Appendices

A. Institutional Growth as a Context for GE Reform and Its Administrative Implications

In the years leading up to or since the start of the work of the General Education Task Force in May 2022, Kean University has experienced and continues to experience significant changes that have shaped the work of the GE Task Force, as well as the future conceptualization of this core curriculum that is at heart of all Kean student's undergraduate degree pathways and the aspirations of the institution. These transformative initiatives, plans, and/or articulations of new areas of focus or direction at the institution shape in real and practical ways the decisions and thinking about the General Education Program and its possibilities at Kean University (e.g., pedagogical, engagement with the community, advancement of equity and access, integration of teaching and research projects). Some of these changes are noted below:

• In fall 2023, the Board of Trustees approved a newly updated mission: "Kean University, New Jersey's first Urban Research University, creates a world-class, innovative and inclusive society through equity and excellence in teaching, learning, global research, and impactful public engagement." Mission fulfillment is central to the work of any institution of higher education and is measured, in part, by the Student Learning Outcomes embedded within the curriculum of the General Education Program.

• As referenced in the new mission in the bullet above, Kean University was designated as the state's first Urban Research University in November 2021. This designation recognizes Kean's growing role in conducting research and generating solutions to issues in urban communities statewide (this work engages faculty, staff and students).

• Kean commenced a partnership with EAB, a Washington D.C.-based education firm, through the Moon Shot for Equity initiative, a national network of colleges and universities committed to eliminating equity gaps in higher education by 2030. This work promotes 15 research-based best practices designed to remove systemic barriers to student success and ensure that all students persist to graduation. Kean was the first university in New Jersey to join MSE and is now known as "Moonshot for Kean." This partnership and its timeline are critical to work across the Kean campus.

• Kean University was named a Professional/Doctoral University by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in February 2022. This designation reflects the institution's increased number of doctoral programs offered and degrees awarded, and Kean's strong commitment to research. This new status is central to Kean's future designation as an R2 Research University under the Carnegie Classification, the leading framework for recognizing and describing institutions in U.S. higher education. This is expected in 2025. Building student skills and preparedness for their future careers is central to any General Education Program and developing student's research skills and supporting undergraduate research (with the assistance of a growing body of research-intensive faculty), and fostering faculty-student research projects, inclusive of publication, is a key goal of the university.

• The new Centre for Africana Studies was launched February 2024. This Centre is important to Kean's designation as an MSI/Minority Serving Institution, and it focuses on the development of

educational programming aimed at supporting the implementation of the Amistad curriculum for K-12 students across New Jersey. The Center is designed to become a leading resource for scholarly research, community engagement, and educational programming. Any institution's General Education Program must support inclusivity and belonging and be grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy - this new Centre is a practical reminder of the need to serve the needs of all Kean University students and fulfilling the mission as an MSI.

• The university will soon launch CRECE, a Hispanic Leadership Center. As an HSI/Hispanic Serving Institution this is an important milestone in the development of the university, similar to the Centre for Africana Studies, noted above.

• The university continues to expand its presence in the State of New Jersey and globally. During the 2023/24 and 2024/25 Academic Year, the university significantly expanded its short-term Travelearn Program, overseen by the International Studies Unit, and built connections with other institutions globally. Kean also launched cross-campus work to increase faculty and student exchanges between campuses and held the first ever President's KU-WKU Academic Retreat. The Retreat focused, in part, on developing cross-campus co-teaching, faculty-student research projects, and both increased faculty and student exchanges. The institution's commitment to helping students become globally adept and support teaching within a global context (inclusive of across different campus spaces) remains critical to its strategic initiatives. As noted above in the proposed General Education model, students can choose a Passion Project, inclusive of study/travel and short-term or semesters on the WKU campus.

• The institution has engaged in sustained hiring of tenure-track faculty over the last three years resulting in over 160 new hires and the reshaping of the faculty body. Senior faculty and new faculty alike will be critical contributors to this new General Education Program and its delivery, inclusive of infusing the curriculum with opportunities to engage with the community, to participate in faculty-student research, and more. Faculty across Colleges, regardless of rank, classification and time on campus, will be expected to teach within and support the newly revised curriculum.

• The institution has transformed access to dis/aggregated data on the Kean and Wenzhou Kean University campus. For Academic Affairs and all other institutional units this has been critical for understanding where performance gaps (e.g. high DFW rates) and other challenges exist within the university curriculum and supports course, program, and College-level data analysis, as well as the development of continuous improvement plans as it relates curriculum and student-support services. Student success within General Education Programs depends on close institutional tracking of needed areas of improvement.

The few items noted above emphasize a powerful trajectory of sustained growth and an institution that is seeking to fundamentally and sustainably transform itself, while continuing to offer an elite education within a public institution setting, be a leader in closing performance gaps, and ensure that the multiple designations that it holds as an institution are realized in the most impactful way in the interest of Kean University students. All of these items are important to the future framework and realization of the new General Education program.

B. Philosophical Underpinnings and Curricular Research Informing the GE Redesign at Kean

Introduction and Statement of Philosophy

Kean's Contribution to Liberal Education
The General Education program is the academic core of the University, providing Kean students with the intellectual tools to live meaningful and productive lives. The program advances the University's missions of academic excellence, equity, inclusivity, wellness, social mobility, and public impact, by offering a broad liberal education that cultivates and empowers the whole person.

Liberal education has an ancient lineage, dating back to the Romans, for whom a free society demanded the virtue of magnanimity and open-mindedness among citizens. The Roman philosopher Cicero, for example, asserted that a liberal education should teach humanitas: a humane attitude toward one's fellow citizens. As the idea of liberal education developed, especially during the Renaissance, it grew to encompass notions of human flourishing and independent thought. The Enlightenment era, which helped to inaugurate modern democracy, understood liberal education to cultivate not only kindness to one's fellows, but also an individual mind free from the prejudices and inherited myths that curtail rational thought and erode cooperative human endeavors.

There was always one central problem with liberal education: it was elitist and exclusionary. In practice, liberal education was made available only to the very well-to-do while certain groups of people, considered less than fully human, or thought to exist outside the boundaries of "civilization," were barred altogether; likewise, the materials considered for study were equally narrow, neglecting the intellectual and artistic visions of whole groups of people.

Kean University makes an intervention into this long history of liberal education. As a public institution of higher learning, our GE program is invested in the democratization of liberal education to ensure that all students have access to the life of the mind.

Ethos of GE at Kean

The GE program operationalizes this notion of liberal education in three ways:

First, the GE program helps students practice an introspective life of exploration and self-examination. This means developing the habits of mind that allow learners to identify and gather data, assemble evidence to support claims, appreciate and participate in artistic expression, and communicate effectively with different audiences at work and across communities. This also means exposing students to an array of disciplinary perspectives and modes of inquiry so that they can better identify their skills, career interests, and fields of study. We posit that fostering these habits of mind and explorations are essential to helping students imagine a new future for themselves and lead fulfilling lives. Through the exposure within the GE curriculum, we offer students resources to navigate their current and future lives as workers and community members, as well as questions of identity and existence: Who am I? How do I see the world? What can I contribute to it?

Second, the GE program builds students' ability to live socially meaningful lives of mutuality and deliberation with others. This means ensuring students are well prepared to work collaboratively in professional contexts, but it also entails presenting students with the interdependencies that constitute the self: What affinities do I share with those different from me? How might I express my position with reciprocity and generosity? Where might I be complicit in the suffering of others?

Third, the GE Program prepares students for civic engagement and the responsible exercise of power in a democratic society. This means furnishing students with knowledge about histories, communities, and structures of governance and, with tools of inquiry and analysis, to be actively engaged contributors to society.

(The current GE SLO in Active Citizenship is not part of the GE redesign. That is because civic engagement should be widely embraced by all courses in the Cougar Core, showing that it is a natural part of the purpose, and practice, of Kean's GE program.)

It also entails offering students the expressive capacity to consciously anchor themselves in the political world: What language best encapsulates my commitments in collective life? How does tackling the issues I care about expand the meaning of citizenship? How do the choices I face in professional life impact the power dynamics of my society?

