

**ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE FACULTY SENATE:
A NEW GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER**

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Introduction & Executive Summary

On November 11, 2019, the General Education Review and Inquiry Committee (GERI) released its Proposal for a new General Education Program to the Faculty of the University of Denver (DU). At that time, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) and Faculty Senate President Darrin Hicks charged the Academic Planning Committee (APC) of the Faculty Senate to conduct a survey of University of Denver Faculty on their thoughts and feedback to the new General Education Program. In addition, the APC was charged with gathering additional information from pertinent sources and conducting its own analysis of the proposal as a deliberative body.

A sub-committee of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee wrote the survey in November, 2019. The survey was distributed via email to all faculty members of the University of Denver, regardless of their involvement with General Education, on three dates. A total of 278 faculty members completed at least some portion of the survey.

In general, the quantitative questions revealed that there is not widespread support for the proposal. A plurality of the respondents (46%) indicated that they were inclined to reject the proposal at this time no matter what amendments were introduced by the Faculty Senate. The second largest group (34%) of faculty indicated they were inclined to accept the proposal “with amendments” at this time. The survey, however, did not allow these respondents to indicate on this specific question what those amendments might be. Twenty percent (20%) of respondents indicated they were inclined to accept the proposal without any amendments at this time. Therefore, 54% of respondents indicated they would pass the proposal either “as is” or “with amendments.” From the qualitative questions, however, it appears that some of the amendments required by faculty for acceptance might be complex and could remove much of what is in the proposal.

The qualitative questions also revealed a deeply divided faculty. When asked for general strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, far more faculty wrote about its weaknesses than its strengths. This is true when asked about general strengths and weaknesses of the proposal and when asked about the specific strengths and weaknesses of the various sub-components of the proposal. In some categories, comments about the weaknesses of the proposal outnumbered comments about its strengths by as much as 3:1. In addition, the second largest number of responses to the question “What are the general strengths of the proposal” was “nothing” or “the proposal has no strengths.”

Finally, it is important to note that the most frequently named strength of the proposal (the proposal’s focus on the public good) was also one of the three most frequently named weaknesses. Approximately 50 comments listed this as a strength. Approximately 45 comments named this as a weakness. The fact that the central organizing principle of the entire proposal was so divisive raises great concerns for the APC. Specifically, it indicates deep philosophical differences among faculty about the wisdom of making the public good the defining characteristic of the common curriculum. It is possible that the public good could be a concept that brings more cohesiveness to the common curriculum, but any definition of the public good must be broadened to be inclusive of sciences, the creative arts, and the variety of ways faculty at

DU teach, make creative works, create new knowledge, and engage with the community in ways related to the public good. Much of what DU does falls into the category of the public good, but is not captured in the proposal.

In addition to the faculty survey, the APC solicited information from the deans' offices of all units that teach undergraduates, the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, the Vice Chancellor of Admissions, the Faculty Athletics Representative, and the Chair of GERI in order to make this report as robust as possible. A summary of this information is provided after our discussion of the faculty survey. The APC also received reports from the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI) and the Faculty of Color Association (FOCA) with substantive feedback for the Faculty Senate regarding the GERI proposal based on a town hall meeting and faculty survey sponsored by ODEI and FOCA. The APC also received a report from the Department of Languages & Literature and the Center for World Languages and Culture on "The Removal of 'Proficiency Plus' Requirement." Both of these reports are included as appendices to this report. Finally, in the summary of this report the APC's conclusions and comments based on our analysis of all of this data and our own deliberative process are included.

In this report, the APC used responses to the survey and other research to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal as identified by faculty who responded to this survey and other stakeholders at DU and shed light on what amendments would make the proposal more attractive to faculty.

Based on our analysis of the faculty feedback, other information that was gathered from units and administrators, and our own deliberative process, the APC does not recommend that the GERI proposal be adopted in its current state. The APC recognizes the hard work of the GERI committee. The current proposal, however, is extremely divisive, overly complex, and is not feasible logistically.

