



# Final Proposal to Revise General Education Kean University

Fall 2025

## **Contributors**

This document is derived from the work of the GE Task Force (GETF) and its collaborations with the University Senate's GE Committee and many faculty members from multiple Colleges over the course of more than two years. For a complete list of faculty and staff involved in GE reform work, please see the Timeline of the General Education Task Force Activities 2022-2024 in the appendix of this document.

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## Part 1. Executive Summary

### Purpose of this Document

In Spring 2025, the GE Task Force created a restructuring document according to the specifications in the UCC Manual (2017): “Prior to the preliminary review, a specially appointed committee, consisting of representatives from both faculty and administration – including representatives from the University Planning Council (UPC), the General Education (GE) Committee and the University Curriculum Committee (UCC)– shall develop a restructuring document which analyzes the need for change and describes in detail the proposed program as well as its academic, fiscal, and administrative implications.”

The document, *Considerations for Restructuring the GE Program at Kean*: February 13, 2025, was distributed, as prescribed by the UCC Manual for Major Restructuring of the GE Program: first to the University Planning Council (UPC), then to the GE Committee, followed by the Office of Accreditation & Assessment (OAA) and the University Curriculum Committee (UCC), and finally to the University Senate. Along the way, recommendations were collected and forwarded to the next entity for their review, creating a cumulative collection of suggestions for revision.

At its May 6, 2025 meeting, the University Senate decided that it would deviate from the procedure articulated in the UCC Manual, and instead of moving to open hearings, it requested that the GE Task Force revise *Considerations for Restructuring the GE Program at Kean* so that the accumulated recommendations could first be addressed. The GE Task Force welcomed this invitation, knowing that a revised document would make the open hearings more fruitful, as members of the campus community would be able to respond to an updated version that addresses the Spring 2025 recommendations from the five reviewing bodies.

The aim of this newly revised document, known as *Proposal to Revise General Education at Kean University: Summer 2025* is to provide Kean University community members with a clear explanation of the proposed new General Education curriculum and to consider the wide-ranging implications of the proposed changes.

The appendices provide an overview of the years-long collaborative efforts, situate these efforts within national trends and best practices, and provide a report on the Fall 2024 GE pilot which informed the proposed redesign at scale outlined in this document.

### The Vision for a Redesigned GE Program at Kean

Kean’s General Education Program is the academic core of the University, providing students with the intellectual tools to live meaningful and productive lives. As such, it is central to advancing the University’s mission, as well as its Core Values of academic excellence, equity, inclusivity, wellness, social mobility, public impact, and vision—all to be reaffirmed in the upcoming release of Kean’s next Strategic Plan.

General Education at Kean aims to offer a broad, liberal education that cultivates and empowers the whole person, so the academic implications of the revised GE Program are manifold and will be transformative for the institution and student learning. In addition to creating more dynamic, inclusive, and supportive learning environments through innovative pedagogy and curricular models, a well-

structured General Education Program will support a range of institutional needs and mandates, including such things as:

- providing students with a unique, Kean-specific “Cougar Core” experience that fosters a sense of belonging where individuals feel acknowledged and welcomed in shared experiences,
- decreasing achievement gaps and DFW rates across General Education courses, which are often also the gateway/foundational courses for some of the University’s undergraduate majors,
- building more effective curriculum and improving pedagogy to support increased student persistence, retention, and completion rates,
- improving each student’s individual preparedness for their academic majors and minors by ensuring that students reach proficiency across the GE Program Learning Outcomes and have learned how to successfully “be in college,” and
- strengthening the sense of community on campus and fostering robust connections with the surrounding region.

### **Summary of the Proposed New Structure: The “Cougar Core”**

The new GE Program structure of 31-32 credits for all students will focus on the implementation of High Impact Practices (HIPs) and be guided by a Learning Outcomes model. There is overwhelming evidence that the implementation of HIPs in a core curriculum enriches student learning, particularly for student groups served by Kean. This integrative approach will foster inclusive teaching practices, and its central organizing principle is the student experience in a learning community during Semester 1.

### **The Cougar Core will offer:**

- thematic, interdisciplinary learning communities using two courses in the first semester,
- writing-intensive courses in Semesters 1, 2, and 3/4,
- consistent and intentional use of comprehensive and longitudinal e-portfolios,
- peer-to-peer support through GE peer tutors and embedded tutoring,
- experiential learning activities,
- place-based experiences on- and off-campus,
- common intellectual experiences, including the Common Read, and
- a research course, or GE-approved research experience, in Semester 3 or 4.

Moving away from a disciplinary-based Foundation/Distribution model, the new Cougar Core Curriculum will consist of:

1. Essential Learning courses;
2. Core Competency courses, including a writing-intensive course beyond College Composition, and
3. a sophomore-level research course (i.e., The Passion Project), or GE-approved research experience.

Through this revision, the General Education Program will substantially bolster students’ communication, critical reading, and quantitative literacy skills and foster the habits of mind and values aligned with the Kean mission and Core Values as both a global and locally anchored research institution.

## Implications

Like other exciting initiatives happening at Kean currently, the changes catalyzed by the new GE Program will be transformational in nature. The implementation of the Cougar Core will not only impact teaching and learning but also the behind-the-scenes processes and procedures that affect the student experience in a variety of ways and at multiple touchpoints on their Kean journey. As such, the successful implementation of the new General Education curriculum will require a range of administrative changes and will depend upon the collaborative efforts of Deans, faculty, and staff-- all as partners across the university.

## Recommendations from the GE Task Force include:

- the adoption of centralized scheduling in the Office of the Registrar to provide a holistic, big picture understanding of the use of resources (like classroom space) and to maximize efficiency when creating the needed learning communities;
- the hiring of additional support staff to manage student travel and coordinate faculty schedules across colleges;
- an expanded investment in professional development for faculty teaching in the learning communities, as already implemented by the Center for Teaching Excellence with the Fall 2024 and 2025 pilots,
- a significant reduction in the number of adjunct faculty teaching in GE by calling upon Deans to facilitate the strategic assignment of full-time faculty to teach in the GE Program,
- the creation of an Implementation Team, a joint project of the GE Task Force and the University Senate, comprised of
  - faculty to support curriculum development and guidelines around the new GE PLOs,
  - administrators and staff from key areas (for example, the registrar's office, admissions, advising, assessment) to help move forward the learning community model at scale, to aid all University stakeholders in understanding the new GE Program, and to clarify how each individual's work impacts and can support the transition to the new Cougar Core
- a review by the University Senate of the structure and composition of its General Education Committee to include faculty who teach in the GE Program while serving on the Committee,
- more structured and sustained collaborations between relevant Senate sub-committees (e.g., Writing Emphasis Committee) and the GE Committee to support student learning in the new PLOs.
- early consideration of the pending merger with New Jersey City University, as well as implementation of the new GE Program in Wenzhou, at Kean Ocean, as well as with Kean Online.

## Part 2. How is the GE Program Currently Structured?

The current General Education (GE) curriculum is a university-wide program offering courses housed in twenty different academic areas created in collaboration with the University Senate General Education Committee and the Division of General Education and Interdisciplinary Studies (DGEIS). It follows a Foundation/Distribution model with [eight GE Student Learning Outcomes](#):

- Transdisciplinarity
- Critical Thinking
- Quantitative Literacy
- Communication Literacies: Written & Speech

- Information & Technology Literacy
- Active Citizenship
- Ethical Judgement & Integrity
- Diversity

### **Foundation Courses**

Students are required to complete 13 credits of coursework in foundational areas: speech communication, college composition, a college-level math course prescribed by the major, and a college-based, 2000-level research course, in addition to a Transition to Kean course.

### **Distribution Courses**

The Distribution requirements typically consist of approximately 30 credits for students in BA programs and 20 credits for students in BS programs. Based on major guidelines, students have a choice of Distribution courses in the Sciences and Mathematics (GESM), Social Sciences (GESS), and Humanities (GEHU) and all students are required to take a 2000-level Humanities Distribution requirement (ENG\*2403, World Literature) and the 1000-level Social Science requirement (HIST\*1062, Worlds of History).

### **Capstone Courses**

In addition to the foundational and distribution courses, all major-specific Capstone courses are considered General Education capstones and assessment of GE student learning outcomes (SLOs) in these are intended to support understanding of student learning over the course of the undergraduate experience.

The current iteration of Kean's General Education Program was created in the early 2000's and has evolved in various ways over the last twenty-five years. Significant changes to the GE Program have included a shift away from "concentrations" in GE Distribution credits; the addition of a required transitions course for transfer students; the inclusion of GE\*1855 (the First Year Seminar) as a GEHU option; and a number of additional modifications to developmental, non-credit bearing courses that support student success in first-year courses and aim to bring students into the credit-bearing, college-level General Education Program courses as quickly as possible.

## **Part 3. Why Does the GE Program Need to Change?**

The objectives of Kean's General Education Program historically have been informed by the mission and Core Values of the institution, mandates from the State of New Jersey, and the guidelines of its accrediting body, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). These resources were consulted and provided guidance for the proposed GE reform.

The existing GE Program has demonstrated success in many areas:

- developing critical foundational skills with student work consistently meeting benchmarks in rubric categories across most GE Student Learning Outcomes,
- exposing students to a variety of disciplines and majors,
- administering interventions based on assessment data to foster a culture of continuous improvement,

- building community among first-year students,
- implementing the General Education Mentor (GEM) Program to provide peer-to-peer support for students in their first year in the Transition to Kean course where GEMs model positive student-to-student and student-to-instructor interactions in the classroom, offer direction and answer questions, and share a student perspective on campus involvement and academics,
- carrying out High Impact Practices (HIPs), such as the Common Read Program, the First-Year Seminar course, e-portfolios, and initial research and technology courses.

