

# General Education Listening Task Force

Final Report

May 13, 2021

## **The General Education Listening Task Force**

The General Education Listening Task Force, was appointed in Fall 2020 by Interim Provost Norris. The task force included faculty, staff, and student representation from across campus:

- Leslie Bradbury (Curriculum and Instruction, Elementary Ed / RCOE)
- Emily Daughtridge (Theatre and Dance / FAA)
- Leonardo Flores (Chair English / CAS)
- Bailey Gardin (SGA)
- Darci Gardner (Languages Literature & Cultures / CAS)
- Tina Hogan (IRAP)
- Kristin Hyle (Assistant Director Gen Ed)
- Rick Klima (Director FYS)
- Melissa Lesbines (HSOM)
- Denise Levy (Associate Dean BCHS)
- Abhi Ramalingam (Economics / WCOB)
- Ted Zerucha (Director Gen Ed / Task Force Chair)

The charge of the Task Force was to organize and host listening sessions throughout the academic year to hear concerns and perspectives about the General Education program from across campus with the goal of putting together recommendations for revisions to the program. This campus input and recommendations are being submitted to Provost Norris. It is anticipated that this report will be used as a basis to form a General Education Program Revision Committee that will make use of the information in this report and that gathered during the 2020–2021 academic year to propose revisions to the program.

## **Framing Language**

The General Education Program at Appalachian seeks to provide students with a first-rate liberal arts education. Our goal is well-rounded students with the knowledge and skills important for professional and personal success at Appalachian and after graduation: abilities to think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, make local-to-global connections, and understand the responsibilities of community membership. As an experience shared by our undergraduate students and our faculty, it is important that the General Education program represents Appalachian's identity. It is also important for our General Education program to adapt and evolve in response to emerging challenges, changes, and opportunities.

## General Education Listening Sessions

The General Education Listening Task Force hosted campus-wide listening sessions to hear perspectives from the campus community on a range of topics related to General Education at the program level, and to help plan for its future. The listening sessions included targeted topics, chosen based on assessment data and input provided to the General Education office and Academic Affairs over the past several years, as well as open sessions. Each listening session was announced in advance via Campus Announcements, an email sent to campus from Academic Affairs, and direct notifications to Council of Chairs, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, University College Academic Advising and Orientation, Online and Transfer Services, Advising Council, the Honors College, and the Student Government Association. Each listening session was also attended by at least one member of Faculty Senate's Academic Policy Committee who reported back on the sessions to Faculty Senate. Each listening session included an afternoon and early evening Zoom session to provide the maximum opportunity for campus feedback. Each listening session was also accompanied by a confidential survey to provide campus an additional opportunity to provide written feedback. The listening sessions were accompanied by a [webpage](#) where recordings of all sessions were posted as well as survey results. The listening session topics were:

- Social justice, diversity, and inclusive excellence (November 19, 2020)
- Sustainability and climate literacy (January 28, 2021)
- Logistics, structure, and hours (February 25, 2021)
- Open session (March 25, 2021)
- Open session for final comments (April 22, 2021)

## Campus Feedback

Feedback during the listening sessions was robust and included input from faculty, staff, and students. Summaries of the listening sessions and accompanying surveys can be found on the listening session [webpage](#) together with recordings of all sessions. While the task force anticipates that crafting a proposal for a program revision should require attention to this complete archive of information, there were several points about the future of the General Education program that consistently arose as we listened to campus:

- A desire to include a requirement for social justice, diversity, and inclusive excellence
- A desire to include a requirement for sustainability and climate literacy
- A desire to include an emphasis on financial literacy
- A desire to decrease the number of hours in the General Education program of study
- Concerns with the Integrative Learning Experience (ILE)

## Recommendations

Based on the feedback we received from campus we would like to make several recommendations concerning the General Education program:

1. We recommend that a committee be formed at the start of the 2021–2022 academic year with a charge to compose a proposal for a revised General Education curriculum. We suggest that at least a part of the membership of this committee include members of the General Education Listening Task Force to ensure that the revision committee retains the memory of the 2020–2021 conversations. We also suggest that this committee include representation from across campus including the Student Government Association, University College Academic Advising, and Online and Transfer Services. We also recommend that this revision committee be provided the complete archive of materials collected by the General Education Listening Task Force.
2. We recommend that this revision incorporate specific unavoidable urgent topics including requirements for *social justice, diversity, and inclusive excellence* and *sustainability and climate literacy*. In this regard, we also recommend that the revision committee include individuals with expertise in these areas. This will ensure these topics are included in a future curriculum thoughtfully and also take advantage of the expertise that exists on campus. This will also ensure that the *General Education program represents Appalachian's identity*.
3. We recommend that this revision include consideration for a financial literacy component.
4. We recommend that this revision includes less of a focus on specific classes with emphasis on a more flexible and less complicated model, including a reduction in hours of the overall program.
5. We recommend that, as this revision is constructed, the committee consider the importance of the allocation of sufficient resources to ensure the success of the revised program.