

## 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.)

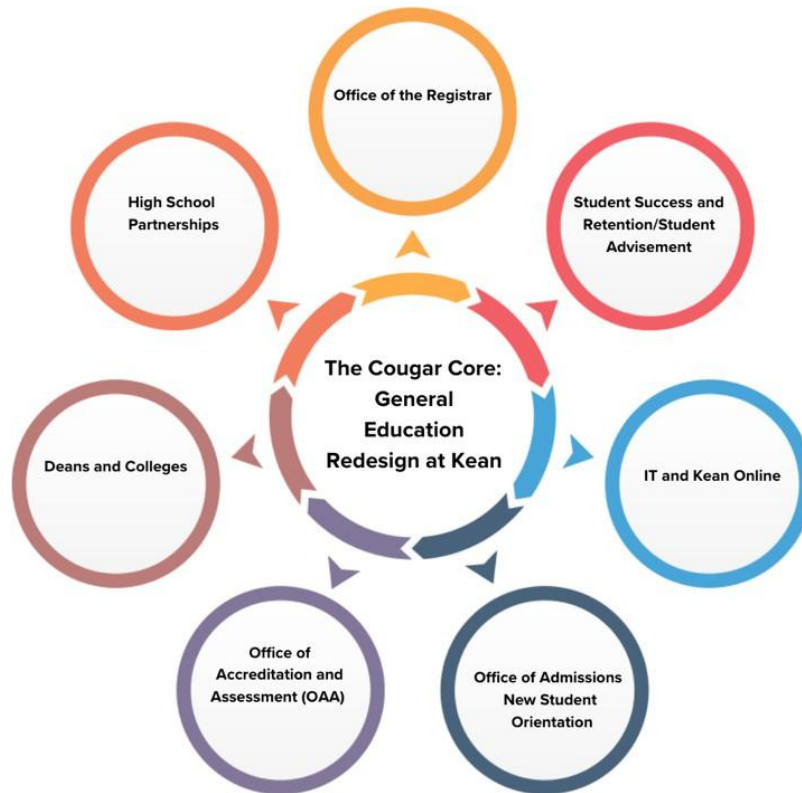
- GE Program Support Positions (e.g., faculty release roles for course coordination and support for teams teaching in the learning communities)
- Accreditation and Assessment (e.g., faculty release roles for course and assessment coordination related to GE Program support)
- Budget Needs (e.g., student 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	Average Numbers of GE Program Seats Note: Course Caps differ across online and F2F

	Taught	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.