These achievements are borne out by GE Program assessment data, including the most recent GE Program Review (2021-22) and the MSCHE Self Study (2021-22). The GE Program Review Committee made a series of recommendations that highlight areas for improvement in the Program's current structure and are central to the new GE curriculum being proposed. Those recommendations, and other motivations for change, are listed here.

1. The GE Program Review found that students lacked a clear understanding of the goals or sequencing of courses in their GE experience. Learners do not necessarily have a sense of purpose tied to their Foundational or Distribution courses and the GE courses are often seen as burdensome barriers to courses in the major rather than opportunities for growth and exploration. This lack of a self-evident “why” regarding GE coursework is a common challenge of the Foundation/Distribution model (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Mayhew et al., 2016). The GE Program revision seeks to address this obstacle to student success by better articulating the program’s goals using specifically named PLOs that clearly identify the competencies to be gained through GE coursework.

2. The GE Program Review Committee recommended the GE Program should bring a renewed focus on further development of High Impact Practices (HIPs). Research demonstrates that strategically implementing HIPs across the GE curriculum will foster deeper learning, offer students a sense of identity and community through their core coursework, and provide an experience that is unique to Kean’s GE Program. Although some HIPs have been integrated into GE, as stated above, there is currently not a program-wide, sustainable commitment to these proven strategies or a systematic approach to implementing them, nor is there an assessment process associated with oversight for, and analysis of, the effects of such approaches. The new GE proposal aims to change that.

3. An additional challenge for the current GE Program is the lack of a clear strategy or structure for scaffolding student learning vertically from the first and second year through the major’s GE Capstone. Although faculty teaching Capstone courses assess learning outcomes associated with the GE Program, there has not been a consistent, focused approach for bringing faculty together at regular intervals to think about how General Education courses build on one another and how student learning is developed over time. An example of this relates to writing skills development. Some faculty have expressed concern about student writing in their Capstone courses. Greater vertical integration and discussion about writing instruction and expectations across various levels of GE courses, and the implementation of a robust Writing Across the Curriculum Program, working closely with the General Education and Writing Emphasis Committees, would support teaching and learning in the communication literacy PLOs: Written Communication and Oral Communication. In the new proposal, after taking their Essential Learning courses in Written and Oral Communication, students would select a Writing-Intensive course housed in the Core Competency course roster, preparing them for the

Passion Project, or some equivalent research experience, thereafter. This creates a vertical progression: Written Communication course (Semester 1), Writing-Intensive course (Semester 2), Passion Project (Semester 3 or 4), and capstone course (Semester 7 or 8).

4. The Committee recognized that the University mission and core values have been significantly reconceived in the last five years, and the GE Program should more fully align and give substantive curricular expression to them. Although many of the current GE Student Learning Outcomes reflect Kean's institutional values (such as current GE SLOs in Active Citizenship and Diversity), the new GE Program seeks to foreground Kean's Core Values and strategic direction in new and more expansive ways (e.g., by including Wellness as a PLO and building HIPs into the program in a sustainable manner). This will bolster crucial links between the principles guiding the University and the experiences Kean commits to offering all students through their GE coursework.

## **Part 4. What Did We Learn from the Fall 2024 Pilot?**

The GE Pilot for Fall 2024 involved:

- 21 faculty
- 150 students
- 7 learning communities (cohorts)
- 12 distinct courses
- 3 themes
- 3 off-campus experiences

The direct financial costs associated with the GE Pilot for Fall 2024 included:

- 6 GE Fellows: 4 TCH for summer work
- 15 GE Faculty: 3 TCH for summer work
- = 69 TCH total for all summer GE Faculty Summer
- 6 GE Fellows and 15 GE Faculty: 1.5 TCH for Fall meetings and collaborations
- 31.5 TCH total for all GE Faculty Fall meetings and collaborations
- = 100.5 TCH total for all GE Faculty Summer and Fall work

Students participating in the GE Pilot who are also part of a Kean University special population:

- EOF - 19
- Bridge to Success - 19
- SUPERA - 0
- Veteran - 2
- CAPS - 77

### **Summary of Incoming 24FA GE Pilot Student Profiles vs. Non-Pilot GE Students:**

Incoming first-time freshman in the GE Pilot were highly comparable regarding high school GPA, gender, ethnicity and race; they differed in first gen status, with the non-GE Pilot students more likely to be first gen.

### **Summary of Key Positive GE Pilot Outcomes:**

1. Instructor Access: GE Pilot students were taught by 0% adjuncts compared to non-Pilot students who had an 85% chance of having only adjunct instructors in their first semester.
2. GPA Metrics: GE Pilot students are less likely to have ended Fall 2024 with a GPA below 2.0
3. Enrollment Metrics: GE Pilot students are more likely to have registered for 12+ credits in Spring 2025.
4. Navigate Alerts: GE Pilot students are less likely to be referred for low quiz grades or missing assignments, and more likely to have useful alerts for excessive absences.
5. Sense of Belonging Survey: GE Pilot students felt more connected to their professors, saw their courses as connected to the real world, and planned to stay enrolled at Kean.
6. Academic Tutoring: GE Pilot students with embedded tutors in ENG\*1030 (College Composition) were three times as likely to have had an academic tutoring appointment to support success in their coursework.
7. Advisement: GE Pilot students were more likely to have kept an appointment with their professional advisor.

### **Summary of GE Pilot Student Experience**

Students valued the familiarity, collaboration, and support offered by the learning communities, which enhanced their comfort, social connections, and academic engagement. However, some felt the experience was restrictive due to repeated interactions with the same people, offered a more limited ability to network with peers, and reported theme monotony.

Conclusion: Addressing these concerns by incorporating opportunities for increased peer interactions and more thematic variety could further enhance the program.

### **Summary of GE Pilot Faculty Experience**

Faculty valued the collaborative, innovative, and student-centered aspects of learning communities but highlighted significant challenges, particularly related to workload, coordination, thematic constraints, and composition of students in learning community cohorts. Suggestions for improvement include providing more structural support, increasing flexibility in theme selection, refining the role of embedded tutors, and streamlining the planning and collaboration processes. Faculty reported great potential in the learning community model if these challenges were addressed.

See the appendices for an outline of the pilot sections, their instructors, and the themes used for specific populations of students.

## **Part 5. What are the Proposed Changes to the GE Program?**

### **The Model and Structure for the New GE Curriculum**

The new GE Program structure will focus on the implementation of HIPs and be guided by a Learning Outcomes model. Rooted in the Association for American Colleges and University's (AAC&U) Essential Learning Outcomes initiative and rubrics, this integrative approach will foster inclusive teaching practices. Based on data collected from the Spring and Fall 2024 pilots, it will link two courses thematically in learning communities during the first semester. Creating an immersive experience for

faculty and first-time freshmen students, the learning community cohort model will enhance teaching and learning experiences, support retention and graduation rates, and deepen students' sense of belonging in their first year.

**The Cougar Core will offer the following HIPs:**

- theme-based Learning Communities in the first year, with consideration for connecting themes specifically to students' interests and/or likely colleges/majors,
- writing-intensive courses (Written Communication in Semester 1, Writing-Intensive in Semester 2, The Passion Project/research (Semester 3 or 4) and capstone course (Semester 7 or 8),
- consistent and intentional use of e-portfolios,
- peer-to-peer support through GEMs and embedded tutoring,
- experiential learning activities,
- common intellectual experiences, like the Common Read, and
- a Passion Project, or GE-approved research experience, in the second year.

The Cougar Core creates a foundation for the Kean career. It will consist of:

- Essential Learning courses,
- Core Competency courses (inclusive of a Writing-Emphasis course), and a
- Sophomore-level Passion Project course, or equivalent research experience.

These will total between 31-32 credits, spread across the undergraduate experience, for students in all majors.

