

# WOU General Education Update

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*Learning is hard  
enough without the  
teacher telling you  
that you are bad at it.*

*Angus Aldrich*

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## **Inclusive Access to General Education\***

Imagine that you are the first member of your family to attend college. While your rural school had limited opportunities for electives and co-curricular opportunities, your family scraped together the athletic fee so that you could play at least one sport each year. You looked forward to the school week because you knew that you'd be able to eat breakfast and lunch and go to bed a little less hungry than on the weekends. Your entire family was thrilled to get the letter informing you of your acceptance to college, letting you know that you actually are college material!

And then you arrive on campus, and you find out that you've been placed in a non-credit bearing remedial course before you can even begin one of your General Education requirements. You'll need to use up some of your valuable financial aid on a class that doesn't even count toward your degree, which you are now not even sure that you are capable of reaching.

*It is time for our campus to take up the difficult discussion of the very real harm that non-credit bearing remedial courses can do to students.* In a meta-analysis of graduation rates among remedial students in 33 states, the Lumina Foundation described remedial courses as a "funnel of failure". Only 35% of students at four-year non-flagship universities (like WOU) forced into remedial courses in math and writing complete a degree within six years. And this remediation may not even influence student success; there are no significant differences in grade distributions amongst students who took the directed remedial courses and those who skipped them. Randomized control trials have demonstrated more robust outcomes for students taking credit-bearing co-requisite courses or recitation sections.

The good news is that we have better options to help our students succeed. The First Year Writing program is a feature of WOU General Education and includes a carefully planned two-course sequence designed around national recommendations to engage novice writers. Nationwide, experts have recognized the value of multiple pathways for students to move through quantitative requirements. Thanks to the work of the first Quantitative Literacy Professional Learning Community, a pathway to graduation that focuses on skills needed in many professions has been established through MTH 110. The General Education Committee has recently approved a proposal to explore the impact of eliminating remedial prerequisites from this course. As we plan for the emphasis on the WOU undergraduate learning outcome Quantitative Literacy in 2019-20, we're excited to be a part of the conversation around helping students succeed.

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## Workshops

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Want to learn more about advising for the new General Education program? Join us for any one of the upcoming workshops in ITC 205:

April 18 - 3:30pm - 4:30 pm  
April 19 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

## Program Update

Following an enormous effort, we now have fully realized General Education program!

- First year Seminars: 52 unique seminar topics; 71 total sections
- Foundations:
  - 9 Mathematics courses
  - 2 Writing courses
  - 4 Critical Thinking courses
  - 1 Health Promotion course
  - 37 Communication and Language courses
- Exploring Knowledge
  - 52 Literary and Aesthetic Perspectives courses
  - 25 Scientific Perspectives courses
  - 41 Social, Historic and Civic Perspectives courses
- Integrating Knowledge
  - 38 Citizenship, Social Responsibility and Global Awareness courses
  - 11 Science, Technology and Society courses

There is still more work to be done as we continue to shape the program Here is what we're working on this Spring:

- Development of a course proposal guide, coupled with modifications to course proposal system.
- Review of proposed criteria for the Foundations: Mathematics and Writing course categories.
- Oversight of the petition process for General Education requirements.
- Review of Joint Service Transcripts to assist our students who are veterans in applying their appropriate military coursework to relevant General Education requirements.
- Finalization of the assessment structure for the 2019-20 academic year, emphasizing assessment of First Year Seminars.
- Compilation of a budget for the new program.
- Coordination of training and support for First Year Seminar instruction.
- Continuing support of advising for General Education, hosting workshops and preparation for SOAR events.

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### Alternate Delivery of General Education:

Some General Education courses are available in online and hybrid formats. Find a list of these courses at: <http://www.wou.edu/gened/alternate/>.

In the future, we look forward to working with the Online Professional Learning Community to identify and highlight General Education courses that employ their recommended best practices.

[gened@wou.edu](mailto:gened@wou.edu)  
503-838-8348