In addition, the APC has serious concerns about the amendment process being used *at this time*. While the APC believes that the Faculty Senate is an appropriate place to debate and approve of general curriculum requirements and thinks at some point the common curriculum proposal should come to the Senate floor for debate and amendments, the current GERI proposal is so divisive and contains so many logistically problematic areas that a better process forward would be to refer the task of revising the current proposal to a committee created by the Faculty Senate *prior* to a formal amendment process taking place on the floor of the Faculty Senate. The APC recommends that this committee solicit input from all faculty, senators, any willing former members of GERI, undergraduate students, the Provost's Office, the Vice Chancellor of Admissions, and units responsible for delivering the common curriculum (e.g., CAHSS, CNSM, RSECS, Writing Program, etc.) to create a revised proposal for the full Faculty Senate to review, debate, amend, and vote on. In addition, we recommend this committee use the senate floor to solicit possible revisions to the proposal from senators during open debate. Finally, we recommend this committee take careful consideration of the feedback provided in the report submitted to the APC by ODEI and FOCA to ensure that diversity and inclusiveness are thoughtfully and meaningfully included in a revised proposal.

If the proposal is referred to a committee or if the Senate chooses to follow through with the amendment process, the APC has recommendations regarding both general areas and specific aspects of the subcomponents of the proposal we believe should be considered. We hope these recommendations will guide debate about and revisions to the common curriculum. Many faculty members identified positive aspects of the proposal that should be incorporated into a proposal that is more inclusive of all units on campus and that is less rigid. Our recommendations emanate from the faculty survey results, information obtained from administrators, and our own deliberative process and are addressed at the conclusion of our report.

Faculty Survey Results

Faculty were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements based on their analysis of the GERI proposal about whether the program “was good” or “would work.” A five-point scale of 1 “strongly agree” to 5 “strongly disagree” was used. A response of 3 indicated “neither agree nor disagree.”