## Realignment of existing GE SLOs with proposed GE PLOs

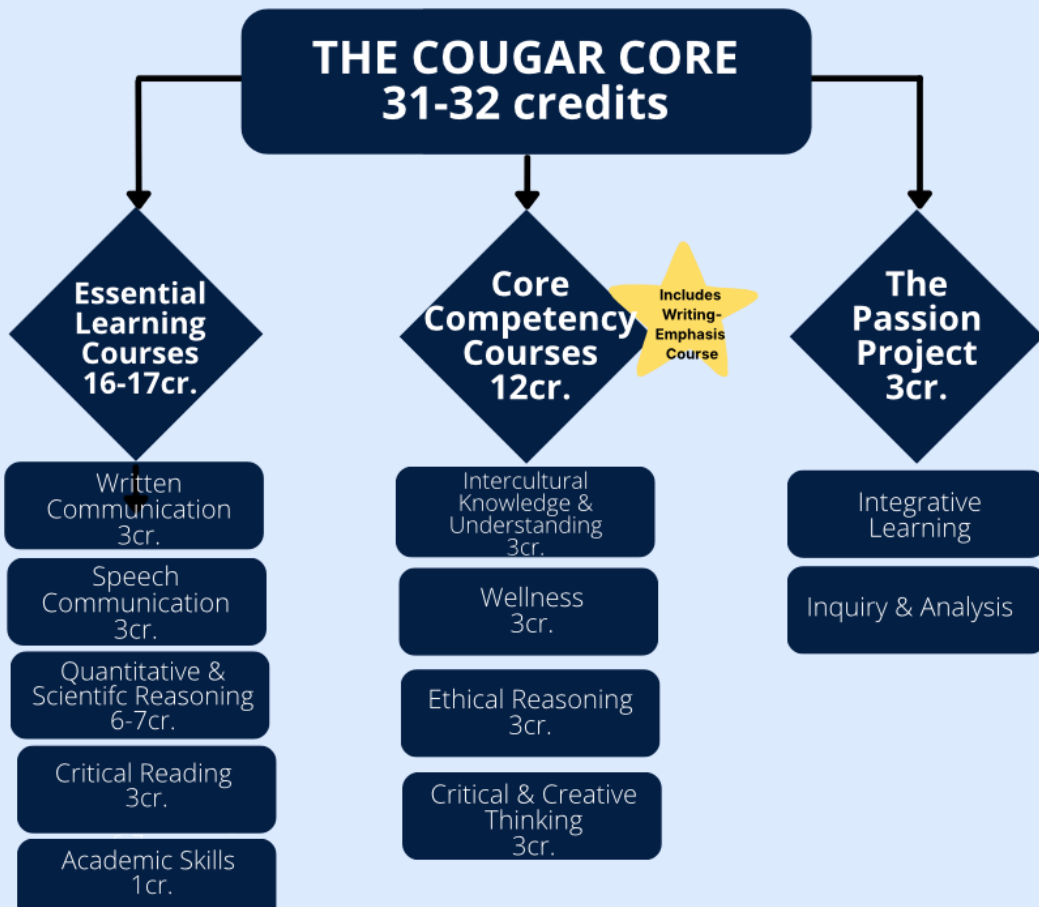
### Existing GE SLOs

Transdisciplinarity  
 Critical Thinking  
 Quantitative Literacy  
 Communication Literacies:  
 Written and Speech Communication  
 Ethical Judgement & Integrity  
 Diversity  
 Active Citizenship  
 Information & Technology Literacy

### Proposed GE PLOs

Integrated Learning  
 Critical & Creative Thinking  
 Quantitative & Scientific Reasoning  
 Written Communication  
 Speech Communication  
 Ethical Reasoning  
 Intercultural Knowledge & Understanding  
 + Wellness  
 + Inquiry & Analysis  
 + Critical Reading

Information & Technology Literacy, Including ethical use of AI, will be embedded in multiple PLOs & major-facing courses.



# THE COUGAR CORE GRADUATION MAP

Semester	GE Requirements	Additional Courses
<b>Semester 1</b>	<p><u>Academic Skills (1cr)</u>            Two Courses Linked Thematically in a Learning Community (6-7cr)            Essential Learning Course (3cr) + Essential Learning Course (3-4cr)            OR            Essential Learning Course (3-4cr) + Core Competency Course (3cr)</p>	Combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential Learning Courses</li> <li>• Core Competency Courses</li> <li>• Major-Facing Courses</li> </ul>
<b>Semester 2</b>	<p>Writing-Emphasis Course from Core Competency Courses (3cr)</p>	Combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential Learning Courses</li> <li>• Core Competency Courses</li> <li>• Major-Facing Courses</li> </ul>
<b>Semester 3 or 4</b>	<p><u>The Passion Project (3cr)</u>            A major-facing, writing -intensive research methods course focused on Integrative Learning and Inquiry &amp; Analysis</p>	Combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential Learning Courses</li> <li>• Core Competency Courses</li> <li>• Major-Facing Courses</li> </ul>
<p>Additional Core Competency Courses and Major-Facing Courses are included in Semesters 5 &amp; 6</p>		
<b>Semester 7 or 8</b>	<p>The Capstone Course (3cr)</p>	Combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Competency Courses</li> <li>• Major-Facing Courses</li> </ul>

The following is an example of what the BA/BS Curriculum Sheet might look like, using existing courses in the ten proposed PLOs. Ultimately, departments, and then committees of faculty experts, will determine which PLO is best-suited to existing GE-approved courses that wish to be part of the new structure.

**KEAN UNIVERSITY – COLLEGE OF \_\_\_\_\_**

**General Education Course Requirements**

**(Major Code) B.A. OR B.S. in \_\_\_\_\_**

**120 S.H.**

GENERAL EDUCATION	31-32 S.H.		ACADEMIC MAJOR***	__ S.H. (Total)
<b>Essential Learning Courses</b>	<b>16-17 S.H.</b>		<b>Major Required Courses:</b>	<b>__ S.H.</b>
<b>Critical Reading &amp; Academic Study Skills</b>	<b>4</b>			
<i>Transition to Kean (required for all students)</i>				
<i>GE1855 First-Year Seminar (for students who place into ENG1030)</i>				
<i>ID1500 Critical Reading &amp; Community OR ID1451 College Reading &amp; Study Skills (for students who place into ENG1025)</i>				
<b>Written Communication</b>	<b>3</b>			
<i>ENG1030 College Composition (required for all students)</i>				
<b>Speech Communication</b>	<b>3</b>			
<i>All students must take 3 credits in Speech Communication from the list below.</i>				
<i>COMM1402 Speech as Critical Citizenship</i>				
<b>Quantitative &amp; Scientific Reasoning</b>	<b>6-7</b>			
<i>All students must take either MATH1016 or MATH1054 (3 credits each) and 3 or 4 credits in Scientific Reasoning from the list below.</i>				
<i>MATH1016 Statistics</i>				
<i>MATH1054 Precalculus</i>				
<i>BIO 1000 Principles of Biology</i>				
<i>BIO1300 General Biology</i>				
<i>BIO2402 Human Physiology and Anatomy</i>				
<i>CHEM1030 Essentials of Chemistry</i>				
<i>CHEM1083 Chemistry I</i>				
<i>CHEM1084 Chemistry II</i>				
<i>ENV1100 Introduction to Environmental Science</i>				
<i>ES1200 Intro to Geology</i>				
<i>ES1300 Intro to Meteorology</i>				
<i>BIO1200 Biology and Society</i>				
<i>CHEM1200 Chemistry in Your World</i>				
<i>ES1000 Observing the Earth</i>				
<i>FSC Intro to Forensic Science</i>				
<i>ID1400 Computing in Modern Society</i>				
<i>PHSY 2091/2092 General Physics I &amp; II</i>				
<i>PHYS 2095/2096 Physics I &amp; II</i>				
<i>SUST1000 Introduction to Sustainability Science</i>				
<i>CPS 1032 Microcomputer Applications</i>				
<i>CPS 1231 Fundamentals of Computer Science</i>				

<b>Core Competency Courses</b>	<b>12 S.H.</b>			
<b>Intercultural Knowledge &amp; Understanding</b>	<b>3</b>			
<i>All students must take 3 credits in Intercultural Knowledge &amp; Understanding from the list below.</i>				
AH1700 Art-Prehistoric to Middle Ages				
AH1701 Art-Renaissance to Modern World				
ENG2403 World Literature				
ID1300 Introduction to Women's Studies				
MUS Music and World Culture				
REL2700 Eastern Religions				
REL2702 Western Religions				
ANTH1800 Cultural Anthropology				
ANTH1900 Introduction to Archeology				
ANTH2805 Films of African World Experience				
ES1010 World Geography				
GS2500 Introduction to Global Studies				
HIST1062 Worlds of History				
PS2500 Race & American Democracy				
SOC 1000 Introduction to Sociology				
SOC2300 American Racial & Ethnic Groups				
<b>Critical &amp; Creative Thinking</b>	<b>3</b>			
<i>All students must take 3 credits in Critical &amp; Creative Thinking from the list below.</i>				
FA1000 Introduction to Art				
FA2950 Creative Concepts in Arts & Crafts				
ID3230 Understanding Images				
MUS1000 Music Survey				
MUS1050 Music Fundamentals				
MUS 2201 Music History I				
MUS 2202 Music History II				
PHIL 1100 Introduction to Philosophy				
PHIL2505 Critical Thinking				
ECON1020 Principles of Economics I				
ECON1021 Principles of Economics II				
PS1010 Introduction to Politics				
THE 1000 Intro to Theatre				
THE 1100 Acting 1: The Actor Prepares				
<b>Ethical Reasoning</b>	<b>3</b>			
<i>All students must take 3 credits in Ethical Reasoning from the list below.</i>				
PHIL2300 Introduction to Ethics				
ID1350 Environmental Ethics				
PA1001 Civic Engagement and Public Service				
<b>Wellness</b>	<b>3</b>			
<i>All students must take 3 credits in Wellness from the list below.</i>				
PSY1000 General Psychology				
SOC2100 Sociology of the Family				
<b>Inquiry &amp; Analysis Sophomore Passion Project</b>	<b>3 S.H.</b>			

## About the New GE PLOs

All but one of the ten proposed new GE PLOs have already been defined with VALUE rubrics established by AAC&U: Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE). “These are Open Educational Resources (OER) that enable educators to assess students’ original work. AAC&U offers a proven methodology for applying the VALUE rubrics to evaluate student success reliably and verifiably across 16 broad, cross-cutting learning outcomes.” (AAC&U). The new GE Program proposes to utilize the VALUE rubrics in assessing nine of the ten new GE PLOs.