GE's Commitment to Inclusivity, Belonging, and Kean's Core Value of Equity

The GE program embraces the transdisciplinary quality of the education it offers, and the diverse contributions that faculty from all corners of the University make to the program. The strength of the education GE offers is the constellation of intellectual influences, analytical lenses, and lived experiences of our faculty. The GE program should challenge students with enduring and perennially contested questions, connecting academic interests and specialties to human existence, social meaning, and public life.

Guided by this robust understanding of inclusivity, Kean's GE program is rooted in the insight that education for professional success and intellectual curiosity are not mutually exclusive. Rather, these aims are mutually constitutive, complementing one another, and what unites us as Kean faculty is that, in a variety of diverse pedagogical contexts, we are all always challenging our students on both levels.

A commitment to Kean's Core Value of Equity in education is the fulcrum of our GE Program. This includes providing students with fungible skills and critical competencies, useful across an array of contexts, that will prepare students for a competitive marketplace and support students in their professional endeavors. However, our commitment to inclusivity is not limited to career development. The GE program also exists to ensure students a space to pursue their curiosities and imaginings. We believe that just like students at elite institutions, Kean's students have the right and capacity to think about their lives and their societies in the most expansive of terms. We further posit that Kean students with their cultural, linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity may, in fact, be better suited to engage in such imaginings given their rich and varied experiences. Through the GE curriculum, we seek to engage Kean students' rich cultural capacities as we seek to expand their understanding of the world and their role within it.

GE Program's Critical Sensibilities

As it has been classically understood, a liberal education is not reducible to the mastery of a specific base of knowledge, disciplinary tradition, or content area. A liberally educated person is distinct from the specialist. Moreover, a liberal education is not reducible to the development of useful skills or trades. A liberally educated person is distinct from the technocrat. While knowledge specialization and technical competency are important and valuable components of the education Kean University provides, they are not the primary focus of the GE program and are best developed within the major academic programs.

What, then, is a liberal education? A liberal education entails a person who is immersed in the world of ideas and able to critically navigate that world with the aid of intellectual virtues. The intellectual virtues of a liberal education transcend disciplinary specialty, even while they may be developed in the specific disciplinary
contexts that we as faculty are familiar with; and such virtues include and exceed technical proficiency, even while they may manifest in concrete classroom practices or competency that we as faculty share with students. Rather, in the tradition of liberal education, we might call these intellectual virtues sensibilities or dispositions. We can define such sensibilities as critical capacities that lend students the ability 1) to discern the appropriate questions to ask of their world, 2) to detect the key assumptions or gaps in knowledge present in prevailing answers to those questions, and 3) to devise forms of inquiry, argument, or interpretation that enlighten those questions in new ways.

One way to grasp this is via Hanstedt's contrast between knowledge and insight. A liberal education anchored in critical sensibilities aims not so much at the dissemination of knowledge as the inculcation of insight:

"Knowledge, as I'm using it here, is quantitative: Do you have the right information, yes or no? Insight is qualitative—not just, 'Do you know X and Y?' but, 'When X and Y fail, what ideas, thoughts, or cognitive paradigms do you have that will allow you to respond to this new, unanticipated problem?' Insight requires knowledge, of course; students in any field need to know the concepts of that field. But insight is also able to move one beyond the known and the familiar into the unanticipated and the unfamiliar" (Hanstedt, p. 12, 2024).

By anchoring our GE program in critical sensibilities, or values, we are deliberately interweaving the distributive and the integrative models of general education. This approach is distributive because it offers students courses in essential competencies and values-based areas taught by specialists in their fields. It is integrative because the organizing principle of such courses will not be an exhaustive survey of a given field, but the development of a critical sensibility that, though stemming from a disciplinary tradition, extends within the course beyond that discipline in its applicability to students' lives and communities, allowing students to become agents of that sensibility, exercising original thought through it.

C. A Survey of GE Programs Nationwide: Current Trends and Best Practices

General Education (GE) programs in higher education serve as the foundational academic experience for students (at least 25% of a student's total credits for degree), providing them with a broad range of skills, knowledge, and perspectives across multiple disciplines. Over time, GE programs have evolved to reflect shifting educational priorities, societal needs, and pedagogical innovations. Here is an overview of current trends and best practices in GE programs nationwide.

Current Trends in General Education Programs

1. Interdisciplinary and Thematic Approaches

Increasingly, universities are organizing GE programs around interdisciplinary themes or "pathways" that allow students to explore a central topic from multiple disciplinary perspectives. For example, themes like sustainability, global citizenship, or social justice allow students to connect coursework in science, humanities, and social sciences.

o   Best Practice: Themed Learning Communities (TLCs) group students together in courses that share a common theme, promoting deeper connections between disciplines and encouraging collaborative learning across subjects.

2. Focus on Skills Development

There has been a strong emphasis on developing critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills within GE courses. The goal is to ensure that students are not only gaining knowledge but also developing the ability to apply their learning to real-world challenges.

o   Best Practice: Many universities have adopted the LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) initiative from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), which outlines essential learning outcomes such as critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and teamwork.

3. Global Competency and Diversity

GE programs are increasingly emphasizing global awareness and cultural diversity, reflecting the growing importance of preparing students to live and work in a diverse, interconnected world. This includes courses on global history, languages, and cultural studies.

o   Best Practice: Institutions like Georgetown University incorporate a Global Engagement Certificate into their GE, ensuring students engage with global perspectives through study abroad, internships, and coursework.

4. Integration of High-Impact Practices (HIPs)

High-impact practices, such as undergraduate research, service learning, internships, and study abroad, are being integrated into GE programs. These activities provide students with experiential learning opportunities that deepen their academic engagement.

o   Best Practice: Capstone projects are becoming a popular GE requirement, offering students the chance to synthesize and apply their learning from multiple disciplines in a culminating experience.

5. Digital Literacy and Technology Integration

As technology continues to become more integral to education and the workforce, and at an accelerating pace (e.g. AI), GE programs are incorporating digital literacy as a core competency.

Courses may include modules on navigating digital environments, ethical use of information, and data analysis.

o　　　Best Practice: Digital literacy requirements in GE, such as those implemented at institutions like the University of Texas at Austin, ensure that students are proficient in using digital tools for academic and professional purposes.

Best Practices in General Education Programs

1.　　Flexible and Personalized Pathways

Many institutions are offering flexible pathways through GE programs, allowing students to select courses that align with their interests and career goals, while meeting core requirements. This flexibility enhances student engagement by providing more autonomy in shaping their educational experience.

o　　　Example: The University of Arizona offers "General Education Signature Courses," allowing students to personalize their learning through interdisciplinary courses with real-world relevance.

2.　　Assessment and Continuous Improvement

Effective GE programs regularly assess student learning outcomes and use data to refine curricula. This ensures that GE programs remain relevant and aligned with institutional goals, as well as the changing needs of students.

o　　　Best Practice: AAC&U VALUE Rubrics are widely used by institutions to assess essential learning outcomes in GE programs, providing a standardized approach to measuring student success in areas like critical thinking and written communication.

3.　　Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility

Many GE programs now emphasize civic engagement, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility, preparing students to contribute meaningfully to their communities and address societal challenges.

o　　　Best Practice: Institutions like Portland State University require students to participate in community-based learning as part of their GE curriculum, fostering civic responsibility through engagement with local organizations.

4.　　Integrated Learning and Co-Curricular Connections

Some GE programs link classroom learning with co-curricular activities, such as service learning, research, and leadership development, to create a more holistic educational experience. These programs emphasize learning that extends beyond the classroom.

o　　　Best Practice: Learning communities that connect academic courses with co-curricular programs enhance student engagement and retention by integrating their academic and social experiences (The Chronicle of Higher Education).

The Top 3 Most Important Lessons Learned about GE Trends & Best Practices in the US

Since receiving its initial charge from Provost David Birdsell on May 13, 2022, the GE Task Force and the University Senate's GE Committee have devoted time and effort towards understanding the contemporary landscape of GE reform in the United States:

- Members of the GE Task Force presented case studies of select universities to make the group aware of the types of revision completed in the first decades of the 21st century.
- The University Senate's GE Committee formed an ad hoc committee dedicated to researching the current state of General Education in the US, resulting in a document, Definitions, Models, and Resources, compiled by Dr. Marguerite Mayhall.
- Prof. Rachel Evans, Chair of the GE Task Force, and Dr. Dean Casale, Chair of the University Senate's GE Committee, presented a Zoom webinar on May 22, 2024: GE Reform in the USA: Trends and Best Practices. Their presentations, along with that of Dr. Alex Guzman, member of the GE Task Force Executive Committee, summarized significant findings related to the presentation's title, including two case studies (Portland State University and Boston University).

