**Q and A with the General Education Working Group**

*Question: What are the “dimensions of wellness” as stated in the learning outcomes?*

Within our working group, we researched and learned that wellness is multi-dimensional. The World Health Organization identified 7 dimensions of wellness as early as the 1940's.  The dimensions themselves are listed on page 16 (first bullet point) in the section that describes *Wellness* and *Physical Literacy*: physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, occupational, social and environmental.

*Question: Why is a “passport” only required for wellness and no other core required element?*

Page 17 explains \*why\* we believe the Wellness Passport is an important new component of our revised general education program: “ . . . the Wellness Passport elevates our commitment to wellness and the ‘body’ beyond the curricular level to the institutional level, reflecting an integrated and holistic approach to education and further aligning with our mission and Humanics philosophy to promote physical, mental and spiritual well-being. It prepares students to incorporate wellness across the lifespan and encourages them to pursue an active, healthy lifestyle.” As a result, the passport is inherently linked to the unique mission and history of Springfield College. According to NECHE (our accrediting body), the institution’s academic program must be “consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes.” Specific to general education, our program must embody “the institution’s definition of an educated person and prepare[s] students for the world in which they will live.” Our working group has proposed the Wellness passport to reflect the college’s commitment to and continued service of our mission.

*Question: How will the “passport” be monitored? How will these “qualifying experiences” be determined and by whom?*

A preliminary implementation plan is briefly laid out on pg. 30 and Appendix 7 of the document. It is exactly these types of questions that will need to be answered before the roll-out in Fall 2020. We have recommended that the implementation team include key disciplinary constituents to address issues like these.

*Question: First, It is proposed in the report that faculty will "volunteer" to teach first-year seminar. However, there is no clarification what it means to be a faculty "volunteer". Will new faculty be pressured to volunteer as part of their bid for tenure? What safeguards are there so that new faculty are not pressured to "volunteer". In addition, who teaches the other courses from the volunteer faculty's discipline? Adjunct? Grad students? How does having a cadre of adjunct faculty or grad students teach courses make for a stronger core or major curriculum model?*

FYS courses will be staffed by faculty who are interested in teaching them and with the support of department chairs. Members of our working group have had conversations with numbers of faculty from different schools who are excited about the opportunity to teach FYS’s. It is not our intent to have faculty forced to teach these sections. The provost has committed to funding the FYS program; resources will be provided when department courses need faculty as a result of FYS staffing. Our working group has always maintained that a strong FYS program must predominantly be taught by full-time faculty from various disciplines.

*Question: I'm concerned about availability of resources. The re-imagined core curriculum model will require a great deal of training/faculty development, time and faculty effort and expertise to develop courses, and in some cases, new personnel. (How) will resources be allocated?*

We do not have specifics to share with you in response to these questions—all good ones—which the working group has also discussed. We recognize the need to provide faculty development. Having said this, faculty on many other campuses regularly develop general education courses as “service”—in this case, such service would definitely be valued and regarded as service beyond one’s department.

*Question: Will the Wellness Passport have any credits attached to it?*

No. The Wellness Passport is not credit bearing. It is intended to support the 3 credits associated with physical/wellness literacy and to further support this learning throughout the entire span of a student’s time at Springfield College. In response to feedback that emphasized how central physical/wellness is to the SC mission, we adopted the wellness passport as a way to highlight how this outcome is achieved through both credit-bearing work and other experiences that support the development of lifelong, intrinsically-motivated, commitments to health and well-being.

*Question: How will this be evaluated?*

We have drafted Learning Outcomes associated with every portion of the Core Curriculum. Assessment will be ongoing and systematic.

*Question: Since the definition of “wellness” is being expanded, what are some of the range of options that might count?*

We have discussed yoga, meditation, nutrition, and financial literacy classes, in addition to students perhaps choosing to take PEAC classes to enhance their physical wellness and participation in inter-collegiate athletics.

*Question: Would regular religious service attendance count?*

We did not discuss this. Our working group is focused on the Core Curriculum as enhancing student learning, so one might question whether or not regular service attendance is actually resulting in new student learning. This is an interesting proposal that should be considered by both the implementation team and the Core Curriculum Work Group.