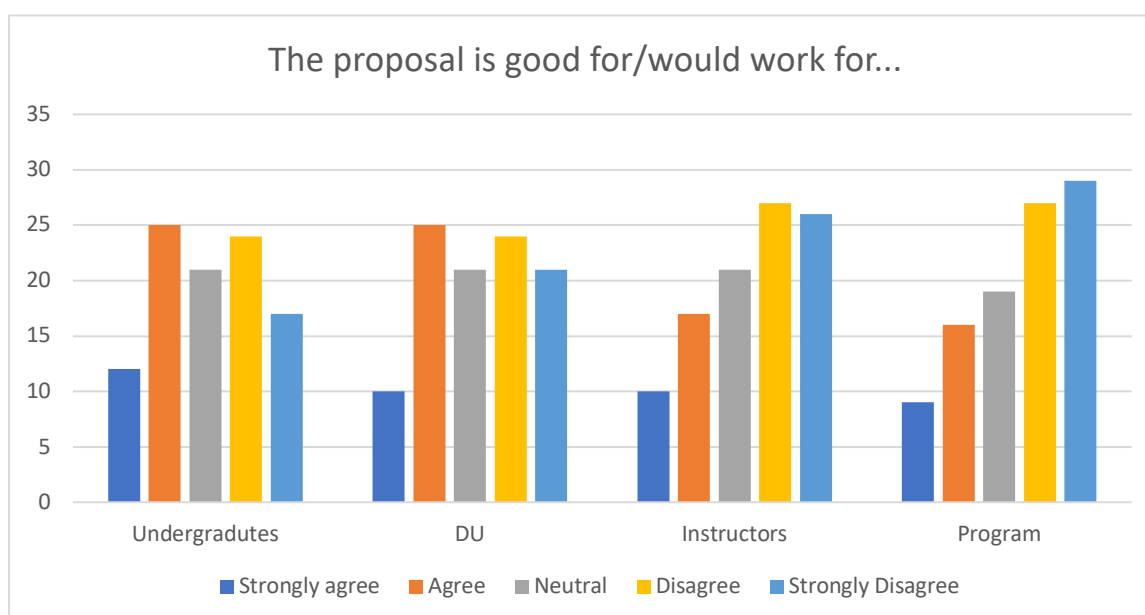
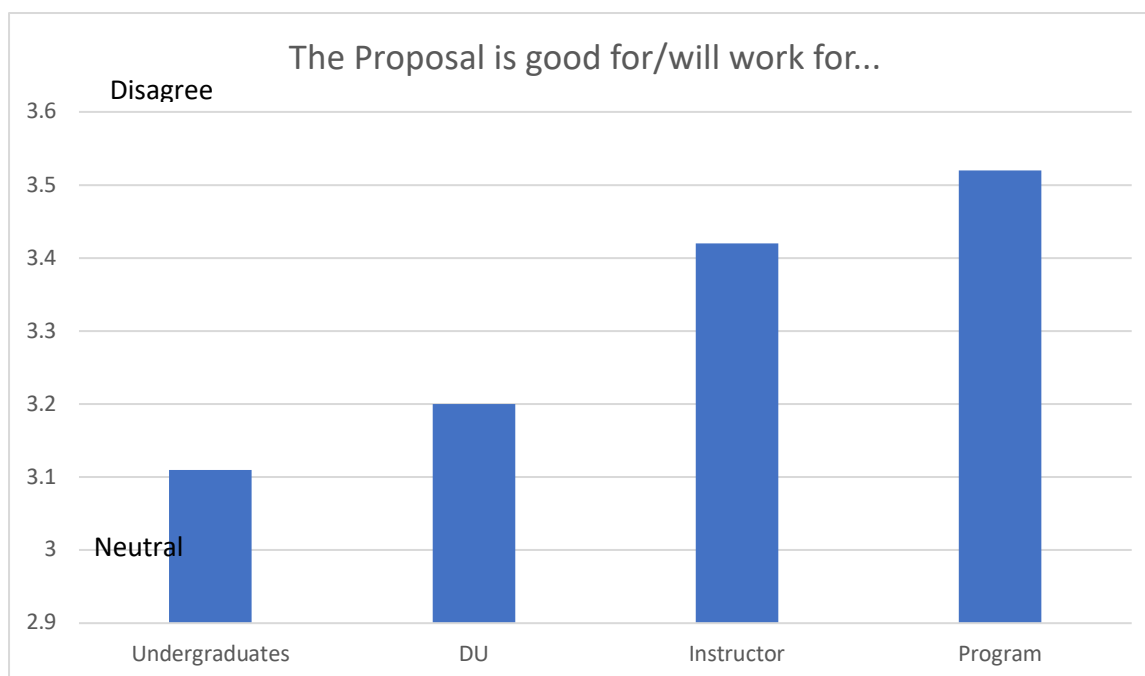
Question 1: “The proposed revisions are good for undergraduates at the University of Denver.”

Question 2: “The proposed revisions are good for DU as a whole.”

Question 3: “The proposed revisions will work for me as an instructor.”

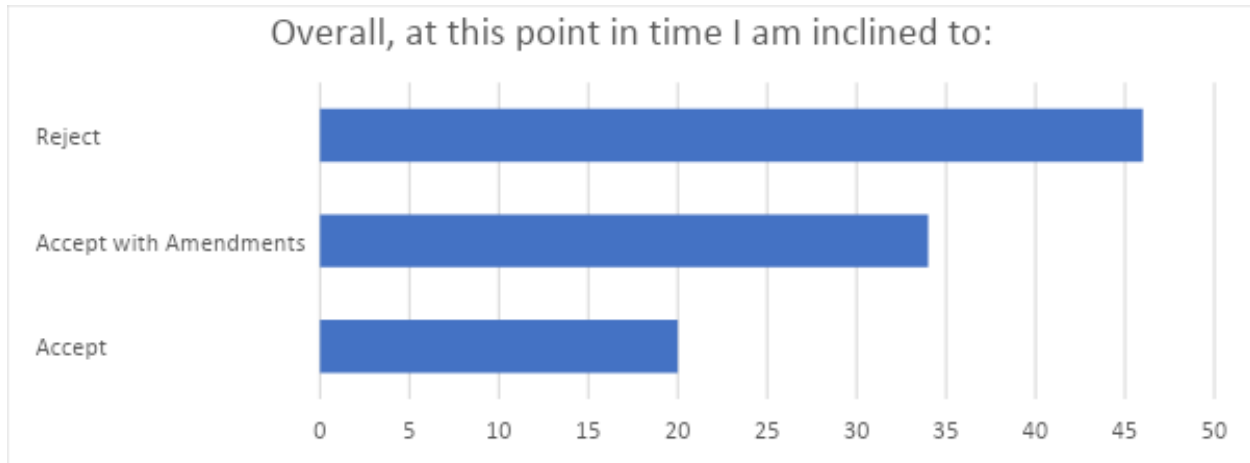
Question 4: “The proposed revisions will work for my program.”

