Memo to: Greg Weisenstein, Provost  
From: Tom Steen and Anne Kelsch, Co-Chairs GE Taskforce  
May 22, 2007

This is our progress report on the work with which you charged the General Education Taskforce. We interpreted your charge (attachment A) as having three main tasks:

1. Review the current General Education Requirement,  
2. Make recommendations for improvement at UND, and  
3. Implement those recommendations (assuming the Taskforce recommendations were approved by various campus groups and persons).

In this memo we summarize for you the results of our work to date (which include the completion of tasks 1 and 2 and significant progress towards task 3). We also make recommendations for how to support the new revised program administratively, as well as how best to transition into the new program.

To recap the first part of our charge, reviewing the current GER: the Task Force read widely, researched other programs and best practices in general education and discussed a wide range of issues, data, information and problems at UND. This is the most extensive examination of GE at UND since at least the early 1990s and perhaps further back than that. More details on the task force review are available in our letter to the Senate dated April 4 (attachment B). This review phase of the work dominated our first year (2005-6).

This year (2006-7) the Task Force focused on developing a proposal to the campus in which we shared our recommendations for revising UND’s general education. Among these changes we recommend a name change for the program to help increase both the awareness and value of students’ liberal learning on campus. We will refer to the new name -- Essential Studies -- in the rest of this memo. In addition to the name change, we recommend a more clearly articulated rationale for Essential Studies and a revised set of goals to address in ES courses. We also recommend a number of curricular changes. More details of the proposal are in the documents that we shared with the University Senate, the Student Senate and the rest of campus in April (attachment C). As you know the University Senate adopted our proposal on May 4, 2007. We also received the endorsement of the Student Senate in late April. With the approval of Essential Studies by University Senate, we can now begin implementation.

**Recommendations for Administrative Support of the Essential Studies Program**

The successful implementation, oversight, and evaluation of the Essential Studies Program will require a clearly demarcated and highly visible administrative point of responsibility, authority, and support. While many similar universities have an office and a dedicated administrator for general education, no such hub exists at the University of North Dakota. Currently the Senate General Education Requirements Committee (GERC) is charged with oversight for general education, a charge that is often beyond the GERC’s time and resources.
Research on sustainability and vitality in General Education programs suggests that an administrative structure is crucial. In most programs, directors have responsibility for day-to-day operations and management, but little authority. General education committees, on the other hand, have traditionally had much greater authority but overall program management by committee is problematic. Therefore a careful partnership needs to be created between the roles of the director and committee. The director needs meaningful authority, but both authority and responsibility must be shared through a collaborative partnership with the GERC. We view both the director and the committee functioning to support faculty in course development, validation and revalidation of Essential Studies courses, assessment of the Essential Studies Program, sustaining faculty development initiatives, supporting student advisement, and coordinating ES-related activities across campus. It is also important to involve a wider constituency in major decision making processes related to Essential Studies. At times there will be need to form committees that will work with the GERC and the director on large projects.

To properly support the ES program the Task Force recommends the following:

1. **Establishment of an office for the coordination and administration of Essential Studies.**

The Taskforce recommends that appropriate resources be dedicated to Essential Studies including an office with adequate space and support personnel, an operating budget, a dedicated web site and a budget for faculty development around ES (for example, annual summer workshops for faculty on student learning around ES goals and an annual all campus event on the ES program similar to the GE Summits we have held the past two years.)

2. **Appointment of a director with appropriate authority and responsibility for the administering of the program.**

We recommend the creation of a full time directorship of Essential Studies. The director would ideally be a tenured faculty member, appointed by the Provost in consultation with a faculty committee. The director will provide active and continuous support for the development of ES initiatives, courses and programming. Responsibilities include:

- Working closely with the Senate General Education Requirements Committee;
- Working with schools, deans, Enrollment Services and other university units to ensure that sufficient course sections are offered to meet demands;
- Working with department chairs to recruit faculty and provide faculty development for those teaching Essential Studies courses;
- Working with the Office of Instructional Development to develop effective new faculty orientation related to the goals, requirements and expectations of UND's ES program; and to enhance the quality of teaching and student learning in the ES program;
- Preparing and disseminating regular reports to faculty and administrators, in coordination of the GERC, on the state of Essential Studies at UND;
- Coordinating with the Assistant Provost for Assessment on the assessment of Essential Studies and, in conjunction with the Senate GERC and the Assessment Committee, planning and conducting reviews of overall program effectiveness.
3. Enhance the visibility of the Essential Studies Program.