**GE PLO1:** Integrative Learning takes the place of the current GE SLO in Transdisciplinarity to ensure parity with the AAC&U Value Rubrics: “Integrative learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.” The AAC&U rubric assesses the following:

- Connections to Experience: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- Connections to Discipline: Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- Transfer: Adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to new situations
- Integrated Communication
- Reflection and Self-Assessment: Demonstrates a developing sense of self as a learner, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts (may be evident in self-assessment, reflective, or creative work)

**GE PLO2:** Critical & Creative Thinking represents two areas of the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics, but only one PLO in the new GE proposal. The two rubrics will need to be combined into one by a faculty committee of experts in both critical and creative thinking. The other option is to count these as one PLO but allow departments to specify which of the two categories a course will address. For now, here are the AAC&U definitions:

Critical Thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Creative Thinking is both the capacity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in original ways and the experience of thinking, reacting, and working in an imaginative way characterized by a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking, and risk taking.

Here are the AAC&U criteria on each rubric:

Critical Thinking involves

- Explanation of issues
- Evidence: Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion
- Influence of context and assumptions
- Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)
- Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)

Creative Thinking includes

- Acquiring Competencies: This step refers to acquiring strategies and skills within a particular domain.
- Taking Risks: May include personal risk (fear of embarrassment or rejection) or risk of failure in

successfully completing assignment, e.g., going beyond original parameters of assignment, introducing new materials and forms, tackling controversial topics, advocating unpopular ideas or solutions.

- Solving Problems
- Embracing Contradictions
- Innovative Thinking: Novelty or uniqueness (of idea, claim, question, form, etc.)
- Connecting, Synthesizing, Transforming

Note that GE PLO2 in Critical and Creative Thinking replaces the current GE SLO in Critical Thinking.

**GE PLO3:** Quantitative & Scientific Reasoning is a "habit of mind" competency, and assesses comfort in working with numerical data. Individuals with strong quantitative literacy skills possess the ability to reason and solve quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts and everyday life situations. They understand and can create sophisticated arguments supported by quantitative evidence and they can clearly communicate those arguments in a variety of formats (using words, tables, graphs, mathematical equations, etc., as appropriate). The AAC&U rubric assesses the following:

- Interpretation: Ability to explain information presented in mathematical forms (e.g., equations, graphs, diagrams, tables, words)
- Representation: Ability to convert relevant information into various mathematical forms (e.g., equations, graphs, diagrams, tables, words)
- Calculation
- Application/Analysis: Ability to make judgments and draw appropriate conclusions based on the quantitative analysis of data, while recognizing the limits of this analysis
- Assumptions: Ability to make and evaluate important assumptions in estimation, modeling, and data analysis
- Communication: Expressing quantitative evidence in support of the argument or purpose of the work (in terms of what evidence is used and how it is formatted, presented, and contextualized)

Note that GE PLO3 in Quantitative & Scientific Reasoning replaces the current GE SLO in Quantitative Literacy.

**GE PLO4:** Written Communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

The AAC&U rubric assesses the following:

- Context of and Purpose for Writing: Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task
- Content Development
- Genre and Disciplinary Conventions: Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields
- Sources and Evidence
- Control of Syntax and Mechanics

Note that GE PLO4 in Written Communication replaces the current GE SLO in Communication Literacies that was subdivided into Written Communication and Speech Communication.

**GE PLO5:** Speech Communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase

knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in, or to reinforce, the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

The AAC&U rubric assesses the following:

- Organization
- Language
- Delivery
- Supporting Material
- Central Message
- and Kean adds: Audience Adaptation

Note that GE PLO5 in Speech Communication replaces the current GE SLO in Communication Literacies that was subdivided into Written Communication and Speech Communication.

**GE PLO6:** Ethical Reasoning is reasoning about right and wrong human conduct. It requires students to be able to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Students' ethical self-identity evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues.

The AAC&U rubric assesses the following:

- Ethical Self-Awareness
- Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts
- Ethical Issue Recognition
- Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts
- Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts

Note that GE PLO6 in Ethical Reasoning replaces the current GE SLO in Ethical Judgement & Integrity.

**GE PLO7:** Intercultural Knowledge & Understanding is a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts.

The AAC&U rubric assesses the following:

- Knowledge: Cultural self- awareness
- Knowledge: Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks
- Skills: Empathy
- Skills: Verbal and nonverbal communication
- Attitudes: Curiosity
- Attitudes: Openness

Note that GE PLO7 in Intercultural Knowledge & Understanding replaces the current GE SLO in Diversity.

**GE PLO8:** Critical Reading is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language

The AAC&U rubric assesses the following:

- Comprehension
- Genres
- Relationship to Text: Making meanings with texts in their contexts
- Analysis: Interacting with texts in parts and as wholes

- Interpretation: Making sense with texts as blueprints for meaning
- Reader's Voice: Participating in academic discourse about texts

GE PLO8 is new to Kean's GE Program and offers a unique opportunity to improve students' abilities to encounter a broad range of academic texts in both the GE curriculum and in major-facing courses.

**GE PLO9:** Wellness is the study of the eight dimensions that combine to create dynamic and self-defined care for the mind, body, and soul:

- Emotional wellness
- Occupational wellness
- Intellectual wellness
- Environmental wellness
- Financial wellness
- Social wellness
- Physical wellness
- Spiritual wellness

GE PLO9 is new to Kean's GE Program and no AAC&U rubric exists for this GE PLO. Kean faculty experts in Wellness will need to create one.

**GE PLO10:** Inquiry & Analysis are two separate processes: Inquiry is a systematic process of exploring issues, objects or works through the collection and analysis of evidence that results in informed conclusions or judgments. Analysis is the process of breaking complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them.

The AAC&U rubric assesses the following:

- Topic Selection
- Existing Knowledge, Research, and/or Views
- Design Process
- Analysis
- Conclusions
- Limitations & Implications

GE PLO10 is new to Kean's GE Program and is intended to support the goals of the Passion Project and other relevant research experiences early in the undergraduate experience.

The current GE SLOs that do not have an equivalent to the proposed new GE PLOs are Active Citizenship and Information & Technology Literacy. The rationale for eliminating these two is as follows:

Active Citizenship will be addressed in the learning communities planned for a student's first semester. In this proposal, the faculty teaching the paired courses will plan some form of experiential learning. During the pilots, that experiential learning took the form of a project that engaged the students in some form of active citizenship during off-campus trips, such as excursions to Church World Services, Ellis Island, and a provocative Newark muralist's art studio. It is hoped that paired faculty in the new GE program will continue creating opportunities for experiential learning, an important HIP.

Furthermore, one of the likely courses in the Semester 1 Learning Communities is ID\*1500—Critical

Reading & Community. This course will not only satisfy GE PLO8 (Critical Reading) when passed as a new GE-approved course specific to that PLO, but it will also expose the students to active citizenship through community engagement activities. Built into the course outline for ID\*1500 is the inclusion of a student-chosen community service group project.

While there was a time when Information & Technology Literacy needed to be singled out as a stand-alone SLO, that time has passed. All disciplines now embed these literacies in their practices and investigations, making it indistinguishable where the discipline starts and ends, and where information technology takes over. Instead, it is expected that each and every GE-approved course will include the type of information & technology literacy that is appropriate for that discipline. In fact, when the faculty committees are formed for each of the new GE PLOs, part of their charge will be to include information & technology literacy in the outlines of the GE-approved courses.

### **A Note on Generative AI (GenAI) and the Cougar Core**

Supporting faculty in best practices and creative strategies for using AI as a teaching tool, and helping students understand how to ethically use GenAI programs, is crucial. The Provost's Office AI Task Force, with cross-College faculty and administrative representation, will be fundamental to this process.

The new GE Program will enable students to ethically and intentionally use GenAI when appropriate and in accordance with course, disciplinary, and University guidelines. As with all skills developed in the Cougar Core, teaching and learning around GenAI is most meaningful when there is scaffolding from the GE-level coursework into the major. To begin a student's awareness around best practices for the use of GenAI, introductions to GenAI will be included in courses aligned with the following GE PLOs:

- Critical Reading & Academic Study Skills
- Written Communication
- Speech Communication
- Ethical Reasoning

Further investigation of GenAI will continue in the sophomore year when the Inquiry & Analysis PLO will be explored in the Passion Project or a GE-approved sophomore-level research experience.

Ultimately, the GE curriculum will prepare students to navigate the quickly changing landscape around GenAI technologies into the future. Helping students develop an understanding of how and when to employ GenAI tools (for both the classroom as well as the post-Kean workplace setting), as well as the benefits and drawbacks of doing so, will be built into the new GE PLOs and their corresponding GE assessment rubrics.

### **Determining how courses will be designated as part of the GE Program**

Faculty experts in each of the ten new GE Program Learning Outcomes will develop a series of guidelines to determine the criteria for categorizing courses as fulfilling a particular General Education outcome and its intent. To ensure a broad perspective, focus will be more on making sure a course contributes meaningfully to the Cougar Core, rather than just doing pre-major work for a given discipline. This process will include:

1. an overview and evaluation of the AAC&U rubric for each Program Learning Outcome (when such a rubric exists),
2. a determination of the final GE assessment rubric to be employed for that particular PLO along

with a plan for how Canvas can be used to collect GE assessment data to support a culture of assessment in the GE program. Both direct and indirect measures will need to be identified.

3. the creation of a set of expectations for courses that fulfill each PLO, including signature assignments and integration of specific HIPs (e.g., the use of e-portfolios, peer support, experiential learning). In the case of Core Competency courses, these expectations should include how a particular course builds upon skills addressed in Essential Learning courses to enhance student learning across semesters to create vertical alignment, where relevant.

This work will be completed in collaboration and consultation with the Senate's GE Committee to streamline the process for reviewing existing GE courses as they fit within the new structure and program.

