

General Education Task Force

Co-curriculum Sub-committee Recommendations

Committee members:

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Introduction:

As the proposed preamble for general education advances, Illinois State University is committed to:

- a motivating and engaging faculty who inspire curiosity and empower students to challenge the status quo; and
- a seamless integration of curriculum and co-curriculum that engages students, extends beyond the classroom, and broadens their horizons.

With an emphasis on integrating the curriculum and co-curriculum, a committee of faculty and staff were assembled to discuss the role and contributions of the co-curriculum to the general education program with the following questions to guide their inquiry.

Is student services programming aligned with general education, supporting or reinforcing student learning in general education courses? If not, what changes in student services programming might be made?

As committee members reviewed the size, scope, and diversity of the co-curriculum institution-wide, it was recommended that the question guiding the inquiry be expanded to include:

Is the co-curriculum integrated with the general education curriculum, supporting and reinforcing student learning in general education courses? If not, what changes in student services programming might be made?

The review included a collection and categorization of co-curricular opportunities available in departments/colleges across campus. The number of available opportunities for students was estimated at over 4000 in a given calendar year. It is believed that this number falls far short of the actual opportunities that exist.

Defining Integrative Learning and the Co-curriculum:

According to a statement written by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, fostering students' abilities to integrate learning across courses, over time, and between campus and community life is one of the most important goals and challenges of higher education.¹

Our committee asserts that a cultural shift will need to occur across campus as it relates to the notion of Integrative Learning, more specifically how we think and operationalize Integrative Learning. Therefore, we recommend we adopt the definition of Integrative Learning as developed by the AAC&U, which states:

*Integrative Learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.*²

In an effort to clarify the term *co-curriculum*, the committee recommends the following definition:

A collection of educational opportunities occurring beyond the classroom either on or off campus that may be seen as a partner or extension of the curriculum towards the goal of Integrative Learning.

¹ This statement was developed in conjunction with the national project, Integrative Learning: Opportunities to Connect (March 2004) by AAC&U and the Carnegie Foundation for the advancement of teaching.

² Association of American Colleges and Universities, www.aacu.org

This collection of educational opportunities includes, but is not limited to the following types:

- Athletics
- Camps
- Ceremonies
- Civic engagement
- Conferences/symposia
- Dance performances
- Elections
- Exhibits
- Fundraisers
- Intramurals
- Leadership development
- Lectures or talks
- Master classes
- Meetings
- Movies and films
- Recitals/concerts
- RSO involvement
- RSO leadership
- Panels, seminars, colloquia
- Performances
- Professional development
- Recreation
- Research
- Service learning
- Speakers
- Theatre
- Webinars
- Workshops

The good news at Illinois State University is that co-curricular opportunities are plentiful; however, it is essential to increase the campus' understanding of what is considered co-curricular and its value to student learning outcomes.

Goal:

The recommended goal of this committee is to foster Integrative Learning by encouraging and helping students “develop the capacity to make and evaluate sound and useful connections between the things that they encounter in different courses, disciplines, and domains of life”.³

This becomes possible when we are intentional about helping faculty and staff “build links into the general education curriculum, which create opportunities for all students to integrate their learning at multiple points throughout their college careers”.³

Intentionally embedding the co-curriculum in general education creates habits of involvement, engagement, and reflection for Illinois State University students.

³ Huber, M. T. (2006). *Fostering Integrative Learning through the Curriculum*. This essay was prepared for the public report on the Integrative Learning project. For the full report, visit www.carnegiefoundation.org/elibrary/integrativelearning.

Role:

Understanding that learning is not compartmentalized, our committee recommends the following role of Integrative Learning in the general education program:

To ensure that curricular and co-curricular educational experiences inform each other to place the student's reflective processes at the core of the learning experience. This will enable students to evaluate both new information and the frames of reference through which the information acquires meaning in the world around them.⁴

Recommendations:

The following recommendations provide support for the co-curriculum as one of the ways to foster Integrative Learning in the general education program. Our committee's recommendations are mapped onto the other five sub-committees' recommendations.