It is our recommendation that the web site is one important part of a larger effort to increase the visibility of ES information on campus. For example, ES should be featured prominently in the University Face book and material created by University Relations, and in speeches given by the President and the Provost. There should also be a separate listing of Essential Studies courses created by the registrars for easy student access and also a cross listing of courses by goals as well as by disciplinary distribution.

4. Develop a program review process to periodically assess the overall functioning and effectiveness of the new ES education program.

The review committee would work with the Director of ES, the GERC, the Senate Assessment Committee and the Assistant Provost for Assessment to develop recommendations and plans for improvement on a regular basis.

Recommendations for the Transition and Start Up
The Taskforce sees the upcoming academic year (2007-8) as the transition year for the new ES Program. With the completion of a successful transition, we should be able to implement the new program for students and faculty beginning in the fall of 2008.

We recommend the appointment of a transition team which would operate in a similar fashion as the GE Taskforce but with a one year commitment to plan and carry out the transition to the new ES program. We recommend that two co-chairs lead the transition effort and be given course relief and clerical support. This team would include representatives from the GERC, the General Education Task Force, and others as appointed. A tentative timeline follows:

Summer 2007
The Task Force Steering Committee has already agreed to work this summer and plan the initial transition work in order to keep momentum. We are implementing four discussion groups made up of members of the Taskforce and others organized around the categories of the disciplinary distribution (e.g. Math, Science and Technology or Arts and Humanities). These groups will begin to draft guidelines for how to place ES courses within the distribution.

Early fall semester
- The transition team is appointed and begins its work.
- Early transition tasks will include expanding or reorganizing the GERC and planning and carrying out Gen Ed Summit III.

Mid fall and spring 2008
- In partnership with the GERC, the Transition Team will review and revise the validation/revalidation system to reflect the new ES program. [note: The Transition Team’s objective would be to support the GERC in accomplishing this enormous task]
- Review courses and programs offered at UND, creating an analysis of current courses and how they address (or fail to address) the new goals: for example, which goals are
well targeted, which goals have few course offerings associated with them, which goals need faculty development efforts.

- Work with the registrar to create a special listing of ES courses. Strengthen advising around ES: for example work with student services to create strategies for student engagement in the goals of ES, work with the registrars office on ES audits,
- Promote the new program and make ES highly visible: for example create a dedicated, easily accessible web page, sections in the face book and presentation in the getting Started Program, etc.

**Summer 2008**

- Finalize implementation details with the advising office, registrar’s office, etc.
- Faculty development workshops on the new program.
- Plans from GE Summit IV.

**Fall 2008**

- Implement ES program.
Attachment A: Charge to the Task Force

Provost’s Charge to the Task Force

The Task Force on General Education will be responsible for re-examining UND’s general education program and proposing any needed changes. Specific tasks to be accomplished include the following:

1. Reviewing
   - Existing data regarding gen ed at UND to identify problems and opportunities
   - National trends in general education to identify opportunities

2. Articulating
   - The overarching purpose of general education at UND
   - Specific general education goals within that purpose

3. Planning for assessment
   - . . . of general education goals by answering the question, “what would student achievement of that goal look like, and, therefore, where should we look for evidence of goal achievement?”

   - general education goals with general education requirements and curriculum
   - general education goals with the first year through graduate level curriculum
   - general education goals with current and potential general education assessments

5. Recommending, based on the above,
   - Changes needed in general education goals
   - Changes needed in communication to students and/or faculty about general education goals
   - Changes needed in alignment between goals and curriculum
   - Changes needed in assessment of general education
   - Changes needed in how general education gets organized and carried out

6. Implementing (year 2)
   - By taking the lead in communicating recommendations to the larger UND community
   - By shepherding recommended changes through the appropriate administrative bodies
   - By planning institutionalization of changes in general education requirements, alignments, and/or assessments.
Dear Senator:

You are being presented today with the near-final draft of a document that outlines a proposed new general education program for UND. The document reflects over two years of intensive work undertaken by members of the Provost’s General Education Task Force. The Task Force was convened in Spring 2005 because of mounting evidence of multiple weaknesses in the existing general education program that needed to be addressed. Task Force members began their work with a substantial self-education component comprised of a long list of readings and discussions about best practices in General Education. With this background, the task force then began considering multiple sources of evidence in order to fully assess the strengths and weaknesses in UND’s general education program. These sources included the General Education Longitudinal Study, the General Education Transcript Project, problems noted by the Senate General Education Requirements Committee, the Higher Learning Commission’s Accreditation report, and findings from the General Education Assessment Project which directly assessed student outcomes of writing, critical thinking, and familiarity with cultures. Furthermore, the Task Force solicited feedback from departments on campus in terms of what they viewed as strengths and weaknesses in the existing gen ed program.

Key weaknesses identified in the existing general education program included:

- Lack of student awareness about the purpose of UND’s General Education Program
- Lack of faculty awareness about the purpose of UND’s General Education Program
- General Education goals that were not clearly defined
- Difficulty in directly assessing the general education goals because they were poorly defined
- Faculty concern with student writing
- Multiple weaknesses with the “cultures” goal including that the goal was too limited in scope, the goal was weakly addressed in many “world cultures” courses, and graduating seniors scored low when directly assessed on their familiarity with cultures
- Faculty concern that there were few opportunities for students to meaningfully integrate the knowledge gained from disparate general education courses.

These weaknesses have largely been addressed in the proposed new general education program through new and modified goals and requirements, as well as new language that clarifies the purposes of general education and more clearly articulates, for both faculty and students, a UND general education program.

Findings from the Task Force’s study of best practices in general education, a task force review of general education programs at universities across the nation, and a call for proposals from UND constituents also resulted in new ideas for task force members to consider. Proposals considered included the following: a quantitative reasoning goal, an information literacy goal, an oral communication goal, a wellness goal, a leadership goal, an ethics goal, an aesthetic reasoning goal, a civic engagement goal, a freshman general education seminar, and a senior
general education capstone course. It quickly became clear to the Task Force that while all the ideas had merit, the new general education program could only attempt so much if was to be more purposeful and meaningful to faculty and students.

The Task Force followed established procedures when deciding on each component of the proposed new program. Proposals were evaluated both on their own merit and on how they would work to solve current problems with the general education program or improve on the overall program. Discussions revolved around the need to keep the new general education program simple in design so that it could be readily understood by faculty and students as well as managed by faculty committees. Other considerations included ease or difficulty of implementation at UND and assessability. The Task Force held multiple forums for faculty and students to provide input on each stage of the proposal development. In order to allow students as much flexibility as possible in their course selections, and to also not privilege any one department, a decision was made to not require any specific course or to require students to take a course from a pre-specified department, with the single exception of Composition.

It is important to note that every requirement and goal included in the proposal required a 2/3 majority approval by Task Force members. Many of the goals, requirements and other components that you see today are significantly different than when first presented to the Task Force. In many cases, a 2/3 consensus was reached only after heated discussion and compromise. However, consensus was achieved. After two years of research, brainstorming, and debate, task force members will tell you that there is no such thing as the perfect general education program, and it is impossible to make 100% of faculty (and students) happy about every feature of a gen ed program. However, considering the problems with the existing general education program, we hope to reach general consensus across campus that the proposed new general education program is a needed improvement that should be implemented.

It is also important to look upon this proposal as a living document. It will in all likelihood need to be slightly tweaked or even significantly revised depending on resources, implementation, and what’s learned from the first few years of operation. The Task Force is currently focusing their work on the program’s implementation process. It is envisioned that a special General Education Implementation Committee will be necessary to facilitate the first three years of the new program’s operation, and a General Education Review Committee will be convened every three years, much like program area review committees, to assess how the new general education program is working and determine what changes should be considered.

The Task Force welcomes your questions about this proposal and how it was developed. A list of task force members and other supporting documents are attached. Thank you in advance for your consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,
The Task Force on General Education
Who are we talking to?
Members of the Gen Ed Task Force were chosen to include people, both faculty and staff, with diverse perspectives and experiences. But it is important with an effort like this to go beyond the views of those actually on the task force. We have made efforts to hear perspectives from others on campus. And we’ve worked to learn more about what institutions across the nation are doing in general education. Below is a list of some of the contexts where input was solicited and some of the people who’ve been consulted during the process.