Also in consultation with the Senate's GE Committee, policies need to be developed to answer relevant questions such as:

- How many of the 10 PLOs can be satisfied by a single course? The GE Task Force recommends that a GE course may fulfill more than one PLO (i.e., exist on the list of GE courses under multiple PLOs) but on a student's program audit a single GE course would fulfill not more than one required PLO. Also, the Task Force suggests limiting this to two PLOs per course so as not to overburden a given course with trying to meet too many PLO guidelines. Of course, a course might reinforce and/or foreground many other SLOs by its very nature.
- Could a course simultaneously satisfy a GE and a major requirement? The GE Task Force recommends that such "double-dipping" generally not be permitted: a course should satisfy either a GE-requirement or a major requirement, but not both. Exceptions should be considered once the proposal has been adopted and the GE and Implementation Committees have had time to consider the implications.
- How many major courses could become embedded in GE-approved courses? The GE Task Force recommends no more than three: one Essential Learning course and two Core Competency courses. For example, the Department of Theatre could get its introductory script analysis course (ID\*2701) approved as a Critical Reading PLO course (as one Essential Learning course option), and Acting 1 (THE\*1100) approved as a Core Competency course under the Creative Thinking PLO—but only one more Theatre courses could be approved to meet an additional GE PLO for Theatre majors.

#### **A proposed timeline for the transition from Distribution courses to the PLO model:**

Fall 2025: It is recommended that the Senate's GE Committee put out a call for faculty volunteers to serve on 10 sub-committees, one for each of the proposed new GE PLOs. Hopefully, faculty who serve as existing coordinators for current GE-approved Distribution Courses, and the faculty who teach them, will be willing to work together to identify the criteria for a course to be categorized as embodying the intention of each individual PLO. A checklist of criteria should be developed by the sub-committee.

On a related note: during Fall 2025, the roles of GE assessment coordinators must be clearly defined, including the allocation of release time and compensation. While such clarity is needed for assessment coordinators outside the GE Program, with the implementation of the new GE Program, attention is similarly needed within.

January 2026: The 10 sub-committees would release to the Kean community the checklists of criteria, and departments would identify which of their existing GE-approved Distribution Courses best adhere to the requirements. Applications would be submitted to the sub-committees for their review.

Spring 2026: The 10 sub-committees would meet to review the applications and submit their approvals to the Senate's GE Committee. A roster of initially approved courses would be released by the end of 2025 – 26.

It should be noted that until this process is completed, a list of temporary alignments between the current GE-approved Foundation and Distribution Courses and the proposed new GE PLOs will be used to guide advisement and facilitate the phased-in process of the new GE curriculum. See below for a preliminary (albeit incomplete) version of such a guide.

### **Examples of Possible Alignment between New GE PLOS & Current GE Distribution Courses**

New GE PLOs	<b>GESM Distribution Courses</b>	<b>GEHUM Distribution Courses</b>	<b>GESS Distribution Courses</b>
<b>Integrative Learning</b>	SUST 1000, ENV 1000, ENV 1100; College-Facing Second Year Research Course /Passion Project	HIST1062, GE1855, MUS2220, College-Facing Second Year Research Course /Passion Project	GS2500, ANTH2805, College-Facing Second Year Research Course /Passion Project
<b>Critical &amp; Creative Thinking</b>	SUST1000	FA1000, MUS100, MUS1050, MUS1051, PHIL1100, PHIL2505, THE1100, THE1000	ECON1020, ECON1021, PS1010, PS2100, PS2300, SOC2100, PSY1000
<b>Quantitative &amp; Scientific Reasoning</b>	BIO1000, BIO 1200, BIO1300, CHEM1200, CHEM1030, CHEM 1083, CHEM1084, CPS 1231, ES 1000, ES 1100, ES 1200, ES 1300, ES 1400/2400, ENV 1000, ENV 1100, FSC100, PHYS 2091/2, PHYS 2095/6, SUST 1000, MATH1016, MATH1054		SOC2052
<b>Written Communication</b>		ENG1030	
<b>Speech Communication</b>		COMM1402	ID2415
<b>Critical Reading &amp; Academic Skills</b>		ID1451, ID1500, GE1855, GE1000	
<b>Ethical Reasoning</b>	SUST 1000, ID 1350, CPS1032	PHIL1100, PHIL2300	
<b>Intercultural Knowledge &amp; Understanding</b>		AH1700, AH1701, ENG2403, ID1300, REL1700, REL2700, REL2701, ID1300	ANTH1800, GS2500, HIST1062, PA1001, PS2400, PS2500, SOC1000, SOC2300
<b>Wellness</b>		PSY1000, ID1300	
<b>Inquiry &amp; Analysis</b>	College-Facing Second Year Research Course /Passion Project; 4th Year GE/Major Capstone	College-Facing Second Year Research Course /Passion Project; 4th Year GE/Major Capstone	College-Facing Second Year Research Course /Passion Project; 4th Year GE/Major Capstone

### **Second-Year Passion Project and GE-approved Research Experiences (3 credits)**

The Passion Project will be achieved through a second-year writing-intensive, college-facing research methods course that develops students' skills in two GE PLOs: Integrative Learning and Inquiry & Analysis. The Passion Project will contain some of the current content of Research & Technology (GE\*202X) with the added goal of leading to a research endeavor chosen by the student to address lines

of inquiry stimulated by students' coursework and extra-curricular activities during the preceding semesters. It is hoped that the use of a unifying theme in the learning communities of Semester 1 will inspire freshmen to want to know more about the theme and its implications in their community. By covering foundational research methodologies in the first half of the Passion Project's semester, students will be prepared to identify, design, and engage in their self-identified undertaking. The goal will be to achieve the objectives implied in the AAC&U rubrics for Integrated Learning and Inquiry & Analysis through such activities as methodology selection, data analysis, focused academic writing, and consideration of relevant ethical issues.

While students may not have declared their major by their third or fourth semester when they engage in the Passion Project, it is hoped that with advisement, they can at least identify the college where they'd like to begin their career exploration. Students can then further their investigation of areas of interest through the Passion Project experience. This GE course is not meant to replace a major-level methods course, but instead, provide meaningful preparation for the research (or creative works) prescribed in the major's curriculum. The college-specific Passion Project courses should ensure that all students are exposed to content of comparable rigor. To do so effectively, and to provide individualized mentoring and feedback to students during the research process, class sizes may have to be adjusted accordingly.

It is proposed that a committee of current GE\*202X instructors and representatives from the colleges, including faculty of Capstone courses, collaborate to design this course during 2025-26, seeking final curricular approval in time for publication in the 2026-27 catalog at the beginning of March 2026. This will allow time for any professional development needed to prepare the instructors for the first offering of the course in Fall 2026. Until that time, GE\*202X will be used as the GE-approved course fulfilling this requirement. Like GE\*202X, the Passion Project will be classified as a GE course—on the “left side” of the curriculum sheet.

In terms of sequencing, the Passion Project should happen after Semester 1's Learning Communities, after the Writing-Emphasis course in the Core Competencies, and before any discipline-specific methods course prescribed for a major. In some cases, the Passion Project may spur interest in research topics for the Capstone course.

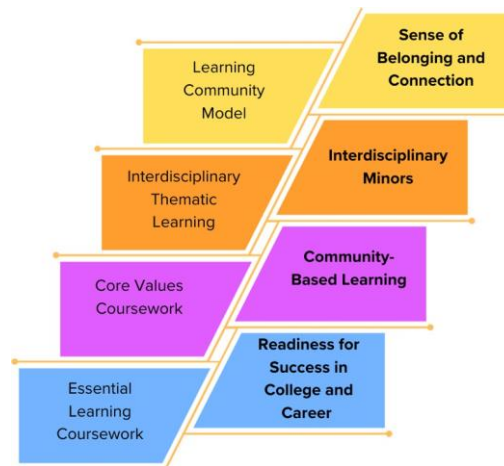
It is possible that research-based experiences provided by some colleges would qualify as substitutes for the 3cr. Passion Project, acknowledging that there are already existing equivalent opportunities provided by some programs, such as the Research-First Initiative (RFI) or projects that fall under the Center for Undergraduate Research & Fellowships (CURF). It is also possible that study/travel (e.g. Travelearns) and short-term or semesters on the WKU campus could be substituted for the Passion Project course, if the PLOS, Inquiry & Analysis and Integrative Learning, can be included in those experiences in ways that align with the Passion Project course. It is recommended that the Senate's GE Committee serve as the body responsible for establishing the criteria for granting approval of such Passion Project substitutions.

Given Kean's R2 status, investment in an initiative like the Passion Project should be expected and supported. In some cases, physical lab space will need to be increased to accommodate science

majors; in other instances, limited numbers of full-time faculty mentors may be an issue. However, given the importance of Inquiry, Analysis, and Integrative Learning to the post-graduation success of Kean students, solving such limitations is worth fiscal, academic, and administrative collaboration.

## Part 6. How Does the New GE Design Fit into the Larger Curricular Experience at Kean?

The proposed General Education redesign integrates into the broader curricular experience in several ways, as visualized and outlined below:



### Community Engagement Experiences → Community-Engaged Learning in Later Coursework

- Kean has made a significant investment in Community Engaged Learning.
- Early GE courses introduce students to community engagement through structured, experiential learning activities.
- Students develop skills in civic engagement, ethical reasoning, and intercultural competency.
- Later coursework in majors and interdisciplinary programs build upon these experiences, deepening community partnerships and fostering more complex, sustained engagement.
- Capstone courses and advanced projects encourage students to apply learned skills in real-world community settings, preparing them for active citizenship and professional roles.