A review of these resources reveals The Top 3 Most Important Lessons Learned about GE Trends & Best Practices in the US:

1. As Dr. Alex Guzman noted in his May 22, 2024 examination of Portland State University's University Studies program, i.e., its General Education curriculum, ongoing assessment is a vital part of the reform process. PSU committed time and resources to evaluating and documenting successes during its implementation period, 2018 – 2022. Kean should be prepared to do the same.

2. An additional key take-away came from Prof. Rachel Evans' overview of Boston University's HUB curriculum on May 22, 2024. She discovered the value of having strong connections between a university's mission, the conceptual framework for its new GE curriculum, and the use of a catchy name and an attractive infographic. When there is alignment between these elements, GE reform is poised for success. For example, Boston identified 21 Competencies that represent its core beliefs in what students should know and be able to do. Rather than streamline and reduce that number, Boston committed to all 21. They used a circular graphic organizer to evoke the hub of a wheel, providing a recognizable image to communicate its underlying philosophical belief. Kean would do well to ensure alignment between its unique mission, the content/form of its GE program, and the nomenclature it eventually selects.

3. The second edition of Paul Hanstedt's General Education Essentials: A Guide for College Faculty provides a useful continuum to understand the variety of General Education models that have emerged in the last two hundred years, with a distributive model on one end (Gen Ed 1.0), an integrative model in the middle (Gen Ed 2.0), and the high-impact practices model on the other end (Gen Ed 3.0). Hanstedt adeptly articulates the content and form of each iteration of General Education curricula, citing their distinctive characteristics.

Using this schema, the current ideation of Kean's GE program is 1.0, the distributive model, with several examples of high-impact practices (HIPs) associated with the 3.0 model. The March 2022 roster of Approved Distribution Courses identifies 93 possible courses. The AAC&U recognizes 11 HIPs, and 5 are represented in the current GE program: Common Intellectual Experiences, First Year Seminars, Diversity/Global Learning, Undergraduate Research, and Service Learning.

On May 29, 2024, the GE Task Force and the University Senate's GE Committee co-sponsored "The Future of GE at Kean: Identifying Campus-Wide Needs." During this interactive session attended by more than 75 stakeholders, the campus community considered its preferences among the 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0 models.

The collected responses seemed to call for a continued mixture of the three.

D. Curricular and Instructional Foundation for the GE Program's Interdisciplinary, Place-Based and Learning-Community Cohorts

Thematic, Interdisciplinary Learning

Thematic, interdisciplinary learning in higher education is an approach that organizes curricula around central themes or problems, crossing traditional disciplinary boundaries to offer students a more integrated and holistic learning experience. Instead of learning in isolated academic silos, students explore a topic or theme from multiple perspectives, drawing on various fields of knowledge to address complex, real-world issues.

Key Characteristics:
1.   Thematic Focus: Courses are designed around central themes or big ideas such as sustainability, social justice, global health, or technology in society.
2.   Interdisciplinary Approach: Students learn from multiple academic disciplines, blending knowledge from fields like science, humanities, social sciences, and engineering to analyze and address the chosen theme.
3.   Collaboration and Integration: Faculty from different departments collaborate on course design, and students often engage in interdisciplinary projects that require the integration of ideas and methods from various fields.

Benefits of Thematic, Interdisciplinary Learning:
1.   Complex Problem Solving: By learning through an interdisciplinary lens, students develop the ability to tackle complex, multifaceted problems that cannot be solved through one discipline alone. This approach mirrors real-world issues, which are often interconnected across social, scientific, and ethical dimensions.
2.   Enhanced Critical Thinking: Students are encouraged to think critically about how different disciplines approach questions and problems. This helps them develop flexible thinking skills and the ability to synthesize diverse viewpoints and methodologies.
3.   Engagement and Relevance: Themes are often drawn from pressing societal issues, making learning more relevant and engaging for students. By applying knowledge to real-world problems, students can see the direct impact of their education on society.
4.   Collaborative Learning: The interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum encourages collaboration among students with different academic backgrounds and interests, fostering teamwork and communication skills.
5.   Preparation for Diverse Careers: Many careers today require interdisciplinary knowledge and the ability to work across fields. This approach better prepares students for careers that demand flexibility, problem-solving, and adaptability in an increasingly interconnected world.

Examples in Higher Education:
•   Stanford University's "Thinking Matters" program: This program encourages first-year students to engage with broad, thematic questions like ethics, global citizenship, or the role of science in society, drawing from multiple disciplines to explore these topics.
•   University of Michigan's Interdisciplinary Concentration Program (ICP): Students design their own

interdisciplinary curriculum around a central theme of their choice, integrating courses from different departments.

The Hanstedt terminology provides a concise vocabulary that the entire community can use when referring to its options for GE re-design.

Place-Based Learning Experiences

Place-based learning (PBL) in higher education is an educational approach that uses the local environment, culture, and community as the primary context for learning. This method connects students' academic work to real-world issues and engages them in meaningful, experiential learning that extends beyond the classroom.

Key Characteristics:
- Local Context: Place-based learning emphasizes learning within the specific ecological, social, cultural, and economic context of the students' surroundings. It integrates local knowledge and community collaboration.
- Experiential Learning: Students engage in hands-on activities, such as fieldwork, community projects, or research tied to local issues.
- Interdisciplinary Approach: PBL often spans multiple disciplines, linking areas such as environmental science, sociology, anthropology, and urban planning, providing students with a holistic view of the subject matter.

Benefits of Place-Based Learning:
1. Deep Engagement and Relevance: By connecting academic content to real-world local issues, students find learning more relevant, which increases their motivation and engagement.
2. Civic Responsibility: Students develop a stronger sense of community and civic responsibility by working directly with local stakeholders, which fosters collaboration and a deeper understanding of societal challenges.
3. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: PBL encourages students to address complex, real-world problems, which helps them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
4. Cultural Competence: Students gain insights into local history, culture, and practices, helping them develop cultural competence and a deeper connection to the place they study and live.

Examples in Higher Education:
- Sustainability and Environmental Programs: Many universities, such as the University of Vermont and Stanford University, have adopted PBL in their sustainability programs, where students engage in projects focused on conservation, renewable energy, or local food systems.
- Community Development: Programs focused on urban studies or social work often incorporate PBL by having students work on community development initiatives, such as affordable housing projects or local health campaigns.

Learning Communities

Cohorted Learning Communities in higher education involve groups of students taking a set of courses together over a specified period, often within their first year. These students form a cohort, sharing

academic experiences and building social connections that can support their learning and development.

Key Characteristics:

1. Linked Courses: Students in a learning community typically take two or more courses together that are often thematically or disciplinary connected.
2. Cohort Model: Students move through their courses together as a group, fostering close peer relationships and collaboration.
3. Interdisciplinary Approach (Optional): Many cohorted learning communities link courses from different disciplines to offer a more integrated educational experience.
4. Faculty Collaboration: Faculty often work together to coordinate assignments or projects across the linked courses, encouraging interdisciplinary thinking.

Benefits of Cohorted Learning Communities:

1. Increased Sense of Belonging: The cohort model helps students build a support network of peers, which can improve engagement and retention. Students are more likely to feel connected to their peers and the institution.
2. Enhanced Academic Support: Learning communities provide students with built-in academic support from both their cohort and faculty. This collaborative environment encourages active participation, peer learning, and shared problem-solving.
3. Interdisciplinary Learning Opportunities: When courses are linked around a theme or topic, students gain a more comprehensive understanding by examining the subject from different academic perspectives, leading to deeper learning.
4. Higher Retention Rates: Studies show that students in learning communities tend to have higher retention and graduation rates due to the social and academic support they receive, particularly in their first year.
5. Active and Collaborative Learning: Learning communities often use active learning strategies, such as group projects, peer review, and discussions, which foster critical thinking and collaborative skills.