Sub-committee research projects/reports
Internal departmental scan
Internal assessment audit
Peer and NDUS system scan
Best practices in gen ed scan
Goals options
Student affairs/services scan
Quantitative reasoning proposal
First year experience recommendation
Ideas for a common freshman year GE experience
Information literacy proposal
Social-cultural diversity report
Communication proposal
General education senior seminar/senior capstone proposals

Additional proposals reviewed
Aesthetic Reasoning goal/requirement (submitted by Royce Blackburn and Dept. of Music)
Ethics goal and/or requirement (submitted by Provost Greg Weisenstein)
Civic Engagement goal/requirement (submitted by Lana Rakow, Jan Kelly-Moen)

Information gathering
General Education Longitudinal Study, Fall 1999- Spring 2006.
UND team participation in AAC&U general education conference, 5/04.
Dr. Peggy Maki, Specialist on Assessment and General Education, Gen Ed Summit, meeting with task force, 8/26/05.
Dr. Anne Walker and Dr. Joey Benoit, report on attending HLC session about accreditation expectations and gen ed assessment, 10/05.
Dr. Greg Weisenstein, Provost, conversation about ethics and general education (11/05).
Dr. Pamela Kalbflesch, report on development of new gen ed program at Wyoming, 11/05.
Student body president and vice-president, “Leadership U” proposal, 12/8/05.
AAC&U Conference on Assessment and General Education, two attendees, 3/06, 3/07.
Dr. Ross Miller, AAC&U, Gen Ed Summit II, meeting of task force with GER committee and Dr. Weistenstein, 8/25/06.
Collaboration Conference on Diversity, three attendees, 2/07

Public events for campus-wide education and input
Dr. Peggy Maki, Specialist on Assessment and General Education, Gen Ed Summit, 8/26/05.
“Making General Education Matter” keynote.
“Making Assessment Practical” workshop.
On Teaching session, “How are students doing? Findings from the gen ed assessment on writing and critical thinking,” 20 participants, 10/12/05.

On Teaching session, “Re-visiting UND’s gen ed goals: Do we still believe in them? Are we missing something important?” 27 participants, 1/25/06.

On Teaching session, “New ideas for gen ed: Drawn from a ‘best practices’ analysis of other universities’ programs,” 18 participants, 3/7/06.

Dr. Ross Miller, AAC&U, Gen Ed Summit II, 8/25/06.
“Teaching Gen Ed Courses as if They Matter” panel presentation.

A Public Conversation with Ross Miller, AAC&U.

On Teaching session, “How well are we helping students develop ‘familiarity with cultures other than their own’?” 22 participants, 9/26/06.

On Teaching session, “Checking in with the Gen Ed Task Force: Proposals for key program features,” 38 participants, 10/31/06.

University-wide information forums, two-sessions, 11/06.

Departmental visits (made at several stages of the process over two years of task force work)
Composition (English)
Psychology
Chemistry
Economics
Computer Sciences
Languages
Music
Aviation
Teaching and Learning
Physical Therapy
Communications
Marketing/Management
School of Engineering and Mines
Social Work
Criminal Justice
Integrated Studies
Family and Community Nursing
Sociology
Nutrition and Dietetics
Indian Studies
Geography
Math
Biology

Task force updates in newsletters
On Teaching, Volume 14 Number 6, “Special Issue on General Education.”
University Letter, various updates (e.g., 11/9/06, 10/17/06, 11/30/06)
Attachment C: Supporting Material Provided to the Senate and the University Community

Essential Studies

What is Essential Studies at the University of North Dakota?

Essential Studies (ES) is the academic core of your university experience. The courses offered in the ES curriculum provide broad and diverse perspectives on how human beings think and feel, solve problems, express ideas, and create and discover new knowledge. These courses also help you acquire essential intellectual skills: they challenge you to think critically and creatively, reason using numbers and charts, communicate effectively both orally and in writing, find and evaluate information from various kinds of sources, and increase your understanding of the role of diversity in a complex world.