*Question: Must these things take place on campus or be organized by a campus group?*

To be determined. We recognize that with the regional campus students also completing the same Core Foundation Curriculum, we will need to develop off-campus options.

*Question: Do we have a collective sense, as faculty, of what “social justice” means?*

We are aware that there is quite a bit of debate on this question that already exists among our faculty. This new curriculum offers a new opportunity to be more precise in this definition and to potentially work toward a shared, institutional understanding of social justice.

*Question: What are some ways that we might develop our own interpretations of this term, as faculty and FYS professors? (e.g. can we all agree that humanics ≠ “social justice”)*

You sound like someone who might like to volunteer for just this challenge. Stay tuned for the call for volunteers!

*Question: How and when will students choose a themed exploration?*

Our ideal is visible in Figure 1 of our proposal. We recognize that some of our programs that are highly regimented will result in a different timing of student enrollment and completion of the themed explorations. The proposal includes recognition that the ideal may not be attainable for students in all programs.

*Question: How and when can faculty propose themed explorations?*

This will be managed by the Core Curriculum Director and the implementation team. Timetables and Calls for Proposals are still to be developed.

*Question: Why are FYS capped at 22? That is way too large for a small, seminar-like experience as described in the rest of the document.*

One of the major reasons for undertaking a general education review and renewal was to build in continuous assessment of the core curriculum in terms of institutional and domain learning outcomes. As part of this process, all components of the program will be reviewed and revised based on the findings of this assessment.

*Question: I’m a little confused by the language of core curriculum and general education. Are these two terms supposed to be interchangeable throughout the document? Or do they mean two different things here?*

We decided to rename our entire general education proposed curriculum as our new Core Curriculum, in part to distinguish it from the prior discussions and iterations of general education at SC. By calling it the Core Curriculum we also emphasize that this program is a central feature of a student’s SC education.

*Question: What will be involved in the “validation/revalidation” of all courses? How does the working group imagine this happening? Will it be similar to the current process for adding classes to the gen ed? Or will there be a different, more constructive and transparent, process?*

See Figure 2 for more information on this topic. Disciplinary experts will be appointed to develop validation/revalidation rubrics. Once these are developed, the Core Curriculum Director will work with the Core Curriculum Working Group and the Senate General Education Curriculum Committee to assess all submitted courses. The proposal recognizes that there will need to be work and consultation to ensure that these processes are consisted with the Senate By-Laws and that mechanisms for collaborative work between the Administrative and Senate curriculum bodies occurs. Final decisions about courses will be made through the Senate in accordance with Senate By-Laws.

*Question: How will faculty be chosen to participate in the course review process?*

One task for the implementation team (per Figure 2, “Recommended Relationships around the Core Curriculum at Springfield College) will be to participate in discussions among the Senate General Education Curriculum Committee, the Core Curriculum Program Director, and the Core Curriculum Work Group. Our working group discussed beginning with faculty volunteers for course review and validation. The Senate has ultimate responsibility for reviewing and voting on curricular decisions so duly elected members of the faculty senate will be engaged in the course review process. The membership of the Core Curriculum Work Group will also be determined by the Implementation Team, along with the Core Curriculum Program Director. The Core Curriculum proposal currently being considered makes clear that those who are reviewing courses must have disciplinary expertise and, when they do not, there must be pre-identified faculty to consult.

*Question: It’s currently unclear how accredited programs with capstone classes already embedded into their curriculum will be affected by the requirement to include two content areas from Understanding the World. It’s not clear how the Understanding the World content areas should be embedded into our capstone, nor why the capstones are tied to unrelated content areas as opposed to the institutional learning outcomes (or core learning outcomes), such as critical analysis and thinking, or professionally related content areas, such as the ones outlined by our accrediting body and our profession. The committee presented a relatively clear argument for many parts of the document, but did not provide sufficient rationale nor direction for what I’ve outlined.*

The working group recommends this model because capstone courses (nationally) are routinely identified as an important location for some facet of final general education assessment. This is the one location where students in their final semester(s) may consider and demonstrate the connections that should exist between a strong general education program and students from any major program of study. The committee recognizes that this part of the proposal will require more conversation and thinking on the part of the implementation team and others. We would assume the department or program chairs will need to be part of further discussions and decision making regarding the capstone courses.