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.

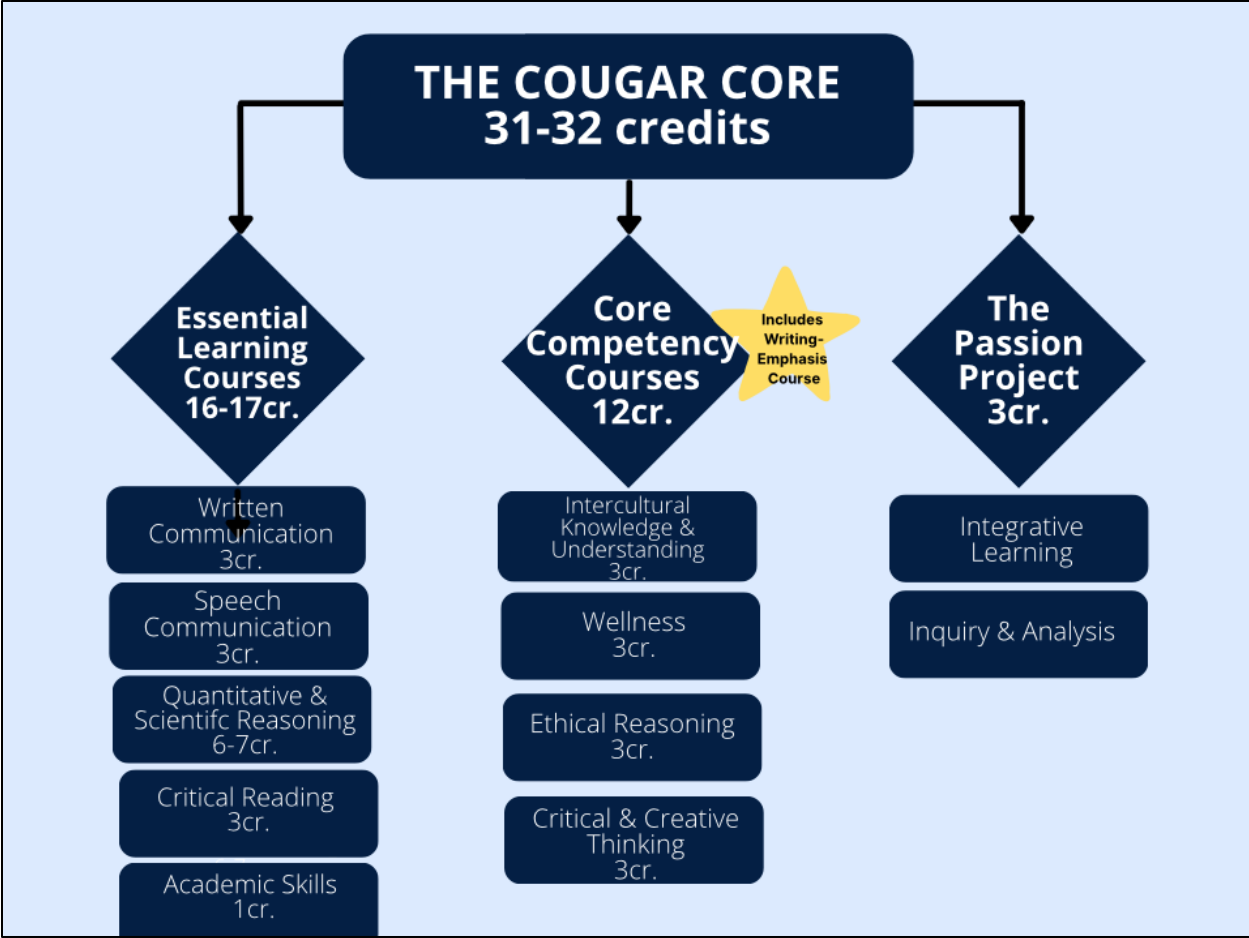# Realignment of existing GE SLOs with proposed GE PLOs

Existing GE SLOs	Proposed GE PLOs
Transdisciplinarity →	Integrated Learning
Critical Thinking →	Critical & Creative Thinking
Quantitative Literacy →	Quantitative & Scientific Reasoning
Communication Literacies: Written and Speech Communication →	Written Communication
	Speech Communication
Ethical Judgement & Integrity →	Ethical Reasoning
Diversity →	Intercultural Knowledge & Understanding
Active Citizenship	✚ Wellness
Information & Technology Literacy	✚ Inquiry & Analysis
	✚ Critical Reading

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

THE COUGAR CORE
31-32 credits

Essential Learning Courses 16-17cr.

- Written Communication 3cr.
- Speech Communication 3cr.
- Quantitative & Scientifc Reasoning 6-7cr.
- Critical Reading 3cr.
- Academic Skills 1cr.

Core Competency Courses 12cr.

Includes Writing-Emphasis Course

- Intercultural Knowledge & Understanding 3cr.
- Wellness 3cr.
- Ethical Reasoning 3cr.
- Critical & Creative Thinking 3cr.

The Passion Project 3cr.