Examples:

• University of Washington's First-Year Interest Groups (FIGs): In this model, students take courses together in their first term while participating in a small seminar designed to ease the transition to college.
• Queens College's Learning Communities Program: This program links courses around specific themes like social justice or sustainability, allowing students to explore topics across multiple disciplines.

Instructional Foundation: Inclusive Teaching

Inclusive teaching in higher education involves creating an equitable learning environment where all students feel valued, respected, and able to succeed. It seeks to engage students' socio-cultural identities, creating bridges between the prior knowledge students bring to college and academic subject matter. Inclusive pedagogy recognizes and celebrates diversity in the classroom and seeks to engage all students through intentional instructional practices that draw out students' funds of knowledge. Below

are key pedagogical practices associated with inclusive teaching:

1. Active Learning and Student-Centered Teaching

• Practice: Active learning involves engaging students in activities such as group discussions, problem- solving tasks, and peer teaching, which can accommodate diverse learning styles. Student-centered teaching emphasizes the importance of student participation in their own learning process.

• Why It's Inclusive: These methods encourage engagement from all students, allowing them to connect with material in ways that work for them, rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all lecture format.

• Examples: Incorporating small-group work, think-pair-share activities, and case studies can promote participation across different backgrounds and abilities.

2. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

• Practice: UDL is an educational framework that involves designing course materials, assessments, and activities to be accessible to all students, offering multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement.

• Why It's Inclusive: By providing multiple ways for students to access information (e.g., videos, texts, podcasts) and demonstrate learning (e.g., presentations, essays, portfolios), UDL accommodates diverse learning preferences, abilities, and backgrounds.

3. Culturally Sustaining Teaching

• Practice: Culturally sustaining teaching acknowledges and integrates students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. This includes incorporating diverse perspectives in the curriculum, using teaching examples that resonate with students' experiences, and fostering an inclusive classroom culture.

• Why It's Inclusive: This practice helps students feel recognized and respected, making the learning experience more relevant and engaging, particularly for students from underrepresented groups. Incorporating diverse voices in the curriculum allows students from marginalized backgrounds to see themselves reflected in the content and encourages all students to appreciate a range of perspectives.

• Examples: Using case studies, readings, and examples that reflect diverse cultures, perspectives, and histories, and inviting students to share their experiences related to course content. Selecting course materials that reflect a diversity of authors, perspectives, and research traditions. This practice ensures that students encounter and engage with viewpoints and scholarly contributions from a wide range of identities.

4. Equitable Assessment

• Practice: Equitable assessment involves designing assessments that provide all students with an equal opportunity to succeed. This may include offering varied assessment methods (e.g., written essays, oral presentations, creative projects) and providing clear grading criteria.

• Why It's Inclusive: Different students may demonstrate their understanding in different ways, and offering multiple types of assessments can help reduce bias and barriers to success.

5. Fostering a Sense of Belonging

•	Practice: Inclusive teaching encourages the development of a classroom culture where all students feel that they belong and are capable of succeeding. This includes building a supportive classroom community, using inclusive language, and creating opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction.

•	Why It's Inclusive: A sense of belonging can enhance motivation, persistence, and academic performance, especially among students from marginalized or underrepresented groups.

•	Examples: Creating a "week zero" welcome module, actively facilitating discussions so all voices are heard, and acknowledging diverse contributions to class discussions.

6. Transparent Teaching

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11. Transparent Teaching

• Practice: Transparent teaching involves clearly explaining the purpose of assignments, the criteria for success, and the processes involved in completing tasks. It ensures that students understand why they are learning certain materials and how it will benefit them.

• Why It's Inclusive: Transparency helps reduce barriers to learning for students who may be unfamiliar with academic expectations, fostering clarity and fairness in grading and participation.

• Examples: Portfolios help students better recognize their own growth, promote student agency in their learning, and align their learning goals to the expectations of the course.

12. Reflective Teaching and Continuous Improvement

• Practice: Inclusive teaching is also about continuous self-reflection by instructors. This involves evaluating one's own biases, learning from students' feedback, and adapting teaching practices based on their needs and experiences.

• Why It's Inclusive: Self-reflection helps instructors remain aware of implicit biases and challenges that students from diverse backgrounds may face, allowing for adjustments that promote inclusivity and belonging. Meeting with other faculty members to discuss student challenges promotes reflective practice.

E. Timeline of the General Education Task Force Activities: 2022-2024

In this section we provide a historical, detailed overview of all the activities related to the development and evolution of the current proposed plan for GE restructuring.

May 13, 2022: Formation of the Task Force and Its Charge

During the initial meeting of the GE Task Force on May 13, 2022, David Birdsell, Ph.D., Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, shared a new vision for Kean's General Education

curriculum that would be distinctive, legible, and linear. He further described his vision, saying that the new version should have the following traits:

1. Intellectually vibrant
2. Shared – students should receive a similar foundational education
3. Does the lion's share of academic major preparation
4. Interdisciplinary
5. Possess few branches at the foundational base; many at the top
6. Requires no backtracking when a student changes majors
7. Facilitates student progress

The GE Task Force was charged to explore how to apply this vision to Kean. Made of representatives from all colleges and members representing students' interests, the GE Task Force began working collaboratively to:

- Create a genuine, shared core,
- Support graduation in four years with a major and up to two minors, for incoming first-year students,
- Have the General Education curriculum accepted by all majors with few or minor modifications,
- Craft an inquiry-based curriculum,
- Build a curriculum around concrete observations that would then back into theory,
- Derive as much of the curriculum as possible from place and community,
- Create multiple points of contact throughout the first year, i.e., an integrated curriculum, and
- Emphasize throughout the values of equity, inclusion, analytical rigor, sustainability, and mutual respect.

Initial Members of the General Education Task Force

Jace Hargis GE Task Force, Chair
Vice President for Curriculum & Faculty Development

Hana Abouhaib
Student Representative

Bridie Chapman
Executive Director, School of General Education

Dawn Marie Dowd
Student Success & Retention

Rachel Evans
General Education Committee

Dave Farrokh
University Planning Council

Alex Guzman
College of Education

Sean Keegan-Landis
General Education

Amrita Kaur
Wenzhou-Kean University

Kihwan Kim
College of Business & Public Management

Delia Latini
Student representative

Don Marks
University Senate

Revathi Narasimhan
Hennings College of Science, Mathematics, and Technology

Abigail Perkiss
College of Liberal Arts

Robyn Roebuck
Kean Skylands

Andrea Rosa
Office of the Registrar & University Curriculum Committee

Daniela Shebitz
Hennings College of Science, Mathematics, and Technology

John van Brunt
Enrollment Management

Karen Villanueva
College of Health Professions & Human Services

Darion Washington
Michael Graves College

GE Task Force Resource Members:

Mukul Achayra
Office of Accreditation & Assessment

Jessica Adams
Kean Ocean

Hong Gao
Institutional Research

Joy Moskovitz
Office of the Provost and Senior V.P. for Academic Affairs

Summer 2022: Meetings with Jace Hargis
During the Summer of 2022, the GE Task Force held periodic meetings. One of the initial tasks was to review the institutional history of GE, including recent GE assessment results. Members of the Task Force conducted research into GE at other universities and shared their findings with the group. This led to some initial conversations about what the conceptual framework for a new GE curriculum could look like.

Fall 2022: Proposal by Dr. Birdsell

With the departure of Jace Hargis from Kean, Provost Birdsell called several meetings of the GE Task Force to get a sense of its progress. At one such meeting, the Provost proposed a concept that got the Task Force excited: the whistle stop concept!

Provost Birdsell imagined that various disciplines could be united around a place– a town in New Jersey that would be accessible by NJ Transit's rail system. Each of the disciplines would be explored in the context of the "whistle stop," and utilize experiential opportunities for learning in the town. Provost Birdsell shared a vision for this to be done in 15 credit chunks of curriculum with faculty collaborating, thus allowing for interdisciplinary study. He suggested that one faculty member would serve as the central organizer to orchestrate the interweaving of ten proposed disciplines (listed below) and to function as an advisor to the students in the year- long cohort. This role came to be known as "The Conductor," to continue with the train theme.

