

To: Faculty Senators
From: Mark Stegeman (chair)
Mae Smith (chair of the program structure subcommittee)
ad hoc General Faculty Committee on General Education
Date: September 9, 2024

These written remarks will be summarized in a brief presentation today to the Faculty Senate.

The ad hoc committee (comprising 17 members, from 14 academic units) will soon present its second written report to the Senate, as required by its original charge. The present remarks summarize what we believe to be the likely content of that report and the path toward further changes in the General Education Refresh. That path should include substantial engagement with the Faculty Senate. We emphasize, however, that the upcoming report and any other formal conclusions will require a vote of the full committee.

1) *Survey of academic advisors.* During the summer we completed, with extensive help and advice from the Office of Academic Advising, in the Provost's Office, an anonymous survey of over 200 undergraduate advisors. We were pleased with the 47% response rate but are hoping to reopen the survey this month, to accommodate advisors who were unable to respond during the summer. The survey responses, including hundreds of free responses to various questions, pointed to several aspects of the General Education program that we believe warrant Senate discussion before further changes come forward.

Just as our Spring report provided a fairly detailed summary of the nearly 500 responses to the committee's earlier survey of the teaching faculty, concerning ABOR's mandate to provide Civics education, so will our next written report summarize main points arising from the survey of advisors.

2) We increasingly believe that, partly due to the complexity of the current General Education program and the prospect of additional complexity: *It is difficult to assess and implement changes in isolation from each other.* Three major (categories of) issues are:

(a) The implementation of a mandatory Civics curriculum, as required by ABOR. The Refresh curriculum submitted to ABOR for approval in 2021 omitted this component. There is no apparent consensus on the optimal models for the structure and administration of the prospective Civics curriculum.

(b) The possible further postponement of the four Attributes (i.e., Writing, Quantitative Reasoning, Diversity, and World Cultures) which were originally scheduled for implementation with the rest of the Refresh curriculum, for students entering in Spring, 2022. This date has been repeatedly postponed, most recently, with ABOR's approval, to Fall, 2026. Numerous comments from administration have suggested possible further revision, potentially including dropping some or all of the Attribute requirements.

(c) Various concerns about the current implementation of the Refresh, including: no required natural science content (unique among major public universities that we have yet surveyed); the 1-unit UNIV 101 and 301 courses staffed out of the Office of General Education; difficulties in mapping courses into other universities' curricula, for both incoming and outgoing transfer students; slowness of course approvals; ongoing (reported) shortages of seats in various categories; the disruptive effects of piecemeal changes.

3) *Circumstances unforeseen a few months ago,* including: the absence of a budget model for the funding of General Education; the unknown viewpoint of the future Provost; and the exhaustion of faculty and staff due to the budget cuts and other recent turmoil originating outside of General Education.

The ad hoc committee offers no recommendations at this time, but we (the authors) believe that one overall effect of these circumstances and issues is a mandate to proceed with diligence, but also gradually and carefully, with further changes to the Refresh curriculum. This process should include ample consultation among the Faculty Senate, the Office of General Education and UWGEC, the General Faculty, and other stakeholders.