go elsewhere and get their degrees more quickly? What about students getting second bachelor’s degrees? Do they take general education all over?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being flexible—students need credit for life experiences• Creating a statement of principles or competencies• Basing funding on graduation encourages grade inflation• Ivy Tech driving the conversation• Inadequate inclusion of stakeholders• Will have more students coming in with large core of courses (will create an isolating effect)• Need more full-time faculty• Decrease dependence of part-time faculty• Show value in the quality of teaching• Equating education with job training
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Appendix 2: Articulation of IUPUI General Education with Ivy Tech Community College Transfer General Education Core

<i>IUPUI</i>	<i>Credit hrs</i>	<i>IVY TECH</i>	<i>Credit hrs</i>
Analytical Reasoning	6	Mathematics	3-4
Humanities and Social Science	9	Humanities	6
		Social/Behavioral Sciences	6
Core Communication	6	Composition/Communication	3 3
Life and Physical Sciences	6	Life/Physical Science	6-8
Cultural Understanding	3	Multicultural Awareness	3-4
	30		30-34