The ten proposed disciplines

1. Demography/Sociology
2. History
3. Cultural Resources
4. Business & Economics
5. Wellness (incl. Food & Health)
6. Water
7. Air
8. Soil
9. Writing
10. Speaking

Dr. Birdsell proposed that across these ten disciplines, students would develop critical thinking, writing, public speaking, and quantitative literacy skills/capacities.

Inspired by Dr. Birdsell's vision, several place-based examples were developed by members of the Task Force, including New Brunswick (designed by Rachel Evans) and a state-wide use of historical landmarks and significant sites (designed by Robyn Roebuck).

With the whistle stop curriculum in mind, the Task Force started to identify the ways in which such designs could be challenging in terms of curricular content, financial resources, logistical issues, and administrative considerations. As a result, the List of Legitimate Concerns is created to document these factors going forward.

November 9, 2022: Bread Givers

On November 9, 2022, Bridie Chapman, then Executive Director of the School of General Studies, presented to the Task Force an impressive and rich example of the whistle stop curriculum using Elizabeth, NJ with an anchor text in a transdisciplinary, place-based manner. She chose Anzia Yezierska's 1925 novel, Bread Givers, since part of the plot involves the central characters moving to Elizabeth. Chapman was able to demonstrate that using a common read as the central inspiration for a cohort of students could lead to interdisciplinary studies and excursions to relevant local sites. In keeping with the learning outcomes for GE*1855 (Freshman Seminar), Chapman saw a vehicle to expose all incoming freshmen at Kean to improved critical reading skills. Members of the Task Force and Provost Birdsell were appreciative of Chapman's well-considered sample curriculum and would return to Bread Givers as an appealing application of Birdsell's ideas for the next six months.

December 3, 2022: Birdsell presents at BoT Meeting

In order to keep the Kean University Board of Trustees up to date with the effort to revise Kean's GE Curriculum, the Provost made a presentation at the December 3, 2022 meeting. In his remarks, Dr. Birdsell said that the new GE curriculum would be

1.) a fully intentional, fully integrated first year, 2.) supportive of powerful combinations of majors and minor opportunities, and 3.) a distinctive Kean experience for everyone.

January 11, 2023: GETF Retreat

Under the leadership of recently named Chair of the GE Task Force, Prof. Rachel Evans, the GETF met at Kean's Skylands Campus for a day of work. Evans, as representative of the University Senate's GE Committee, led the attendees through a brainstorming process, listing on chart paper the possible curricular units that could be included as parts of ten disciplines. Participants contributed topics and thematic suggestions that could be orchestrated into both stand-alone, discipline-specific content and interdisciplinary studies. The outcome from the retreat was that the GETF had proof of concept that the 10 identified disciplines could create a complete, engaging, and relevant multidimensional curriculum.

Spring 2023: GETF Work Continues

After the January Retreat, the Task Force continued to meet every-other-week in three Working Groups:
• Curriculum Content
• Logistics
• Communication of Vision

The Curriculum Content Working Group generated discipline-specific examples of 15- and 30- week

curricular sequences based on the expertise represented. Bridie Chapman further developed her Bread Givers example into a more robust curricular structure.

The Logistics Working Group used the latest ideas from the Curriculum Content team and started to map out how 15 credit blocks could be scheduled in a sample student's schedule. They recommended that students could select to be part of a morning, afternoon, or evening cohort, allowing students some flexibility to accommodate individual preferences and needs.

The Communication of Vision Working Group focused on improving the Task Force's external communication, especially on its website. Knowing that a public forum was in the process of being planned to share an update with the campus community, this team started to craft language and strategies to get the word out about the opportunity to attend either in-person or remotely.

All three Working Groups continued to update the List of Legitimate Concerns.

March 16, 2023: Laying New Tracks

This event, held in-person at the Little Theatre and streaming on Zoom attracted more than 300 University colleagues. The presenters included Hana Abouhaib (giving their own testimonial about their experience with the current GE curriculum), Dr. David Birdsell (providing the rationale for why changing Kean's GE program is an imperative), Rachel Evans (sketching out how the Bread Givers example might work), and Robyn Roebuck (addressing the logistical concerns already identified). The presentation was recorded and posted on the Task Force's website.

April 2023: Six College-Specific Meetings

Because the March 16, 2023 presentation didn't allow any time for questions or comments, the Task Force planned college-specific sessions as part of a "listening tour" to collect feedback unique to each college's needs.

> April 10   MGC
> April 12   CHPHS
> April 13   CLA
> April 17   COE
> April 17   CBPM
> April 18   CSMT

As a result of the feedback collected at these six meetings, the Task Force initiated changes to the proposal immediately. Most importantly, the colleges spoke of the difficulty of blocking off 15 credits in each of a student's first semesters at Kean; many majors need to be able to get first year students into important introductory courses. So instead of conceiving that they would take 15 General Education credits in both Semesters 1 & 2, the proposal was amended to 12 credit blocks per semester.

Spring 2023: The GETF Executive Committee

Given the complexity of the Task Force's agenda, an Executive Committee was formed to allow for the

division of labor and to create a small leadership circle: Rachel Evans, Bridie Chapman, Liza Bolitzer Alex Guzman, and Robyn Roebuck.

May 30 & 31, 2023: Fourteen GE-constituents Listening Meetings

While the "listening tour" in April was fruitful, there were still key stakeholders in Kean's GE program that had not had a chance to share their thoughts about the March 16, 2023 presentation and its implications. The GETF Chair, accompanied by several members of the Executive Committee, created additional meetings with the faculty delivering the current GE curriculum. The sessions were scheduled at 45-minute intervals over two days, with the following designated topics:

- GE 1000 & 3000
- ENG 1030
- ENG 2403
- COMM 1402
- MATH SGS
- GE 202X
- HIST 1062
- CLA Social Sciences
- CLA Humanities
- CLA Arts
- Hennings Sciences
- Hennings Math & CPS
- Drop-in Hour

This marathon allowed for connections with adjuncts and lecturers who teach GE courses. The prompts allowed faculty to articulate the relevance, challenges, and successes of current GE courses:
- What essential topics, or enduring understandings, would you most like to see preserved in the new curriculum? What could we leave out?
- What strategies are you using to create place-based, inquiry-based, and experiential learning in this course? Could you give me some examples?
- What are the main challenges your students face with being successful in your course?
- What are the key learnings your students need to acquire?

The outcome of these conversations was a preliminary sketch of what semesters 1, 2, and 3 could look like in the new GE curriculum, noting that some existing courses should be retained, albeit modified and improved. For example, it seemed like content from ENG 2403 & GE 202X might make sense in Semester 3.

At this point in the restructuring process, it seemed possible that the GE curriculum model might be most feasible as a 12 + 12 + 6 + 6 structure: Semester 1 (12 credits), Semester 2 (12 credits), Semester 3 (6 credits) and Semester 4 (6 credits).

June-August, 2023: Transdisciplinary Teams Meet

At the end of 23SP, a call was put out for full-time faculty members (TT, Tenured, and Lecturer) to apply

to be part of Summer 2023 Transdisciplinary Teams – a group of faculty who would work at designing the new curriculum for Semesters 1 & 2. This yielded strong interest from faculty across Kean, including full-time faculty who had not previously taught within the GE curriculum. The following faculty were hired for the period of June 15 - August 10, 2023.

- Mia Fiore, Ph.D., CLA, Lecturer, English
- Tamara Hart, MFA, CLA, Lecturer, English
- Kalasia Ojeh, Ph.D., CLA, Assistant Professor, Sociology
- Jack Sargent, Ph.D., CLA, Chair, Communications
- Melissa Libby, MFA, CLA, Lecturer, English
- Brid Nicholson, Ph.D., CLA, Chair, History
- Charles Nelson, Ph.D., CLA, Chair, English
- Sean Keegan-Landis, M.A, CLA, Lecturer, Philosophy
- Daniela Shebitz, Ph.D., CSMT, Chair, Environmental & Sustainability Science
- Gabriel Fuentes, M. Arch., MGC, Assistant Professor, Architecture
- Kathleen Lodge, M.A., DGEIS, Lecturer, Mathematics
- Karen Woodruff, Ph.D., COE, Assistant Professor, Elem & PE
- Fran Stavola-Daly, Ed.D., CHPHS, Chair, Health & Human Performance

Before the Teams began their work, four days of faculty development were planned. Led by Bolitzer and Guzman, the first three days focused on providing faculty with a deep dive into the three pedagogical pillars associated with the proposed revision:

- Students' Funds of Knowledge: How might we use what our students know to further their learning of subject matter?
- Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL): How can we develop a teaching and learning environment that engages students and teachers in IBL?
- Experiential Learning: How can we facilitate experiential learning so that it furthers students' learning of subject matter?