Why are Essential Studies courses important?

UND undergraduates take a number of Essential Studies courses out of the conviction that citizenship in a complex world demands a breadth of knowledge and a wide range of intellectual skills. You are likely to encounter shifting conditions and challenges over the next 50 or more years. This knowledge and these skills will prepare you for a satisfying and effective professional and personal life, and participation in the public life of your community.

What is the best way to select Essential Studies courses?

When you choose your Essential Studies courses, we encourage you to venture into areas that are new, interesting, or arouse your curiosity. By choosing courses that range outside your current experience, you will gain opportunities to explore questions and issues that can challenge you to grow and expand your knowledge and awareness.

Also consider choosing ES courses that complement each other, so that you can extend what you learn in individual courses. By linking courses in this way, you can develop the ability to make connections among them and draw on their ideas and traditions to address the complex, multi-faceted questions of life in the 21st century. Your coursework should help you prepare you to actively engage in contemporary issues of public importance.

You might want to pay particular attention to your choices of special emphasis classes (described under “Essential Studies Requirements”). Each special emphasis requirement highlights a particular area of learning considered to be important by the university. For example, the U.S. diversity requirement offers a unique opportunity for you to learn more about American Indian histories and cultures, which is especially important to UND since the North Dakota Century Code gives the university a particular mission in education about American Indians. Some of your special emphasis courses may be met within your major or with a class recommended by your major department.

Finally, you might want to consider meeting some of your Essential Studies goals in Honors, Integrated Studies, the American College of Norway, Study Abroad, civic engagement courses, or through another non-traditional option. Programs and courses such as these can provide an opportunity to focus intensively on Essential Studies goals and meet ES requirements. But at the same time, a non-traditional option can also provide a great experience. Such programs are worth further exploration. [click here to move to one of the cited programs]
Breadth in Essential Studies

Why will I take courses under four different categories of subjects?

All Essential Studies courses contribute to your breadth of knowledge. In fact, possessing a breadth of knowledge is one hallmark of a well-educated person. The ability to draw on a variety of fields of knowledge is important for professionals in all fields; it is also crucial for understanding ourselves, our communities, and our larger world.

In UND’s Essential Studies program, you will complete coursework that introduces you to academic fields within Communication, Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities, and Math/Science/Technology [click here to see course listings within the distribution requirement]. Taking courses across a wide range of subject-areas will expose you to the way that people think and create knowledge in a variety of disciplines. For example, your ES courses will give you the opportunity to explore what it means to think like an artist or art critic, like a psychologist or sociologist, and like a geologist or chemist.
Goals in Essential Studies

At the same time as you select courses across the four broad fields of Communication, Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities, and Math/Science/Technology, you will be choosing courses that are designed to help you achieve the following goals.

Goal #1  Thinking and Reasoning [click here to see critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and creative thinking rubrics]

*You should be able to use a variety of thinking and reasoning skills, apply these skills as appropriate in various situations, and move among them depending on purpose.*

Rationale: The ability to call on a variety of thinking and reasoning skills and choose among them in order to accomplish a range of civic, professional, and personal tasks is a core hallmark of an educated person. By the time you complete your ES courses, you will have encountered opportunities to practice various kinds of thinking and reasoning skills, including at least critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and creative thinking.

You will improve your **critical thinking** skills when your ES courses ask you to do the following:
- Synthesize and analyze texts, issues, or problems.
- Evaluate the logic, validity, and relevance of arguments.
- Come to reasoned conclusions or resolutions to problems that includes foreseeing ethical ramifications of choices, broader implications of actions, and alternative solutions.

You will improve your **quantitative reasoning** skills when your ES courses ask you to do the following:
- Apply empirical data to a special problem or issue.
- Draw conclusions based on quantitative information.
- Analyze graphical information and use it to solve problems.

You will improve your **creative thinking** skills when your ES courses ask you to do the following:
- Explore alternate and potentially divergent perspectives on an idea, process, experience, or object.
- Discover ways to confront complex or ambiguous problems, make new connections, and see how things could be otherwise.
- Engage in creative practice as a means to develop aesthetic understanding.