Structure and Curriculum Mapping:

- As syllabi are created or redesigned for General Education, co-curricular assignments should be required.

Examples of support could include:

- Include examples of co-curricular assignments for CTLT workshops on course design/redesign.
 - Provide examples of rubrics for faculty incorporating co-curricular assignments.
 - Provide samples of syllabi from courses using co-curricular assignments to illustrate the variety of ways to implement.
- Provide easy accessibility to the co-curriculum through tools, resources, and professional development.

⁴ Adapted from the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators & American College Personnel Association. (2004). *Learning reconsidered: A campus-wide focus on the student experience*.

Examples of support could include:

- Include a co-curriculum module or support page on the general education website.
- Create taxonomy of activities and events showcasing the size, scope, and diversity of the co-curriculum.
- Identify and provide examples of unique ways to incorporate the co-curriculum.
- Be an active voice in campus discussions on teaching and learning – blogs, CTLT newsletter, ISUTeach listserv, etc.
- Create specific tagging on the University calendar to indicate how an activity/event may be used as part of general education courses.
- Effectively utilize, promote, and navigate the university calendar as a resource for the co-curriculum.
- Increase the cross-promotion of events and activities across departments and colleges.

Administrative Structure and Communication:

- Broaden representation on council to include staff involved with co-curricular programs and services.
- Incorporate a broader definition of learning through the use of such terms as integrative, transformative, interdisciplinary, and connected, etc.
- Communicate and market the value of the co-curriculum within the goals of general education (recruitment, orientation, syllabi reinforcement, Blackboard, etc.).
- Promote co-curricular programs and projects as unique features of general education.
- Include proponents of Integrative Learning when recognizing excellence in general education.

- Include assessment of the co-curriculum within the methods of evaluating course requirements.
- Use reflective exercises in programs and activities coordinated by Student Affairs/Services to connect learning outcomes to curricular goals.

Pedagogy and Professional Development:

- Use the co-curriculum as an active learning strategy to provide learner opportunities.
- Ensure the implementation of Integrative Learning through a dedicated general education unit.
- Provide resources and tools for successful implementation and utilization of the co-curriculum.

Examples of support could include:

- Create a teaching and learning community or professional development circle around the topic of Integrated Learning.
 - Create a workshop by request surrounding different co-curricular topics from hands-on seminars to panels/showcases.
 - Include the co-curriculum as a topic for a general education speaker series.
 - Targeted professional development for new and early career faculty.
 - Include workshops/seminars on Integrated Learning as part of the Teaching Excellence Series.
 - Develop a *Expand Your Horizons* series for faculty and staff members to participate in events and activities beyond their disciplines. The series would include opportunities to attend events, performances, workshops, etc. to experience first-hand areas of interest. Participants would meet in small group discussion after each event to discuss how the experience could be integrated into the courses he or she teaches.
- Include the use of Integrative Learning as a criterion of General Education Faculty Distinction and ASPT processes.

- Broaden representation of General Education Fellows to include staff involved with co-curricular programs and service units other than colleges (if not fellows, identify designees).

Writing Across the Curriculum:

- Co-curricular components can be utilized for writing assignments to promote learning and the construction of knowledge, integrate disciplines, and engage students as critical thinkers.

Assessment:

- Conduct a syllabus audit to determine the current co-curricular practices in GE courses:
 - Is it happening?
 - What's happening and to what extent?
 - Are the activities/experiences promoted within the department/discipline? Outside?
 - What is the reflective experience?
 - How is it being described?
 - How is it evaluated?
- Code artifacts as curricular and co-curricular assignments as part of the institutional artifact portfolio process.
- Create co-curricular rubrics for use by faculty and staff.
- Identify and communicate contributions of the co-curriculum to student learning.

Partnerships:

Illinois State University's ability to integrate a curriculum and co-curriculum that engages students extending beyond the classroom will depend in large part on the strength of its partnerships between and across departments, colleges, divisions, and the community.