These questions reveal that there is disagreement over the benefits of the proposal. Overall, for faculty who responded to the questions, responses skewed slightly toward “disagree” with means above 3.0 (neither agree nor disagree) for all four questions. As reflected in the graph below, Question 1 (undergraduates) had a mean of 3.11, question 2 (DU) had a mean of 3.20, question 3 (instructors) had a mean of 3.42, and question 4 (faculty) had a mean of 3.52. Collapsing responses, none of the questions had a majority of faculty who responded with “strongly agree” or “agree.” For questions 3 (instructors) and question 4 (program), a majority of respondents (53% and 56%, respectively) responded “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” For questions 1 (undergraduates) and 2 (DU), the most common responses were “agree” (25% for both), while for question 3 (instructors) the most common responses was “disagree” (27%) and for question 4 (program) the most common response was “strongly disagree” (29%).



Next, faculty were asked to respond to the question “Overall, at this point in time I am inclined to _____.” Faculty were given the option to respond with “Accept the proposal without amendments,” “Accept the proposal with amendments,” and “Reject the proposal.” As noted above, 20% of faculty responded they were inclined to accept the proposal without amendments,” 34% of faculty responded they were inclined to accept the proposal with amendments,” and 46% responded they were inclined to reject the proposal. Therefore, as noted a majority of the faculty who responded indicate they are willing to accept the proposal “as is” or “with amendments,” but it is impossible to know exactly what amendments would cause the 34%

to approve the proposal. In addition, it is obviously possible that while some amendments would attract some of these faculty members, not all amendments would be appealing to all faculty who responded with this answer to this question. In the next section of this report, however, the APC attempts to use the qualitative responses to highlight the various strengths and weaknesses of the proposal as identified by faculty who responded to this survey.



Qualitative Responses

Faculty were next asked to comment on the strengths of the overall revisions. In total, responses were sorted into 17 different categories that had at least two comments in the category based on coding by the APC. If a comment from a faculty member contained more than one strength it was coded into multiple categories. If a response listed multiple strengths of a single category, however, it was only counted as one response. All categories that had at least five comments sorted into the category are listed below. In order of most frequently cited, those strengths were:

General strengths

- **Focus on the public good**
- **No strengths/the current common curriculum is better**
- **Cohesiveness**
- **Digital portfolio**
- **First year cohort**
- **Capstone**
- **The proposal was creative/innovative/unique**
- **Experiential learning components**
- **Themes**
- **Changes to the science curriculum**

The proposal's emphasis on the public good was by far the most commonly cited strength, with twice as many comments (49) being sorted into this category as the second (no strengths, 23), the third (cohesiveness 22), and fourth (digital portfolio, 20). The number of comments per category after that fell off quickly.

Faculty were next asked to comment on the weaknesses of the overall revisions. The number of comments on weaknesses of the proposal were roughly twice as many as the comments related to the strengths, even when considering the second largest category of strengths was “the proposal has no strengths.” In total, responses were sorted into 29 different categories based on coding by the APC that had at least 2 comments in the category. In addition, as with strengths, if a comment from a faculty member contained more than one weakness it was coded into multiple categories. If a response listed multiple weaknesses of a single category, however, it was only counted as one response. All categories that had at least five comments sorted into the category are listed below. In order of most frequently cited, those weaknesses were:

General weaknesses

- **Focus on the public good**
- **Too complicated/confusing**
- **Too much focus on Denver/the DSEM concept**
- **DU doesn’t have the faculty, staff, or administrators to deliver the proposal/ DU will need to hire new administrators, faculty, and staff/Faculty workload will be dramatically increased**
- **Themes**
- **Required team teaching**
- **Transfer students will be discouraged from attending DU/cannot complete the proposed common curriculum**
- **Capstone**
- **Common curriculum courses will no longer count for the major/The proposal takes too much away from majors**
- **Too rigid/structured**
- **Language changes**
- **Not enough explicit focus on diversity/race/class**
- **Science changes/Proposal needs more emphasis on STEM and technology**
- **Not enough role for the arts**
- **Does not support R1 goals**
- **Portfolio**

The first three categories were roughly equal in number of comments, each containing between 40-45 separate comments. Each one of these categories had close to the same number of comments in the category as the proposal’s largest strength category (50). There were 31 individual comments about weaknesses related to staffing concerns and faculty workload. Each of the top 7 categories of weakness had more or roughly the same number of comments as the fourth largest of the strength categories.

Comments that dealt with specific aspects of the subcomponents of the proposal are discussed below under the section that deals with that subcomponent. This section focuses on those responses that had to do with general aspects of the proposal or aspects that are not captured by specific subcomponents of the proposal.

General Strengths

Focus on the public good

Faculty who listed this as a strength typically agreed with the core principles outlined in the proposal and focused on the proposal's alignment with DU's mission. They noted there was an attempt to include and recognize the importance of the public good and diversity, equity, and inclusion. There was a belief that the public good could be a unifying theme for a common curriculum. Faculty liked that students were challenged to get involved in the world beyond the classroom and were required to reflect on that involvement in an academic way. Comments in this category indicated the proposal did not define the public good as a particular attitude or conclusion. Faculty wrote the proposal spoke to their desire to figure out how to do "more good" in the world. A few respondents noted they believed the public good could be used to set DU apart from competitors and attract students who might share this altruistic goal. It would make DU unique. Faculty also noted the proposal's focus on the public good seemed to give it a unifying sense of purpose and would create a common curriculum that was more than just checking off boxes. However, even some of those who agreed this was a worthy goal noted "the public good" was poorly defined in the proposal. Others, however, noted that avoiding a concrete definition of the public good allowed the concept to be defined broadly. It is also important to note that this was the "weakness" of the proposal that was most frequently cited.

No strengths

As noted, the second most frequently discussed "strength" of the proposal was that it had no strengths. At times, respondents indicated they understood what the proposal was attempting to accomplish, but this goal was not appropriate for a university, the proposal did not achieve what it attempted, or the proposal was too confusing/complicated to achieve anything. In addition, respondents who said the proposal had no strengths expressed their belief that the current common curriculum was better than the proposal.

Cohesiveness

Respondents who listed the cohesiveness of the proposal ranged from those who indicated the new curriculum was "slightly more coherent" than the present common curriculum to those who wrote "the greatest strength of this revision is its conceptual continuity." Many of these respondents wrote that the proposal was better than the current curriculum and would likely lead students to understand the connection between their general education requirements, although not all respondents agree the current curriculum lacked cohesion. Typically, these respondents liked the idea of revising common curriculum to emphasize a "shared experience" and to provide a learning experience that was "uniquely DU." In addition, several noted that the approach could provide "strong returns." Others noted, however, that the cohesiveness leads to constraints on individual faculty and programs. For example, one respondent wrote, "The goal of having an overarching theme around which the general education curriculum can be organized is laudable. In pursuing such an approach, each unit of the university should determine how that [the public good] is best reflected in the curriculum for that unit."

Creative/Innovative

Slightly more than a half dozen comments noted a strength of the proposal was that it was “creative,” “innovative,” or “unique.” These respondents believed the curriculum would set DU apart and make the university competitive. Responses stated the proposal was visionary and creative in suggesting a variety of different learning modes, such as the portfolio, the experiential component, the first-year lecture series, and the team-taught capstone. Respondents also indicated they thought the proposal would also help distinguish DU as a unique university.

General Weaknesses

Focus on the public good

A large number of comments related to the weaknesses of the proposal were related to the proposal’s focus on the public good. These comments were more diverse than those that found the focus on the public good was a strength and generally fell into a few different categories: the definition of public good in the proposal was too narrow and did not include faculty interests as teachers and researchers/scholars/creative artists or their students’ interests; emphasis on the public good was not appropriate for a university, especially a university that was trying to become more prominent nationally; and the proposal assumed students would be attracted to a university focused on the public good, which has not been supported by research.