Goal #2  Communication  [click here to see communication rubrics]

*You should be able to write and speak in civic, academic, and professional settings with a sense of purpose and audience.*

Rationale: The ability to communicate effectively is a skill that is needed not only on the job but in personal and civic life. Communicating skillfully means being able to write and speak clearly for diverse audiences, and involves learning the conventions associated with each.

You will improve your communication skills when your ES courses ask you to practice the following, in written or oral assignments:
- Present information, express ideas, or construct arguments for particular purposes and audiences.
- Use critical thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation to create effective written or oral presentations.
• Present research, cite sources, and format documents in ways that are consistent with different disciplinary standards.

Goal #3 Information Literacy  [click here to see information literacy rubric]

You should be able to access and evaluate information for effective, efficient, and ethical use in a variety of contexts.

Rationale: Information comes from many different sources, appears in many different formats, and is used for varied purposes. It is important to be able to access information, understand factors that influence its creation and application, and use it effectively and appropriately.

You will improve your information literacy skills when your ES courses ask you to practice the following:

• Access needed information effectively, efficiently, ethically, and legally.
• Evaluate the credibility of information and its sources.
• Use information to effectively and ethically accomplish a specific purpose.

Goal #4 Diversity  [click here to see diversity rubric]

You should be able to demonstrate understanding of social-cultural diversity and use that understanding to address issues, solve problems, and shape civic, personal, and professional behavior.

Rationale: Because the United States is becoming a more diverse society in a multicultural world, it is important to understand and appreciate social and cultural differences; given the North Dakota Century Code designation of a special mission for UND in education about American Indian cultures and histories, it is especially appropriate for students to consider courses in that area.

You will improve your understanding of and appreciation for diversity when your ES courses ask you to practice the following:

• Use concepts like culture, difference, and diversity.
• Recognize your own diversity in relationship to the larger society, and understand and respect the social-cultural diversity of others.
• Analyze and apply knowledge about diversity to domestic and global issues.
**Essential Studies Requirements**
36 credits + 3 credit upper division Essential Studies capstone
(required of all students, including transfers)

Your Essential Studies Program will include three components.

**Communication Requirements**

* 6 credits written communication, including English 110 (College Composition I) and either English 120 (College Composition II) or English 125 (Technical and Business Writing)
* 3 credits oral communication (designated with an O)

Your oral communication (O) course must be selected from the list of O Essential Studies courses, although your major may specify which ones you should take.

**Breadth: Required Areas of Study**

You will be required to take courses from four broad areas of study. In each area of study, your classes must be taken in two or more different departments:

* 9 credits Communication (described above)
* 9 credits Arts & Humanities (including at least one 3-credit Arts class and one 3-credit Humanities class)
* 9 credits Social Sciences
* 9 credits Math, Science, & Technology (including at least one 4-credit science class with a lab).

When choosing your Essential Studies courses in Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, and Math, Science, & Technology, you need to be sure to include the following specially designated courses:

* a quantitative reasoning course (designated with a Q)
* a two social-cultural diversity courses, one designated with a U and addressing diversity within the United States, and one designated with a G and addressing global diversity
* an advanced communication course (numbered 200 or higher and designated with an A)

Your quantitative reasoning (Q), social-cultural diversity (U and G), and advanced communication (A) courses may be selected from the list of Essential Studies courses with a Q, U, G, or A designation.

**Upper Division Essential Studies Requirements (a graduation requirement for all UND students, including those who have transferred general education/Essential Studies credits from other institutions)**

* 3 credit senior Essential Studies capstone

Your department may offer an Essential Studies capstone which you will be required to take. However, other capstone courses are open to students from all majors. Check with your department to find out which capstone options are open to and recommended for you.
Faculty Questions about Essential Studies

Where does my course fit in the distribution requirement?

Every Essential Studies course, with the exception of the capstone, must fit into one of the four areas of study (communication, arts & humanities, social sciences, or math/science/technology). If you are submitting one of your courses for Essential Studies credit, your first decision is which area of study is appropriate for your course. Remember that the area of study is determined NOT by your department but by the content of the course.

How do the goals fit in?