These strategies were chosen based on the objectives in restructuring the programs, as defined by Dr. Birdsell and the GE Taskforce and the High Impact Practices, as identified by AAC&U. Each of these initial days was devoted to one of the pedagogical strategies and included assigned readings, demonstrative exercises, and discussions of theory and practice. Across the three days, faculty also explored rooting their collaborations in a particular place in NJ to facilitate students' learning and engagement. For example, one group focused on Elizabeth, NJ, exploring the distinct and related questions from the fields of Architecture, English and Enviornmental Science that students might be led in asking about Elizabeth.

The fourth day was designed to bring the three pillars and exploration of place together, through a hands-on field trip to exemplify the type of place-based experiential learning the new curriculum aspired to contain. Situated on the Kean campus, the teams were asked to consider the question "What is Kean University?"

To explore that question, the Teams went first to the Liberty Hall Academic Center (LHAC) for a morning of activities at the Special Collections Research Library & Archive (SCRLA). Head Archivist Erin

Alghandoor prepared an exploration of artifacts related to actual Kean students from the mid- 20th century. By examining primary sources, the role-playing faculty were able to respond to prompts using critical thinking and peruse report cards, letters, course schedules, newspaper clippings, and other documentation of student life at Kean in the 1940s and 50s. A tour of SCRLA's facilities was also included so that faculty could be better informed of the resources available.

The afternoon was spearheaded by Daniela Shebitz who gave the group a guided tour of the grounds surrounding LHAC. She took the participants to the banks of the Elizabeth River and gave an informative description of the health of the natural environment, often noting what pollutants were present and why. A similar overview was provided by Shebitz when she led the group to the former site of Kean's farm. At both sites, faculty were given the tools to collect water and soil samples. Once the tours were over, the faculty returned to LHAC where they were taught the procedure to conduct analysis of the collected samples using basic test kits.

Everyone agreed that the day was a powerful demonstration of how inquiry- based learning, coupled with experiential opportunities, could engage students in deeper learning. It was agreed that the three pillars of the proposed new curriculum were worth maintaining as the Teams then turned to designing sample curricula that included these three pedagogical best practices. Faculty also agreed about the importance of fully engaging the resources on the Kean campus, as a site of place-based learning.

The remainder of the Teams' summer's work was divided between in-person and Zoom meetings, with the faculty divided into a Semester 1 group, and a Semester 2. By August 10, 2023 the deliverables included draft curricula for three potential courses.

The Teams did their best to include all of the disciplines in an interdisciplinary manner, but were challenged in three key ways: One, faculty struggled to imagine and structure a GE program so radically different from the existing one without models from other institutions. Two, faculty had strong logistical concerns about the implementation of such a curriculum. For example, they worried about processes for bringing students off campus and how 12-credit block classes would appear on a students' transcript. And three, they were challenged by the task of creating both a fully-developed, 12 credit syllabus and a course outline at the same time. In hindsight, it became clear to the Executive Committee that the Teams would have benefitted from having a more structured framework before shaping the content of the curriculum. Nonetheless, the results of the Summer 2023 Transdisciplinary Teams were proof-of-concept that a rich, relevant, and innovative GE curriculum was within reach, it would just take more effort, and more time, to get it right.

Fall 2023: The GE*1855 Project

Inspired by the work of the Transdisciplinary Teams, four faculty and two researchers asked themselves, "How might faculty apply pedagogical concepts from the summer to the teaching of GE*1855 (Freshman Seminar)? And how might these concepts support student engagement?"

Practitioner Researchers
- Tamara Hart
- Bridie Chapman
- Sharmistha Das-iyer

- Sean Keegan-Landis

Researchers
- Liza Bolitzer
- Kalasia Ojeh

All four faculty members used their GE*1855 class as an opportunity to include experiential learning with the following destinations tied to course content:
- Groundwork Elizabeth
- Biology Lab
- Assisted Living Facility
- Yoga Class
- Kean Archives
- Human Rights Institute
- Galleries and exhibits on campus

To include inquiry-based learning, they used the following strategies in their courses:
- Students selected the sites for experiential learning
- Students brought questions to the sites
- Students selected the focus of assignments
- Faculty engaged students in structured inquiry processes during class discussions
- Faculty challenged students to engage in inquiry-based, staged assignments

The professors were able to engage students' knowledge by:
- Identifying students' knowledge and experiences in class and outside
- Assigning reflective writing exercises
- Making connections between course content and "home"
- Empowering students to make choices about destinations for experiential learning sites.

The research of Bolitzer and Ojeh included interviews with the four faculty, classroom observations, as well as weekly faculty meetings, and student surveys. This research yielded insights into both the value of the pedagogical approaches to student learning and the challenges of applying them for faculty.

December 12, 2023: An Update to Interested Parties

Knowing that the campus community was curious about the progress of the Task Force since its March 13, 2023 presentation, the Executive Committee planned an update to interested parties, inclusive of the University Senate, the GE Committee, and Evans's growing email list of people who requested to be kept informed. The agenda included an overview of the project's history complete with outcomes, news about the 24SP Field Test, and a Q & A. The presentation was offered both in-person and on Zoom, with the Zoom recording being posted on the Task Force's website.

24SP Field Test: 5 Faculty with 5 GE Courses in a Learning Community

From the Provost's first explanation of his vision, faculty collaboration and the interdisciplinary integration of courses had been part of the Task Force's goals. In response to the challenges and possibilities demonstrated during the Transdisciplinary Teams work, beginning in September of 2024 the GE Task Force decided to focus on identifying existing curricular models in higher education that

would support those goals. At this time, they began to use the model of learning communities, whereby groups of students take a shared set of classes. To test the viability of this strategy in the context of Kean's GE courses, five faculty, with five different GE courses, volunteered to work together during Spring 2024.

Tamara Hart: ENG*1030
Kathleen Lodge: MATH*1016
Kalasia Ojeh: SOC*1000
Brid Nicholson: HIST*1062
David Birdsell: COMM*1402

While the hope was to have a full cohort of 16 students in all 5 classes, thus creating a true learning community, that was not possible under the timeline of implementation. The Executive Committee, therefore, coordinated with staff to enroll as many students in as many of the class sections as possible, creating a learning community with students taking two, three, four, or five of the sections together. Migration was chosen as the curricular theme that would be used to unite the sections in an interdisciplinary manner.

Laura Baecher, new to Kean as Associate Provost for Faculty Development, facilitated the coordination of the five faculty, starting with several planning sessions to look for places where the five syllabi had obvious intersections between SLOs and course assignments. During the semester, Baecher structured conversations around individual students who were struggling in more than one of the field test's sections, and assignments that addressed the theme successfully.
Experiential learning was included where possible, with Hart taking students to a Newark artists' studio, and Ojeh coordinating a trip to Church World Services in Jersey City.

The field test produced many notable outcomes:
- It provided proof of concept, although different from the Transdisciplinary Teams from Summer 2023, that the three pedagogical pillars could be successful even when more loosely defined.
- With support from Baecher, the faculty's own learning community was able to use best practices.
- The field test experimented with thematic connections between existing GE courses.
- The five faculty members created detailed documentation of pedagogy & curriculum.
- Recognition of the importance of advanced planning and the critical role of advising in ensuring that all students are enrolled in all classes within the learning communities.
The lessons learned from the field test fed directly into the design of the 2024 – 25 GE Fellows & Pilot Faculty program.