### Thematic Curricula → Pathways to Interdisciplinary Minors

- Thematic GE courses are designed to encourage interdisciplinary thinking by integrating content across multiple disciplines.
- Students engage with themes that connect to existing minors, helping them see clear pathways to deeper study in interdisciplinary fields.
- This design fosters coherence in learning by linking GE coursework with upper-division electives and minor programs.
- Encourages students to build expertise across disciplines, enhancing their ability to tackle complex societal challenges.

### Outcomes-Based Design & Learning Communities → NACE Career Readiness Competencies

- The GE curriculum is structured around clear learning outcomes, ensuring alignment with key competencies valued by employers.
- Learning communities provide structured support, peer collaboration, and mentorship, reinforcing essential skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.
- Outcomes-based assessments can track student progress in competencies such as critical and creative thinking, digital literacy, and leadership.
- The integration of these elements prepares students for career readiness by developing transferable skills applicable across industries.

## **Part 7. What are the Academic, Financial, and Administrative Considerations and Implications of a Redesigned GE?**

As noted in the Executive Summary, the General Education Program is central to the advancement of the University's Core Values: academic excellence, equity, inclusivity, wellness, social mobility, public impact, and vision. This section of the report focuses on some key academic, financial, and administrative implications to be expected with the launch of a new GE Program. Such an endeavor will lead to questions warranting deeper exploration in the year(s) ahead.

(The Appendix includes some of the fundamental changes and transformational growth that Kean University has undergone while the General Education Program was being redesigned, and which understandably shape its new direction).

### **Academic Implications specific to Student Support**

While the bulk of the academic implications have been addressed in the preceding sections of this proposal, it is important to add that the 2024-25 GE pilot work has spurred deeper thinking and effective institutional action around the need for more robust academic support services at Kean. While tutoring support has been offered through NLTC, as well as in an often-ad hoc manner across the Colleges, this aspect of student support is not as strong as it could be. Through renewed cross-unit collaboration and conversation (e.g. NTLC, Writing Center, College of Liberal Arts, Provost's Office, Faculty Development), the need to eliminate performance gaps and ensure that services are available and accessible to all Kean students has come into focus. Efforts are well underway to centralize and enhance Kean University's tutoring services. This includes initiatives overseen by the NTLC/Writing Center in partnership with DGEIS and CLA which are inclusive of:

- Embedded course tutors
- Academic coaches
- Increased access hours for all students
- Revision of the College of Liberal Arts ESL/English as a Second Language

Tutoring Model to significantly expand student access and types of services. A new English Language Resource Center and full-time tutoring housed within the NTLC has been launched.

- Strategic use of incentivized tutoring in current GE Foundation courses.
- Further development of this model will be needed for the GE revision to live up to its transformational potential.

## **Administrative and Fiscal Implications**

### **Academic Affairs Structures - 2023 College Restructure and Launch of DGEIS**

Over the last three years the University commenced a study and review of its College structure, as well as the reimplementing of an academic department leadership model (e.g. Faculty Chairs).

Commencing in Fall 2023, Kean University created 6 Colleges within Academic Affairs, with each College housing both undergraduate and graduate programming; the Nathan Weiss Graduate College was dissolved. That same Fall, a new Division of General Education and Interdisciplinary Studies (DGEIS) was created.

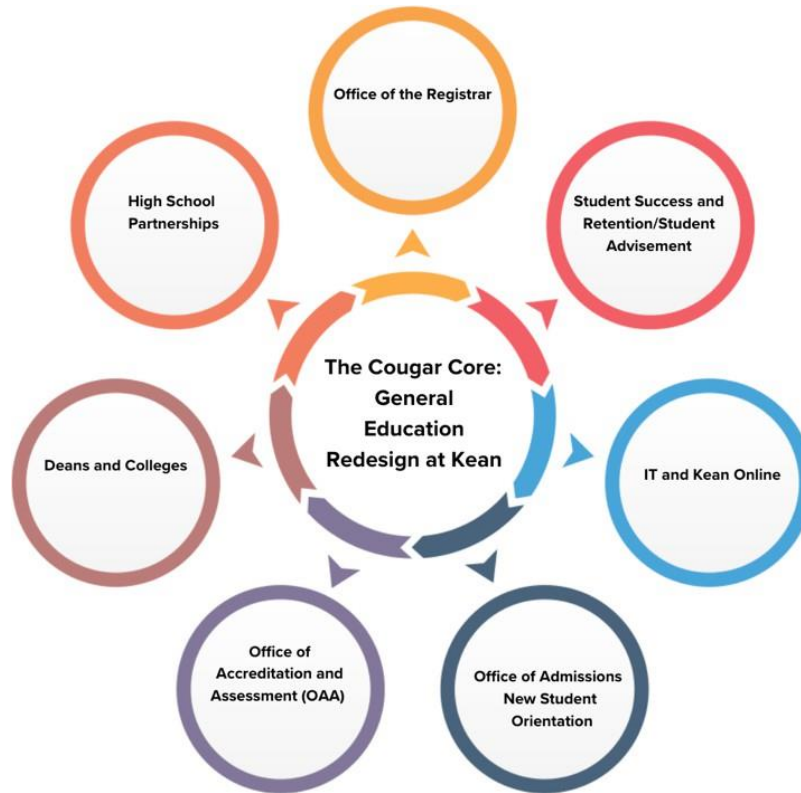
DGEIS is administratively led by an Acting Associate Dean of DGEIS and a Director of Interdisciplinary Studies. The GE Program is administratively supported by DGEIS staff and through a range of cross-campus faculty administrative release positions (i.e, TCH allocations): GE Coordinators, Assessment Coordinators, and GE Course Coordinators. Faculty holding these essential positions are housed in both DGEIS and across the Colleges. These Coordinator positions support a range of critical needs for the GE Program from working collaboratively with faculty on curricular revisions to supporting assessment of student learning (and therefore Kean University's Middle States accreditation needs), and redesigning assessment tools when needed. DGEIS houses nine courses and the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts (BALA) program. Most of the GE Program Distribution Requirements and Foundational Courses are housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Hennings College.

While DGEIS houses the GE Program, it is not meant to function independently. Instead, it is designed to be highly collaborative with every college, ensuring that there is a sense of shared responsibility for the delivery of the GE experience to Kean's students. Just as the Senate's GE Committee gleans its membership from representation across all six colleges, DGEIS provides leadership for greater cross-campus contributions to the GE curricula and its delivery by faculty in all disciplines. In fact, the creation of DGEIS signaled the vital role that the GE Program has on any university campus and in the academic life of students, faculty, and staff. The administrative structure and goals of DGEIS have been reviewed as part of the learning community pilots to ensure there is ample support for administrative tasks associated with the learning community model. It is crucial for DGEIS to be well supported institutionally to fulfill its primary objective which is to run a transformative GE Program for the university. Signs that the administration support DGEIS initiatives include the recent hiring of additional staff and development of a travel budget to support the Fall 2025 GE Pilot. DGEIS Administrative Tasks (e.g., administrative staff position support for faculty hiring, contract distribution, scheduling.)

- GE Program Support Positions (e.g., faculty release roles for course coordination and support for teams teaching in the learning communities)
- Accreditation and Assessment (e.g., faculty release roles for course and assessment coordination related to GE Program support)
- Budget Needs (e.g., student and faculty travel as it relates to learning community off-campus activities and events)
- Student Travel Processes (e.g., assessing staff needs related to facilitation and planning for off-campus engagement and activities for students). Please see additional comments below about this process.

### Areas outside of Academic Affairs that will need to support this initiative

The General Education Program is a central locus point for students as a foundational and, we hope, defining experience of their Kean University undergraduate education. The GE Program has as always and will continue to work closely and collaboratively with partners across campus to achieve goals related to supporting students in the new Cougar Core experience. This work will necessarily need to continue as new processes and planning will be needed to develop the new GE Program, impacting current processes and workflow between DGEIS and a range of areas, as visualized below:



Of particular note is the role of the College of Liberal Arts and Hennings College of Science, Mathematics and Technology. These Colleges host the vast majority of GE curriculum and, therefore, oversee a large segment of GE scheduling, assignment of faculty, adjunct hiring, continuous tracking of enrollment needs across in-person and Kean Online curriculum, GE assessment, and contracting.

### Program Administration

Administrative tasks (those primarily overseen by college staff, administrators, and Chairs/Associate Chairs) for the management of the GE Program (e.g. faculty adjunct hiring, class schedule development, budgeting, contracts) reside within DGEIS, but also across multiple Colleges and academic departments. While much of this work aligns with where the GE curriculum resides, there is the opportunity to review if greater centralization might best support the GE Program. For example, faculty contracts are currently generated by the College in which the faculty are housed rather than within DGEIS, leading to the need for multiple layers of communication. More fully centralizing some aspects of contract generation would be beneficial. In addition, it will be critical for effective budget and staffing decisions to be made while recognizing where the administrative burden will exist because of the new proposed GE structure.

## **Kean Online**

Kean Online is a swiftly growing and transformative unit within the Kean University community. It realizes its goals through collaborative work - instructional, administrative, and fiscal/budgetary - with the KU Colleges and DGEIS. Kean Online undergraduate degrees offer the entire GE Program in a fully online format. Supporting the DGEIS, Colleges, and the faculty in the management and delivery of an excellent online GE curriculum is imperative.

