General Education Goals and Learning Outcomes (General Education 3.0)

Appalachian's General Education Program prepares students to be well-rounded, informed, lifelong learners and engaged global citizens who contribute to a just and sustainable future. Preparing students for a complex future as part of local and global communities that are pushing planetary limits requires understanding and appreciating that today's world demands multi-layered learning. The Program's four interconnected goals emphasize the traditional academic capacities associated with a liberal arts education as well as essential and urgent twenty-first century literacies, including: information and media literacy; intercultural literacy; and sustainability and climate literacy.

General Education Program Goals

    i.   Thinking critically and creatively
   ii.   Communicating effectively
  iii.   Making local to global connections
  iv.   Understanding responsibilities of community membership

I. Thinking critically and creatively

RATIONALE

Critical and creative thinkers use an inquiry-based, systematic, logical, and generative process to promote greater understanding and further learning, considering intra-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary sources. They are open-minded and willing to access and consider multiple reliable and credible methods, sources, and conclusions as part of an evidence-based and rational process. To be knowledgeable and informed in the twenty-first century requires that students cultivate the abilities to access, analyze, evaluate, create, communicate, and act, using information in all forms. The critical and creative thinker is able to apply knowledge in novel or unexpected ways toward useful and meaningful goals.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Explanation: Students will clearly explain the issue/problem.
- Evidence: Students will use credible sources to investigate a problem from multiple viewpoints.
- Context: Students will evaluate the influence of context and assumptions when presenting a position.
- Perspective: Students will express a position that takes into account the complexities of an issue and acknowledges other viewpoints.
- Conclusion: Students will express a logical conclusion based on the evidence.
- Transformational Thinking: Students will extend a novel or unique idea, question, or product to create new knowledge or knowledge that crosses boundaries.

II. Communicating effectively

RATIONALE

Communication is diverse and encompasses multiple modes of human expression including, but not limited to, written, verbal, visual, and aural. Successful communicators are reflective and use appropriate modalities that respond to audience and purpose, as well as interact with people

of both similar and different experiences and values. They strive to develop sophisticated reading and observational skills and to refine and adapt their quantitative, technological, and information literacies for increasingly complex situations. Effective communication leads to discovery, connection, and transformation and can help communities or reach consensus.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Context and Purpose: Students will define the context, audience, form, and purpose of their message.
- Content Development: Students will use appropriate content to shape their message.
- Sources and Evidence: Students will integrate credible, relevant sources and other supporting material to formulate their message.
- Articulation: Students will communicate with clarity and fluency.
- Civil Communication: Students will demonstrate the ability to engage in civil and reasoned discourse informed by thoughtful consideration of diverse perspectives.

III. Making local to global connections

RATIONALE

Making local to global connections prepares students to be thoughtful and engaged members of diverse communities who participate in cross-scale cooperation and collaboration, and are knowledgeable of other cultures, worldviews, and frames of reference. Members of local and global communities must negotiate and navigate our highly interconnected and interdependent world, especially within the context of global inequalities, the climate crisis, and other environmental issues. This requires an appreciation of the value of social, cultural, and ecological diversity; understanding local and present-day phenomena in the context of broader conceptions of space and time; and being active participants in the transformations necessary to work towards a just and sustainable future.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Ecological Integrity and Sustainability: Students will evaluate the importance of ecological integrity, from local and global scales, as essential life support for sustainable communities.
- Systemic Drivers of Global Change: Students will evaluate systemic factors that produce local and global inequalities and environmental problems in order to advocate for appropriate responses.
- Global Self Awareness: Students will evaluate the effect of human agency on social, cultural, and natural environments.
- Consequences of Global Change: Students will evaluate the effects of global change on local environments.
- Cultural Diversity: Students will demonstrate knowledge of other cultures, worldviews, and frames of reference and interrogate the implications of the cultural rootedness of their own perspectives.
- Perspectives on Injustice: Students will integrate diverse local to global perspectives to evaluate the interconnected problems of social, economic, and environmental injustice.

IV. Understanding responsibilities of community membership

RATIONALE

Responsible community members strive to live thoughtfully, purposefully, and ethically with self-awareness and concern for the well-being of the self, others, and the environment. This endeavor requires an active, lifelong curiosity and interest in the impacts of our relationships, perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors on others and the planet. Responsible community members demonstrate empathy and care for others and cultivate the skills to effectively communicate and collaborate across differences in order to identify, respond, and implement just and sustainable solutions.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Ethical Self-Awareness: Students will analyze core beliefs and assumptions in relation to ethical issues in local, national, global, or online communities and the environment.
- Perspectives of Others: Students will interpret experiences within diverse cultures, communities, and perspectives, and demonstrate the ability to act in a supportive manner.
- Recognizing Injustice: Students will recognize social, economic, and environmental injustice and the role of power structures, public policies, and implicit and explicit biases in creating it.
- Response-Ability: Students will apply ethical concepts in analyzing the effects of social, economic, and environmental problems on communities and cultivate a capacity to actively respond to these challenges.
- Civic Engagement: Students will reflect on their own civic participation and describe what they have learned about themselves as it relates to community membership and commitment to continued engagement.