January 23 & 30, 2024: Evans presents update to the University Senate

Evans appeared before the University Senate's Executive Committee on January 23, 2024, and the full Senate the following week. Her message was as follows:

"First, the work of the past year has led us to predict that not all GE courses need to change. In some cases, structure and content may stay the same; any changes will be driven by decisions made by faculty who step up as collaborators in the next year.

Next, the GE Task Force is motivated to do what's best for Kean's students. We are encouraged by the potential for high impact presented by learning communities. We also believe in testing out documented pedagogical best practices for ourselves– seeing how Kean faculty adapt, change, and grow alongside their students.

And third: We aim to create a revised timeline and a document with answers to Frequently-Asked-Questions within the next month. We are aware that folks want to know "What's happening with the train idea?"; "Should I revise my guide sheets?"; "What courses are being eliminated?"; and other relevant inquiries. We will do our best to supply current answers with that release.

And lastly: While waiting is hard, so is this work. We know you would like us to present a complete roadmap of everything, but we are not there yet, as this process is very much underway. It is possible that your long-awaited "concept document" could be a task we take on during Summer 2024 through creation of a Working Group dedicated to that effort. A September release date for campus-wide review is possible."

February 20, 2024: Reconvening of the GE Task Force

An update meeting was held to introduce Chair of the University Senate's GE Committee, Dr. Dean Casale, to the GETF and announce a new partnership between the Task Force and the Committee. Other items on the agenda included reviewing a draft of the Frequently Asked Questions document to be distributed to the campus community, and to encourage volunteerism among the members for upcoming projects, including the beginnings of a "concept document."

March 2024: FAQ Released to Campus Community

The Executive Committee of the GE Task Force shared a Frequently Asked Questions document so that faculty and staff across the campus had some of their concerns addressed, including an updated timeline and the short-term work plan for the Task Force.

Spring 2024: 2024 – 25 GE Fellows & Pilot Faculty Named

After receiving applications from faculty across the campus, the GE Task Force proudly announced those named 2024 – 25 GE Fellows (Faculty Learning Community leads) and GE Pilot Faculty (Faculty teaching courses within the Fall 24 pilot):

Fellows

Laura Baecher, VPAA & COE

Dean Casale, CLA

Kim Daniel-Robinson, DGEIS

Tamara Hart, CLA

Melissa Libbey, CLA

Mahchid Namazi, CHPHS

Claire Yun, CBPM

Pilot Faculty

Dena Arguelles, CLA

Joshua Burnett, DGEIS

Jake Carlson, CLA

Sharmistha Das-Iyer, DGEIS

Fred Fitch, CLA

Chris Friend, CLA

Koren Goodman, CHPHS

Sean Keegan-Landis, CLA

Kathleen Lodge, DGEIS

Abigail Maguire, CLA

Stefania Meza, Hennings

Kalasia Ojeh, CLA

Shalander Samuels, CLA

Karen Woodruff, COE

May 2024: Open Letter from Casale & Evans

To generate interest in the planned May 2024 joint presentations, Casale and Evans released an Open Letter containing Proposed Key Pedagogies of the GE Curriculum, a list of AAC&U's High-Impact Practices, and prompts to prepare for the interactive session on May 29, 2024.

Spring 2024: Three Joint Presentations

Sponsored by the GE Task Force and the University Senate's GE Committee, the following three presentations were held:

- April 15, 2024: The Evolution of GE at Kean: Responding to Student Needs
- May 22, 2024: GE Reform in the USA: Trends and Best Practices
- May 29, 2024: The Future of GE at Kean: Identifying Campus-Wide Needs

Summer 2024: Faculty Development for 2024-25 GE Fellows & Pilot Faculty

The GE Fellows and Pilot Faculty participated in faculty development [see Appendix X], led by Laura Baecher, to foster collaboration and to prepare them for teaching students in learning communities as theme-based faculty cohorts. See details in the Fall 2024 Pilot section.

June 2024: Preparing for the Restructuring Document

Following the guidelines for GE reform specified in the University Curriculum Committee Manual (2017), the GE Task Force started laying the groundwork for what the Manual calls a "restructuring document." A group of interested parties, representing faculty and staff, zoomed five times to review the proposed table of contents, to give feedback on Evans' two proposals for GE restructuring, and to adopt a sub-group's Introduction & Philosophical Statement. The members of that sub-group included the following:

Dean Casale

Maxwell Burkey

Kalasia Ojeh

Sean Keegan Landis

F. The GE Pilot at Kean Spring 2024 Field Test

During December 2023, five faculty engaged in a course redesign institute focused on connecting their individual courses (COMM 1402/David Birdsell; SOC 1000/Kalasia Ojeh; MATH 1016 Kathleen Lodge; ENG 1030/Tamara Hart and HIST 1062/Brid Nicholson) around the central theme of Migration. During this time, faculty:

- Reviewed core tenets of the curricular approach (place-based, thematic, learning community)
- Mapped the curriculum of all 5 courses
- Looked for logical places for the courses to overlap
- Completed a "Syllabus audit"
- Examined where the theme of migration emerges in each course
- Identified assignments that were flexible and allowed for interdisciplinarity
- Determined which readings and materials could be shared across courses
- Selected a place to visit off- and on-campus to deepen the student learning experience.

Over the course of the spring 2024 semester, the faculty met bi-weekly to discuss their courses, common challenges, and to stay aligned together with the central theme. Faculty examined student writing samples, assignments as artifacts for discussion and looked at SLOs and VALUE Rubrics. At the end of the semester, a focus group interview was held with 5 students who had been part of at least 2 of these linked courses.

Students reported:
- They enjoyed these courses (as opposed to some outside of this set of courses). They felt they did get to know other students and eventually, "even the commuter students" in some cases.
- They enjoyed the trips above all else (Church World Service and the Muralist). They felt once they took the trips the topics made more sense "opened my eyes" and made the topic of migration "real to me". Students reported having less bias towards immigrants and more understanding that they "don't want to come here--they have to come here". They reported a greater sense of empathy.
- They liked when the professors got to know them, and created a lot of opportunities for interaction in the class. This might have been pair or group work.
- They liked getting feedback from the professor on what they could do to improve, with an opportunity to actually revise or re-do rather than after the grade was already done.
- They liked professors who showed real enthusiasm for the subject.
- They felt like there was too much lecture as opposed to activities and felt more active learning would be better than lectures.
- Some students "never spoke" in class and they felt that the residential students had much more of a community than the commuters "who ran off as soon as the class was over". They recommended more strategies to get everyone to talk right away in the first class so things don't get "awkward" which created a situation where they found some students did all the talking regularly and some never did.
- Policies that allow for more absences without penalization--students found that in some classes at Kean the policies for absence was such that students knew they would fail right away and then just stopped coming. At the end of the spring semester, the experiences and recommendations from the Spring 2024 pilot faculty were applied to the design and implementation of the Fall 2024 pilot.

Selection and Assignment of GE Fellows and Pilot Faculty as an Implementation Model

A call for faculty participants in a GE Learning Communities Pilot for AY2024-2025 was shared in Fall 2023. Faculty were invited to identify what course they would teach in the Pilot, what theme or themes they would be excited to engage with, as well as their experience with inquiry-based and experiential teaching. They also shared their backgrounds and perspectives on teaching first-year students in Kean's General Education curriculum. There was significant interest among faculty and, ultimately, twenty faculty members from four Colleges were selected to teach in one of seven Learning Community Cohorts. For each Cohort there is one GE Faculty Fellow who serves in a leadership role for the group. Each Learning Community addresses one of the following themes from interdisciplinary perspectives: Sustainability, Civic Engagement, or Migration.

G. Fall 2024 GE Pilot

Starting in Spring 2024 and in preparation for Fall 2024, the GE Pilot became connected with the university's Moon Shot for Kean initiative under the "Teaching and Learning" best practices umbrella. GE Faculty began planning the Fall courses in May 2024.

The Fall 2024 pilot involved 7 Learning Communities, 21 faculty, and about 130 students. The GE Pilot Faculty completed a 40-hour (8, 5-hour days) course redesign institute in May-June for these fall courses, and continued to engage for 6 hours per month in and across cohorts through the fall semester.

Overview of the GE Pilot Courses

Here are details about the 7 Learning Communities; the asterisk indicates the GE Cohort Fellow who is serving as the lead faculty in each group.