As Kean Online offerings with GE requirements continue to grow, the instructional, administrative and fiscal/budgetary work required of all pertinent units will need to be reviewed. For example, the 2024-25 development of Prior Learning Assessment tools to support adult learners transitioning back into higher education and actively respond to New Jersey's "Some College, No Degree" Initiative is a cross-unit effort involving faculty, staff, and administrators. The investment in administrative release time for faculty to engage in this faculty-specific work is critical. However, it does take faculty load away from classroom teaching and require the hiring of adjuncts. This TCH-administrative release should be reviewed vis-a-vis the available annual instructional load and what is needed to support and sustain the growth and enhancement of new programs as Kean looks to serve and support a diverse student population. Additional faculty hiring to support these high-growth areas may be needed.

## **Scheduling the New GE Program - Multiple Considerations**

The proposed model under review for the new General Education Program offers an exciting opportunity to transform student learning at Kean University. As this model is reviewed, it will be important to consider the class scheduling implications and how best to ensure that all students have access to the curriculum (i.e. ability to enroll in courses which align with other courses in their schedule), whether joining Kean as incoming first-year students or transfer students. It will be important to consider the following items:

- **Centralized Scheduling Software/Tools** - With its ability to consider a holistic view of campus resources, centralized and strategic scheduling can ensure that students across campuses have access to the required courses that they need to move through their degree requirements in the most efficient manner. Overall, this supports degree completion and will be an important tool in supporting the launch of the revised GE Program. Of relevance here is the need to create blocks of paired GE courses across departments that allow the learning communities to meet in consecutive time periods. For example, if a section of ENG\*1030 is paired in a learning community with a section of COMM\*1402, it would be most ideal if the first class might meet at 9:30am, and the second at 11:00am—and when possible, in the same classroom. This facilitates interaction between the two professors, as well as the cohorts of students. Such scheduling also makes the possibility for experiential learning trips off-campus much more do-able, granting extended period of time when both students and faculty are available without disruption to their day's schedule. It is hoped that centralized scheduling would enable this strategic practice, offering students morning, mid-day, afternoon, and evening blocks of time for their learning community courses to meet.

Additionally, centralized scheduling needs to consider the discipline-specific needs of departments and the delicately balanced lives of faculty who engage in research and service in addition to teaching. The implementation of centralized scheduling should not negatively affect the operations of departments or

the needs of faculty teaching GE courses.

Furthermore, the learning community pairs need to be offered throughout the day, and throughout the week. If Biology majors are scheduled to have their learning community paired courses focused on the theme of Sustainability, to be equitable, those paired courses need to accommodate cohorts in mornings, afternoons, and evenings. A student's personal schedule should not limit what academic programs are available to them.

All these factors make the planning of the new GE model nearly impossible to do manually. While this has been done during the GE pilots through collaboration between the Acting Associate Dean of DGEIS, the Office of the Registrar, and department chairs, the GE Task Force recommends investment in the software/tools needed to standardize this planning.

- **GE Course Caps and Physical Infrastructure/Classrooms** - The enrollment caps within General Education Programs nationally are an important topic. This portion of the undergraduate experience is critical in helping students to develop foundational skills that are vital to their success during both their college years and post-graduation, so it may be that some GE courses merit more individualized faculty attention in smaller groups. As the institution considers/reviews the enrollment caps for components of the new GE Program it will be important to consider this in relation to the availability of differently sized classrooms on the Kean campus, and how this impacts scheduling, course caps, etc. The GE Task Force recommends right-sizing caps to as close to 25 as possible.
- **Moon Shot for Kean** - As the institution focuses on the elimination of performance gaps by 2030, class scheduling will need to continue to consider equitable access to the curriculum for its student population (e.g. residential, commuter, part or full-time work, increased evening and weekend courses, access to in- person and online curriculum). This is an area already well-advanced, thanks to the on-going work of the Moon Shot for Kean team.

- **Experiential Learning Opportunities/Student Travel Process**

The current student travel process is a time-intensive and paper-driven procedure impacting faculty, staff and students across Colleges, DGEIS, and the Provost's Offices. Improving this process would best support the anticipated increased volume of out-of-class experiential learning and, therefore, off-campus travel that will commence with the expanded GE pilot in Fall 2025. Kean is in the process of implementing Emburse, a Travel & Expense online platform whereby multiple individuals can enter needed information and approvals. The new system will also support management of reimbursements—all of which will be essential for experiential learning opportunities, a significant HIP in this GE proposal.

- **Faculty Staffing Model: Current and Recommendations**

During Fall 2024, approximately 715 unique GE Distribution sections were being taught by Kean University Full- Time Faculty (Lecturers, Tenured or Tenure Track), Adjuncts, or KU Staff (who can teach outside of business hours). The snapshot below of one semester's worth of curriculum provides a glimpse into the enormity of running this program. Please note that this is a close approximation of the total section numbers running during a semester as new course sections are often added to the second

half of a semester scheduled later in the semester.

Fall 2024 GE Distribution Courses	Number of Sections Taught	Average Numbers of GE Program Seats Note: Course Caps differ across online and F2F sections using a value of 25 - 30 Student-Seats per Section*
Full-Time Faculty Sections - Tenured/Tenure Track	95	2,375 - 2850
Full-Time Faculty Sections - Lecturer	110	2,750 - 3,300
Staff (Part-Time) Sections	54	1,350 - 1,620
Adjunct (Part-Time Faculty) Sections	457	11,425 - 13,710
Total Part Time Faculty (Staff and Adjuncts)	511	12,775 - 15,330
Full-Time v. Part-Time Ratio	29% v. 71%	

\*Students generally take more than one GE course in any given semester, so these values represent seats, not students. A classroom's physical size may impact the actual number of students enrolled in a course section (e.g. it may be under cap).

### Considerations for the New Curriculum Delivery Model

While creation of a fully detailed budget will be essential for full implementation, it is not under the purview of the GE Task Force to create one. Instead, the GE Task Force is poised to make recommendations that are well-informed, given the administration's demonstrated commitment to the 2024-25 and Fall 2025 pilots: investment in HIPs (such as funding for student travel/experiential learning), investment in the Center for Teaching Excellence (for faculty professional development), and investment in compensation negotiated with the Kean Federation of Teachers.

Full to Part-Time Faculty Ratio - Delivery of any university curriculum requires full-time faculty to develop/design, deliver, and assess the curriculum. Per the table above, the ratios of Tenured-Track/Tenured v. Lecturer v. Part-Time/Adjunct Staff teaching across this curriculum should be reviewed to explore ways to substantially reduce the numbers of adjunct faculty teaching GE courses. This needs to be done thoughtfully, so as not to diminish the full-time faculty's ability to teach upper-division courses in the major; obviously a balance needs to be reached. Doing so will require Deans to facilitate strategic assignment of faculty and the university to commit to more full-time faculty lines.

### Professional Development and Additional Support for Adjunct Faculty

Delivery of the new GE curriculum's learning communities will require active engagement of the faculty—adjunct and full-time alike-- before and during the semester: integrating syllabi and planning course activities around the shared theme. Like full-time faculty, adjuncts teaching in these learning

communities will need to be able to access ongoing professional development related to this curriculum, as well as have time built into their schedules to engage in the pre-semester and in-semester planning processes. This will need to be reviewed from a budgetary and feasibility perspective, but the 2024-25 pilots, as well as the up-scaled Fall 2025 pilot, demonstrated the administration's willingness to dedicate financial resources to this effort through the Center for Teaching Excellence's leadership and professional development activities.

**Decreasing Reliance on Adjunct Instructors** – It is recommended that the University invest in hiring more full-time faculty who can teach General Education courses while simultaneously bringing more tenure-stream and tenured faculty into teaching courses in the GE Program. Incentivizing tenure-track faculty to teach in the GE Program by finding ways to motivate and reward them for doing so (e.g. link RTR to teaching in GE) would support institutional goals related to both teaching and research. More full-time non-tenure track faculty may be hired in permanent positions or as occurs at some institutions, in short-term Visiting GE Faculty positions. New, non-tenure-stream faculty might be supported by dual appointments, serving in their College and supporting the GE Program through teaching.

### **University Senate's General Education Committee**

Moving to a model of GE that focuses on HIPs and Learning Outcomes, the GE Task Force encourages the University Senate to reconsider the charge of its GE Committee so that the committee might be more intentional in terms its work and the actual teaching and learning happening in the revised GE curriculum. In order to strengthen dialogue around and understanding of the GE Program Learning Outcomes, the Task Force suggests something like this: faculty sitting on the GE Committee (in three-year appointments) teach at least one GE course per semester in the Cougar Core during the first two years they serve as members, and one GE course during their third year. Of course, the Task Force recognizes that this is ultimately the purview of the University Senate, but recommends that the Senate work with the GE Task Force and the Senate GE Curriculum Committee to consider a faculty member's experience with teaching in the GE Program as criteria for sitting on the Committee and shaping the GE Program curriculum

### **University Senate's Writing-Emphasis Committee**

Similarly, the GE Task Force recommends that the Senate's Writing Emphasis Committee should work closely with the GE Committee and faculty teams charged with developing guidelines for the creation of new GE PLOs. Doing so would both support changes around the Written Communication GE PLO and support faculty development of courses fulfilling this Core PLO.