UND’s Essential Studies is founded on student development in four areas, called “goals”: thinking and reasoning, communication, information literacy, and diversity. Every Essential Studies course that fits within the distribution requirement must thoroughly address one of the four Essential Studies goals. If you are submitting one of your courses for Essential Studies credit, you decide which goal you are going to emphasize in your course. This goal must be identified on the syllabus, addressed through learning activities that help students make progress toward the goal, and assessed so that you (and members of the Essential Studies Requirements Committee) can see how well students seem to be doing with that goal in your class.

What are special emphasis courses?

In order to create a more intensive experience in key areas that are not routinely addressed through the major curriculum, some goals are addressed through special emphasis courses. UND specifies that all students take special emphasis Essential Studies courses in advanced communication, quantitative reasoning, United States diversity, and global diversity.

Could my course also qualify as one of the special emphasis courses (advanced communication, quantitative reasoning, United States or global diversity)?

You might consider validating to meet one of these requirements if your course includes significant emphasis on

- advanced communication, [clickable]
- quantitative reasoning, or [clickable]
- diversity. [clickable]

In addition to the basic validation/revalidation form, a separate form must be completed to validate as meeting one of these specific requirements. It’s worth noting that all advanced communication courses must be numbered 200 or higher. All quantitative reasoning courses must have Math 102 (or equivalent) as a pre-requisite.

Can experiential learning, like service learning within Grand Forks or a study abroad experience, meet the diversity requirement?

Out-of-classroom experiences can count for either the United States or global diversity requirement, but not both. If you are planning an out-of-classroom course that addresses the United States diversity goal or includes study abroad, consider applying for validation as an Essential Studies class.
What is a capstone, and why require one as part of Essential Studies?

A capstone course provides a “culminating experience” in the sense that it is typically taken in the last year of college and would normally be expected to pull together learning that occurred in previous courses. In fact, many majors already offer or require capstone courses or experiences for their majors.

An ES capstone is a little different in that the course should provide a culminating experience that pulls together learning around two or more of the Essential Studies. This can be done within the context of a capstone already required for a major by, for example, being more intentional about information literacy and critical thinking outcomes within the class (or about other goals – choose the ones that fit with your course). On the other hand, a course that serves as an ES capstone need not be a traditional major capstone at all. If the course is (or could be) limited to seniors and if it addresses (or could address) two or more ES goals, it is a good candidate for an ES capstone. But if faculty in your department don’t want to create a capstone of any sort, remember that other departments will offer ES capstones that can be taken with few or no prerequisites.

An ES capstone is important as a means of emphasizing – one final time – goals that faculty generally agree are important for all students. Especially for transfer students who may come to UND from schools where learning goals and general education requirements are quite different from ours, the ES capstone will be a means of reinforcing outcomes that all graduates should achieve. The ES capstone will be the one place where all UND graduates can count on receiving a thorough and thoughtful emphasis on at least two of our ES goals – right before graduation, and in a context where the learning is especially likely to be perceived by students as important.

What are the features of a capstone?

The capstone is an upper division Essential Studies requirement for all UND students, even those who transfer in with lower division general education/Essential Studies requirements completed. It is separate from the distribution requirement, but it is designed to integrate and reinforce Essential Studies goals.

You may want to consider developing/revising a course for validation as an Essential Studies capstone course, either with discipline-specific pre-requisites (to be taken by students within your department or college) or with no specific pre-requisites (to be open to students from all majors). All capstone courses must be open only to students with senior status, and all must emphasize at least two of the Essential Studies goals.
Essential Studies (ES) is the academic core of your university experience. The courses offered in the ES curriculum provide broad and diverse perspectives and help you acquire essential intellectual skills.

All Essential Studies courses contribute to your breadth of knowledge. UND’s ES program includes a distribution requirement that introduces you to academic fields with Communication, Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities, and Math/Science/Technology. At the same time as you select courses across these subject areas, you will be choosing courses that are designed to help you achieve these goals:

- Use thinking and reasoning skills appropriately in various situations;
- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing;
- Access and evaluate information in a variety of contexts;
- Understand and apply knowledge of social-cultural diversity.

When you choose your Essential Studies courses, you are encouraged to venture into areas that are new, interesting, or arouse your curiosity. Also consider choosing ES courses that complement each other, so that you can extend what you learn in individual courses.

[ES goals, requirements, and other supporting/explanatory documentation will follow in the catalog.]