A number of respondents indicated the definition of public good in the proposal was too narrow. Some wrote the concept of “public good” was inherently too nebulous to provide any real coherence to the curriculum. A number of faculty commented that the proposal left out many areas that could be considered a public good. For example, basic research in science is not conducted by businesses, so universities are the only reasonable place to do that. This is in service of the public good. Others noted that helping students understand science was a public good. Other respondents were concerned there was no explicit focus on inequality, difference, power, race, class, and gender in the curriculum, which constitute a large part of the public good.

Some faculty who responded specifically wrote the narrow definition of the public good in the proposal left their work out. The emphasis on the “public good” and the specific requirements of the proposal meant that many faculty members would either not be able to participate in the common curriculum or would need to teach far outside their expertise. In addition, by focusing on the public good, the common curriculum would no longer represent the areas in which DU’s faculty are experts. Many faculty members, for example, conduct research that relates to the creation of new knowledge, which may or may not fit into the public good as defined by the proposal. Thus, there were concerns about faculty that were related to how faculty whose work did not fit into the proposal’s definition of the common good would contribute to the common curriculum or that such faculty would not feel welcome at the University of Denver. Others wrote that the proposal made assumptions about the expertise and interests of the faculty that were deeply flawed.

One faculty respondent wrote the proposal contained requirements that, “as ideas, are good, but in reality, will not work and could even be damaging.” Several faculty wrote that requiring experiential learning from individual faculty and students for whom it has no interest was dangerous. Another danger was identified in relation to frames of power and equity: Sending even the most well-intentioned students out into communities without the correct training could be damaging to communities. Others wrote that the “forced” emphasis on the public good was misplaced. Respondents wrote that the proposal assumed our students and prospective students wanted to focus on the public good. For all the students who decided to attend DU because of its focus on the public good, other students would specifically choose not to come to DU because of its focus on the public good.

Many respondents wrote that the proposal assumed what was “in the public good.” In addition, while it was a good theme, faculty wrote that the public good should not be the only theme of the common curriculum or considered the core of what we do as a university. Still others wrote the proposal was a “political agenda.” Finally, some faculty wrote that focusing the common curriculum on specific notions of the public good would stifle student voices that did not agree with their instructor about what constituted the public good.

There was also the belief that from the perspective of the sciences, the public good needed to be defined in an even more inclusive way. For example, the Practice in the Public Good requirement does not seem to recognize a typical undergraduate research project in the sciences as a qualifying project. Comments suggested that contributing to the understanding of the physical world definitely contributes to the public good, and it certainly qualifies as high impact experiential learning. The College of Natural Science and Mathematics (CNSM) wants to encourage students to participate in undergraduate research, according to faculty, but this proposal would pull students away from traditional undergraduate research and toward more community-facing projects.

Complicated/Confusing

An equally large number of comments noted a weakness of the proposal was that it was overly complicated and confusing. Faculty called the proposal “byzantine.” One noted it was “*far* too complex” and described explaining it and trying to track it would be a “nightmare.” Many faculty responses noted it was difficult to organize and they would not be able to explain it to current or prospective students. Responses in this category indicated the proposal created additional constraints for courses that makes it more difficult for students and their advisors to craft a workable schedule. Responses generally indicated the proposed revisions were more complex than current requirements and would require more faculty advising time than the current common curriculum or that faculty would no longer be able to serve as the primary advisors of undergraduate students.