### **English as a Second Language Students and the General Education Program**

The ESL Program is housed within the English Department in the College of Liberal Arts. At this time, approximately 98% of ESL students are Supera students, thus Spanish is their first language and ESL runs about 2,000 seats each year across its curriculum. As Kean looks to increase its international student population, the numbers of students with other first languages will increase. ESL students take specifically designed GE ESL courses to support their acquisition of writing, reading, and conversational skills. This portion of the curriculum will continue to need the same level of support and oversight as other components of the GE curriculum as the new GE program is launched.

### **Accreditation and Assessment**

Middle State Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) and General Education

Middle States defines its essential skills for students across these areas: oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency. The proposed PLO model includes all of these areas, either as stand-alone PLOs with Essential Skill or Core Competency courses, or as embedded areas (like technological competency) meant to be included in all GE-approved courses.

### **MSCHE and GE Program Assessment**

The assessment processes for the current GE Program will need to be revised and enhanced so as to align with the proposed GE Program structure. Moving to a PLO model will bolster the culture of assessment in GE and its related processes and activities. There may be additional resources needed to ensure all best practices of learning outcome assessment are built into the new Program structure to support the following: student learning; the collection and analysis of reliable and valid short-term and longitudinal data; and the development and monitoring of continuous improvement plans. Collaborative efforts for identifying and enacting interventions as a result of assessment findings and measuring the success of those interventions will also be central to these processes. There will need to be new methods for understanding the impacts of each HIP as it is integrated into the new GE Program to create a holistic view of student learning, as well as at the effectiveness of each HIP over time.

### **Middle States and Kean University Sites/Campuses**

All Kean sites are accredited by MSCHE and all GE curriculum (regardless of site) utilizes the same assessment plans, learning outcomes, and assessment reports templates/processes. The DGEIS Acting Associate Dean has a primary role in supporting the assessment of the General Education Program and working collaboratively with a range of units and faculty across colleges to support this work. Given the central role of the university's GE Program in the development of student skills and assessment of core student learning outcomes, a continuous review of these processes and institutional support for them should occur to ensure appropriate development of accreditation and assessment-related needs. Attention may be needed to articulate in clear terms what the roles are of those involved in assessing GE courses or programs where GE courses live. These processes will have to be reviewed in terms of their impacts on all campuses, including WKU, to ensure consistency and support continuous improvement.

## **Part 8. General Education Implementation Committee**

To facilitate the implementation of the new GE Program, an Implementation Committee will be launched Fall 2025. The GE Task Force proposes that this be a joint project of the University Senate and the GE Task Force, ensuring broad-based support among faculty, staff, administration, and (perhaps) students.

GE Implementation Committee (GEIC) Co-Chairs:

- Acting Associate Dean, DGEIS
- Dean, CLA
- Representative, University Senate Executive Committee

Representatives from:

- Henning College of Science Mathematics and Technology
- College of Education

- College of Health Professions and Human Services
- College of Business and Public Management
- Michael Graves College
- Transfer Admissions and Evaluation
- Kean Ocean
- Information Technology
- Budget Office
- Center for Advising, Persistence, and Success
- Office of the Registrar
- Faculty Development / Center for Teaching Excellence
- Office of Accreditation and Assessment
- Kean Online
- Admissions/Enrollment
- University Planning Council
- University Curriculum Committee Chair (or designee)
- WKU Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs
- International Studies
- Kean University Foundation
- Nancy Thompson Learning Commons
- SADI and Institutional Research
- GE Committee Chair (or designee)
- Community Engaged Learning Task Force
- Faculty representatives: one chair from each college, one non-chair from each college, and faculty from WKU, OCC, Skylands, and (eventually) NJCU

Note: Representatives will be grouped in pertinent working groups and will not need to be present for all meetings.

The GEIC's mandate will be to review this proposal to create and manage working groups focused on:

- Technology, Systems, and Registration
- Advising – Professional Advising and Faculty Advising
- Admissions and Marketing
- New Student Orientation
- Translating the curricula for various campuses/modalities
- Ellucian back-end tasks for supporting new GE curriculum mapping/sheets
- Supporting transfer students and student with dual enrollments
- Development of Expectations and Guidelines for new GE PLOs and Implementation of HIPs
- Implementing Centralized Scheduled and streamlined registration processes
- Budget Modeling and Planning for Instructional/Faculty Needs
- Managing field trips and off-campus travel for experiential learning

The GEIC will commence work in Fall 2025, providing oversight to ensure effective preparation and response to developing needs. It will remain convened through the Spring of 2028 to ensure continuous review of the phased-in program launch.



## Part 9. Partial Timeline to Implementation

Semester	Select Suggested Actions
25FA	Approx. 800 freshmen participate in Fall 2025 Pilot: paired courses in thematically based learning communities
	Distribute Proposal to Revise GE at KU: Summer 2025 to campus community
	Hold open hearings in collaboration with the University Senate
	Form & initiate meetings with GE Implementation Committee, a joint project of the GE Task Force and the University Senate
	Announce call for faculty experts to serve on the 10 PLO Committees charged with establishing criteria for courses to be GE-approved for each PLO
	Form & initiate meetings with faculty experts charged with creating the Passion Project course
	Support experiential learning excursions for students/faculty in the Fall 2025 Pilot
	Revise the Proposal in response to feedback from open hearings

	The University Senate acts on the document after open hearings have been completed.
	The Chair of the University Senate presents the approved document to the Office of the Provost for formal receipt, review and action.
	The Office of the Provost presents the approved document to the President for formal receipt, review and action.
	The President presents the approved document to the Board of Trustees for formal receipt, review and action.
	Conduct survey with freshmen—those who were part of the Fall 2025 Pilot, and those who weren't
	Conduct survey with Fall 2025 Pilot faculty
	Clarify roles of GE Assessment Coordinators with defined responsibilities & negotiated compensation.
	The GE Implementation Committee rolls out plans for creating the Fall 2026 schedule to accommodate 2000 freshmen in learning communities.
26SP	GE Implementation Committee prepares for Fall 2026 registration with all freshmen participating in learning communities.
	The approved new structure is placed in the University catalogue.
	The process for revision & approval of new curriculum sheets and 4-year plans is initiated; see the UCC Manual p.46 for details.
	The Passion Project Committee creates new courses and has them approved through the curricular process in time to be included in the 2026-27 catalog (March 1, 2026). Criteria for GE-approved research projects is released.
	The 10 PLO Committee release the criteria for existing courses to be GE-approved for each PLO; each Committee begins to accept/review proposals.

	Roll-out strategies for communicating changes to current and prospective students.
	The Senate's GE Committee & Assessment Committee start to review GE Assessment processes and plans for the new structure, beginning in Fall 2026
	The Senate's Writing-Emphasis Committee collaborates with the GE Committee to establish criteria for Core Competency courses wishing to obtain Writing Emphasis designation.
	Professional development is scheduled for faculty teaching in Fall 2026 learning communities
	Professional development is scheduled for faculty teaching the Fall 2026 version of The Passion Project
26FA	All (approx. 2000) freshmen engage in learning communities
	In time for Spring 2027 registration, all 10 PLO Committees release rosters of GE-approved courses.
	A pilot of The Passion Project is launched for the 800 students who participated in the Fall 2025 Pilot.
	Conduct surveys with learning community and Passion Project participants: students & faculty.
27SP	The Passion Project Pilot continues
	In time for Fall 2027 registration, courses designated as Writing-Emphasis are announced.
27FA	Full implementation of The Passion Project
28FA	Freshmen from the Fall 2025 Pilot start to enroll in their Capstone courses, creating opportunities for assessment and evaluation of elements of the new GE structure

## 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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

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

## 7. 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.
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- Examples: Creating a "week zero" welcome module, actively facilitating discussions so all voices are heard, and acknowledging diverse contributions to class discussions.

### 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 Environmental 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 -		
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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 9:30 – 12:15	Abby Maguire
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

<b>Cohort E: All Majors - Sustainability</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
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

<b>Cohort F: All Majors - Migration</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
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

<b>Cohort G: Undecided Majors - Sustainability</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Use embedded tutoring model</li> <li>–Place students within thematic, clustered courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-early alerts with specific details, sent within the first 4 weeks of the course</li> <li>–peer mentoring offered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-examine the uptake and response rates on alerts that are sent</li> <li>-examine the learning support</li> </ul>

<p>Increase undergraduate fall to spring retention rate by 1-2% within GE Pilot over non-GE Pilot students in FA24</p> <p>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)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Place students within small (18 max) learning communities with several shared courses</li> <li>-Engage faculty within small (2-4) faculty learning communities to collaboratively plan and deliver curricula</li> <li>-Design on campus learning experiences out of the classroom</li> <li>-Offer off-campus community-based experiences that can later lead to more in-depth Community-Engaged Learning coursework</li> <li>-Engage students with "Common Read" to connect them across cohort sections</li> <li>-Build community via a Week Zero session and ongoing community-building activities within sessions</li> <li>-Utilize a portfolio to collect student work across sections to enable all faculty to view student progress and for students to self-assess</li> <li>-Use a common grading system (points) and a common grading</li> </ul>	<p>by embedded tutors, academic coaches and GE Mentors (GEM) for all cohort students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-ensure every student has access to a well-functioning laptop computer</li> <li>-connect students quickly to health, financial, and other student support services</li> </ul>	<p>services actually provided</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-weekly "huddles" within faculty learning communities and use of shared student monitoring document to track students' progress</li> <li>-conduct monthly data reviews with faculty and staff to assess progress and identify areas for course-correction midstream</li> </ul>
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	<p>conversion table (from numerical to letter grades) within cohorts</p> <p>-Outcomes based curriculum design</p> <p>-Culturally responsive curriculum</p>		
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