- Integrative Learning
- Inquiry & Analysis

THE COUGAR CORE GRADUATION MAP

Semester	GE Requirements	Additional Courses
Semester 1	Academic Skills (1cr) 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)	Combination of: • Essential Learning Courses • Core Competency Courses • Major-Facing Courses
Semester 2	Writing-Emphasis Course from Core Competency Courses (3cr)	Combination of: • Essential Learning Courses • Core Competency Courses • Major-Facing Courses
Semester 3 or 4	The Passion Project (3cr) A major-facing, writing -intensive research methods course focused on Integrative Learning and Inquiry & Analysis	Combination of: • Essential Learning Courses • Core Competency Courses • Major-Facing Courses
Additional Core Competency Courses and Major-Facing Courses are included in Semesters 5 & 6		
Semester 7 or 8	The Capstone Course (3cr)	Combination of: • Core Competency Courses • Major-Facing Courses

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)	
Essential Learning Courses	16-17 S.H.		Major Required Courses:	_ _ S.H.	
Critical Reading & Academic Study Skills		4			
Transition to Kean (*required for all students*)					
GE1855 First-Year Seminar (*for students who place into ENG1030)*					
ID1500 Critical Reading & Community OR ID1451 College Reading & Study Skills (*for students who place into ENG1025*)					
Written Communication		3			
ENG1030 College Composition (*required for all students*)					
Speech Communication		3			
All students must take 3 credits in Speech Communication from the list below.					
COMM1402 Speech as Critical Citizenship					
ID2415 Group Communication					
Quantitative & Scientific Reasoning		6-7			
All students must take either MATH1016 or MATH1054 (3 credits each) and 3 or 4 credits in Scientific Reasoning from the list below.					
MATH1016 Statistics					
MATH1054 Precalculus					
BIO 1000 Principles of Biology					
BIO1300 General Biology					
BIO2402 Human Physiology and Anatomy					
CHEM1030 Essentials of Chemistry					
CHEM1083 Chemistry I					
CHEM1084 Chemistry II					
ENV1100 Introduction to Environmental Science					
ES1200 Intro to Geology					
ES1300 Intro to Meteorology					
BIO1200 Biology and Society					
CHEM1200 Chemistry in Your World					
ES1000 Observing the Earth					
FSC Intro to Forensic Science					
ID1400 Computing in Modern Society					
SUST1000 Introduction to Sustainability Science					
CPS 1032 Microcomputer Applications					
CPS 1231 Fundamentals of Computer Science					
Core Competency Courses	12 S.H.				
Intercultural Knowledge & Understanding		3			

All students must take 3 credits in Intercultural Knowledge & Understanding from the list below.			
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			
SOC2300 American Racial & Ethnic Groups			
Critical & Creative Thinking	3		
All students must take 3 credits in Critical & Creative Thinking from the list below. 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			
PHIL1100 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			
Ethical Reasoning	3		
All students must take 3 credits in Ethical Reasoning from the list below.			
PHIL2300 Introduction to Ethics			
ID1350 Environmental Ethics			‖
PA1001 Civic Engagement and Public Service			
Wellness	3		
All students must take 3 credits in Wellness from the list below.			
PSY1000 General Psychology			
SOC2100 Sociology of the Family			
Inquiry & Analysis Sophomore Passion Project 3 S.H.			

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	GESM Distribution Courses	GEHUM Distribution Courses	GESS Distribution Courses
Integrative Learning	SUST 1000, ENV 1000, ENV 1100; College-Facing Second Year Research Course /Passion Project	HIST 1062, GE 1855, MUS 2220, College-Facing Second Year Research Course /Passion Project	GS 2500, ANTH 2805, College-Facing Second Year Research Course /Passion Project
Critical & Creative Thinking	BIO 1000, BIO 1200, BIO 1300, BIO 2402, ENV 1000, ENV 1100, SUST1000	FA1000, MUS 1000, MUS 1050, MUS 1051, PHIL 1100, PHIL 2505, THE 1100, THE 1000	ECON 1020, ECON 1021, PS 1010, PS 2100, PS 2300, SOC 2100, PSY 1000
Quantitative & Scientific Reasoning	BIO1000, BIO 1200, BIO1300, BIO 2402, CHEM1200, CHEM1030, CHEM 1083, CHEM1084, CPS 1231, ES 1000, ES 1100, ES 1200, ES 1300, ES 1400/2400, ENV 1000, ENV 1100, FSC 1000, ID 1400, PHY 2091, PHYS 2092, SUST 1000, MATH1016, MATH1054		SOC 2052
Written Communication		ENG1030	
Speech Communication		COMM1402	ID 2415
Critical Reading & Academic Skills		ID 1451, ID 1500, GE 1855, GE 1000/3000	
Ethical Reasoning	BIO 1200, SUST 1000, ID 1350, ID 1400, CPS1032, FSC 1000	PHIL1100, PHIL2300	
Intercultural Knowledge & Understanding	ES 1010	AH1700, AH1701, ENG2403, ID1300, REL1700, REL2700, REL2701, ID1300	ANTH1800, GS2500, HIST1062, PA1001, PS2400, PS2500, SOC1000, SOC2300
Wellness	BIO 1000, BIO 1200, BIO 1300, BIO 2402	PSY1000, ID1300	
Inquiry & Analysis	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.