Cohort A: CPBM Majors - Democracy & Civic Engagement		
Course	Time	Instructor
ENG*1030*GE01	M/TH 12:30 – 1:45	Joshua Burnett
COMM*1402*GE01	M/TH 2:00 – 3:15	Fred Fitch
PA*1001*GE01	W 12:30 – 3:15	Claire Yun*
GE*1000*GE01	T 9:30 – 10:45	Joshua Burnett

Cohort B: All Majors - Migration		
Course	Time	Instructor
GE*1855*GE02	M 9:30 – 12:15	Mahchid Namazi*
ENG*1025*GE02	T/TH	Abby Maguire

	9:30 – 12:15	
CS*0412*GE02	T/TH 11:00 – 12:15	Abby Maguire
MATH*0901*GE02	W 9:30 – 12:15	Kathleen Lodge

Cohort C: All Majors - Migration		
Course	Time	Instructor
GE*1855*GE03	T/TH 9:30 – 10:45	Dean Casale*
ENG*1030*GE03	T/TH 12:30 – 1:45	Chris Friend
SOC*1000*GE03	W 9:30 – 12:15	Kalasia Ojeh
MATH*1016*GE03	M/TH 2:00 – 3:15	Stefania Mez

Cohort D: All Majors - Democracy & Civic Engagement		
Course	Time	Instructor
ENG*1025*GE04	M/TH 9:30 – 10:45	Dena Arguelles
GE*1855*GE04	M/TH 2:00 – 3:15	Kim Daniel-Robinson*
CS*0412*GE04	T/TH 11:00 – 12:15	Shalander Samuels
GE*1000*GE04	W 11:00 – 12:15	Dena Arguelles

Cohort E: All Majors - Sustainability		
Course	Time	Instructor
ENG*1025*GE05	T/TH 9:30 – 10:45	Melissa Libbey*
GE*1000*GE05	T 11:00 – 12:15	Melissa Libbey
SOC*1000*GE05	M/W 12:30 – 1:45	Jake Carlson

Cohort F: All Majors - Migration		
Course	Time	Instructor

ENG*1030*GE06	M/TH 9:30 – 10:45	Tamara Hart*
PHIL*2502*GE06	M/TH 11:00 – 12:15	Sean Keegan-Landis
HED*1225*GE06	M/W 2:00 – 3:15	Koren Goodman
GE*1000*GE06	W 9:30 – 10:45	Tamara Hart

Cohort G: Undecided Majors - Sustainability		
Course	Time	Instructor
ENG*1030*GE07	M 9:30 – 12:15	Laura Baecher*
GE*1855*GE07	M/TH 2:00 – 3:15	Sharmistha Das-Iyer
SUST*1000*GE07	TH 9:30 – 12:15	Karen Woodruff

Curricular Integration

The first charge for the faculty during the course institute was to integrate their course content with each other's courses and with the theme.

Faculty connected their courses via:

Assignments that are constructed via activities carried out across courses.
Theme: Sustainability

For example, a "Call for Sustainability Action" project has students collecting data on sustainability practices via interviews of Kean community members (in the SUST 1000 course); documenting their research methods and findings by writing a research brief (in the ENG 1030 course); and presenting their findings as a research slideshow (in the GE 1855 course).

Community-based experiences that bring together faculty and students from across courses.

Theme: Migration
For example, students investigating migration patterns in the region will travel together with their instructors to a refugee resettlement organization in Jersey City. The SOC 1000 course will prepare them for the content they will encounter in the presentation and the MATH 1016 course will follow up with data that was reviewed to trace refugee migration to New Jersey.

Campus-based experiences that bring together faculty from across courses.

Theme: Civic Engagement
For example, in a unit on "Student Activism", students will visit the Human Rights Institute and in ENG

1025, GE 1855 read and write about how they see student activism today.

Content explorations that interconnect topics from across courses.

Theme: Civic Engagement

For example, students in PA 1001 will examine how non-profit organizations function and serve the needs of their communities. In their COMM 1402 course, they will choose one non-profit to focus on and conduct a rhetorical analysis of how this non-profit presents its cause and gains support from the public.

Internal Consistency

The second charge for the faculty was to identify areas for further alignment, so that students in their learning community experience equitable policies and consistent practices across the courses.

Faculty strengthened their courses via:

•   Common grading scale. Currently, Kean does not have a standardized grading scale and it was noted that for some faculty, a 60 was a D and in other instances, a 65 earned a D. Within each cohort there is now a common grading scale.

•   Common point system to earn grades. Faculty noted that some used a 100 point scale, others a 300 point, and others a 1000 point scale. Within each cohort there is now a common point system.

•   Common attendance policy. Currently, Kean does not have a standardized attendance policy. Within each cohort there is now a common attendance policy.

•   Common portfolio. Currently, Kean does not have a student digital portfolio system. Faculty noted that some have used Digication, others Wordpress, etc., and also that students had to create a different portfolio for each class they were in, and across semesters, rather than developing one single portfolio. Within each cohort there is now a common e-portfolio.

•   Common learning support services. Faculty noted inconsistent access to academic coaching and embedded tutoring. Within each cohort, there is now an assigned academic coach, embedded tutors for each course, and a GE peer mentor through Learning Support Services.

Students' Sense of Belonging

The third charge for the faculty was to consider the student experience as first-time freshmen in their courses and consider how to make sure each student felt welcomed and connected to each other and the available resources at Kean.

Faculty plan to build a strong community and implement high monitoring of student performance via:

Week Zero module. Faculty have designed a pre-semester introduction module for students to begin

introducing themselves and getting to know the cohort faculty before the first class.

Community-building activities. Faculty are purposefully adding in "icebreaker" and community-building activities at the start of each class in the first weeks of the semester.

High-engagement strategies. Faculty will be designing class sessions that move away from lecture and incorporate games, group activities, and require student-to-student interaction.

Early Alerts. Faculty will consult with each other weekly when student absence or other issues arise, and alerts will be entered in Navigate within the first 4 weeks of the courses. When students face mental health, financial, or other challenges the faculty team will work to resolve these needs with the appropriate Kean unit.

Key Performance Indicators for the GE Pilot, Fall 2024:

In the table below, please note:
- the focal area (aspect of teaching and learning practice to be addressed)
- the annual target (improvements over prior year)
- evidence-based practices (within and out of the classes)
- monitoring plan (how we will evaluate impact and course-correct)

Focal Area: GE Course Redesign Focus is on student performance of students within the GE Pilot Learning Communities			
Annual Target	Evidenced-Based Practices (within class)	Evidence-Based Practices (out of classroom)	Monitoring
Increase undergraduate fall to spring retention rate by 1-2% from FA23 to FA24 Increase undergraduate fall to spring retention rate by 1-2% within GE Pilot over non-GE Pilot students in FA24	–Use embedded tutoring model –Place students within thematic, clustered courses –Place students within small (18 max) learning communities with several shared courses –Engage faculty within small (2-4) faculty learning communities to collaboratively plan and deliver curricula –Design on campus	-early alerts with specific details, sent within the first 4 weeks of the course –peer mentoring offered by embedded tutors, academic coaches and GE Mentors (GEM) for all cohort students –ensure every student has access to a well-functioning laptop computer –connect students quickly to health, financial, and other	-examine the uptake and response rates on alerts that are sent -examine the learning support services actually provided –weekly "huddles" within faculty learning communities and use of shared student monitoring document to track students' progress

| Increase ABC (pass) rate by 3-4% for ENG 1030 and the 2 other courses that live in multiple Pilot sections (ENG 1025, SOC 1000) | learning experiences out of the classroom

–Offer off-campus community-based experiences that can later lead to more in-depth Community-Engaged Learning coursework

–Engage students with "Common Read" to connect them across cohort sections

-Build community via a Week Zero session and ongoing community-building activities within sessions

–Utilize a portfolio to collect student work across sections to enable all faculty to view student progress and for students to self-assess

–Use a common grading system (points) and a common grading conversion table (from numerical to letter grades) within cohorts

-Outcomes based curriculum design

-Culturally responsive curriculum | student support services | –conduct monthly data reviews with faculty and staff to assess progress and identify areas for course-correction midstream |