DU doesn’t have the faculty, staff, or administrators to deliver the proposal/DU will need to hire new administrators, faculty, and staff/Faculty workload will be dramatically increased

The complexity of the proposal, the new courses it would require, the proposal’s team-teaching requirements for the First Year Cohorts and the Capstones, and the amount of administrative

tracking that would be needed to track student progress led many respondents to the conclusion that DU could not deliver the curriculum or that DU would need to hire a large number of new administrators, faculty, and staff to deliver the curriculum. There were many concerns that the proposed curriculum was undeliverable at current staffing levels. Many responses called the proposal unrealistic. There was concern that the thematic structure and other elements of the proposal will require more administrative support than the current core. Without a large increase in the number of faculty, some respondents wrote the proposal would have disastrous effects on the university's current programs. Others noted that if more faculty and administrators were not hired, the proposal would lead to a drastic increase in faculty workload. In addition, changes would require creating many new courses, some largely from scratch. Others noted the complexity of the proposal would be burdensome on chairs who are responsible for scheduling courses. Others focused on the difficulty of creating "cohorts," linked courses, and team teaching that the proposal lays out. While the proposal was great "on paper" it was impossible to implement. There were also questions about the need for new administrators (particularly the need for a new assistant provost for undergraduate curriculum) and new staff requirements.

Transfer students will be discouraged from attending DU

There were also concerns the proposal was impossible for transfer students to complete. In addition, some respondents felt the proposal actually sent the message that transfer students were not welcome at DU. There was concern this would overly affect science students, many of whom take common curriculum courses at other institutions. There were concerns the proposed revisions would impact transfer student recruitment significantly. Transfer students, especially those at community colleges, expect to have completed the general education requirements that will transfer and meet the requirements here at DU. This was particularly concerning to faculty respondents as there was a belief that in order to prosper DU would need to attract more transfer students in the future.

Common curriculum courses will no longer count for the major/Takes too much away from majors

Several respondents noted that it would be very hard for students in a structured major, such as in the sciences, Engineering, the Theater Department, or the Lamont School of Music, to navigate the proposal and their major/professional requirements. Other respondents described the proposal as impossible to complete for engineering students. Some respondents contended that many students don't go to college/university for general education. Rather, students choose their college and decide which university to go to based on where they will get a useful degree related to the major they choose to study. In addition, there were concerns that the proposed curriculum would no longer allow departments to teach courses that satisfied their curriculum and the common curriculum. There were concerns that the thematic groupings of AH and SS courses would water down the necessity of introducing students to different disciplinary perspectives in common curriculum courses. It was noted that the proposal seemed to address the "double dipping" that currently takes place in the common curriculum (e.g., Econ counts for DCB and Econ majors and Gen Ed, Psych counts for Psych majors and Gen Ed). However, it was noted that this double dipping was critical for some majors to complete their degree and for some departments to deliver their major courses.

The proposal is too rigid

Multiple responses referred to the proposal as “mandated,” “over-prescribed,” “over-engineered,” and “controlling.” There were concerns related to academic freedom and the ability of faculty to teach in their area of specialty. Comments suggested the proposed changes represented a major centralization of control over individual course content and pedagogy. There were also comments that in some departments, only a very few faculty could tweak their existing FSEM or ASEM course to meet the new requirements and that this would lead to a “stark loss in diversity and a more monochromatic education for our students.”

It should be noted that when told of this category of weakness by the APC, multiple members of the GERI committee indicated the proposal was meant to be read in a more open-ended way than many faculty members were reading it. For example, several members of GERI indicated that the themes in the proposal were meant to be suggestions and the intention that different themes would be proposed and debated as part of the process. In addition, there was a belief that many courses could satisfy new requirements without major overhauls.

Not enough explicit focus on diversity/race/class

Some respondents noted that without much more training, most faculty at DU would be unqualified for working on questions of the public good in the community and could do more harm than good. While one-day trainings may mention diversity and inclusion topics, there would be insufficient time and exposure across the faculty to fully address issues around how to conceptualize and lead discussions about what constitutes the public good. Requiring faculty who don't have any sincere interest or connections with some issues and communities to engage with these issues and communities had the potential to cause more divisions and misunderstandings for the students. In addition, respondents wrote the proposal came across as “tokenism” in engaging with diversity, equity, and inclusion. One respondent noted, “the connection with international cultures and diversity is not only extremely limited, it is downright discouraged.” Faculty also indicated the guidelines for determining what classes attain the Diversity/Inclusion attribute seem insufficient for students to actually learn about D/I because the class simply needs “one or more readings/activities that directly address the issues of identity/inclusivity plus one or more class meetings in which these ideas are a substantial focus” (GERI proposal, p.10). In addition, there were concerns faculty might unintentionally reify “white savior” paternalistic colonial approaches, which would ultimately undermine the notion of the public good.

First Year Backbone

Faculty were next asked to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the “First Year Backbone.” Overall, feedback on the “First Year Backbone” was more negative than positive. In addition, comments about the weakness of this section of the proposal, particularly aspects related to the DSEM, were far more passionate and contained greater specificity than comments about the strengths. There was not a great deal of effusive excitement over any aspect of the First Year Backbone. The most common positive comments about this section of the proposal were

that it was more coherent/cohesive than the current common curriculum, although a couple of respondents expressed concerns about integration/coherence. Comments suggested that cohesion was critical to the success of the First Year Backbone, but there it was also seen as an area of concern because there was a feeling that it would take a lot of administrative oversight to ensure cohesion between FSEM/DSEM and WRIT coursework and faculty. These comments related to faculty concerns that the proposal would increase workload or would require hiring additional new staff and administrators to facilitate cohorts and team teaching. As with responses to the “general strengths” question discussed above, multiple respondents indicated there were “no strengths” related to the First Year Backbone. Only two respondents said there were “no weaknesses” with this section of the proposal. In addition, a lot of positive comments had extensive concerns about this section of the proposal.

DSEM

The DSEM concept was perhaps the most poorly received part of the entire proposal and the DSEM concept received very little support. This was for a number of reasons. First, many respondents believed the FSEM has been working very well and there was really no reason to change it. Close to two dozen respondents specifically stated they currently teach in the program and wanted to keep it. Other respondents complained that the very hard work they put in to creating their current FSEM would be wasted. Second, many respondents suggested the DSEM would be more difficult to administer and too limiting in scope of what faculty deliver in the current FSEM model. Many faculty members who currently teach in the FSEM program—and greatly enjoy teaching in this program—do not feel they could teach in the DSEM program. There were large concerns about narrowing the focus of FSEMs and how that will discourage faculty from teaching them, leading to some programs and professors having little to offer in this area. This led to concerns that the university would not be able to staff DSEMs. Third, many faculty members who responded to the survey indicated that while they value community engagement, the DSEM program was not the proper place for the university to emphasize this type of teaching and learning. Fourth, a number of faculty indicated focusing on Denver makes the university colloquial, takes away from the national and international prestige of the university, or is unbecoming of a university with Research 1 aspirations. It reduces DU from a national university to a regional or city university. Finally, many faculty members who responded to the survey questioned whether students would want to come to a university that focused so narrowly on a single city. A number of respondents were skeptical that students would be drawn to the topic of “Denver.”

WRIT

The WRIT sequence as proposed was popular, although a number of faculty expressed concerns about the feasibility of cohorts. Writing and rhetoric are clearly valued by the faculty who responded to the survey. There was a general feeling that the proposal keeps the university’s current level of investment in this area, but there were concerns about the inclusion of public good and how that might alter what is already working so well. Consistent with the responses to the general strengths and weaknesses discussed above, in this section of the survey respondents indicated the concept of the public good was philosophically mis-understood by the proposal. There was no clear definition of the concept in the proposal which was creating fear and

uncertainty about who will get to define it and what messages will be given to students. Other responses about weaknesses noted concerns that there was either too much focus on writing or the type of writing (why academic discourse/research focus so early, for example). There were suggestions that the proposal add multimodal ways of expressing knowledge (which many WRIT classes already do) or for a focus on presentation/public speaking skills. One comment noted that research should be taught later in a student's career in the major. In addition, concern ranged between "WRIT is trying to take over too much" to "We're asking WRIT to do too much." This latter concern, again tied to faculty workload, was mentioned more often. There were also concerns about how transfer students would navigate Portfolio requirements of the First Year Backbone.

Colloquium

Faculty seemed to approve of the idea of a colloquium, although there were also a number of questions related to faculty workload. Several respondents specifically mentioned approving of community engagement and the added co-curricular events. A number of respondents mentioned the value of exposing students to interdisciplinary perspectives and showcasing faculty research. Most of the concerns related to the colloquium were logistical. A number of respondents mentioned worries about student attendance, as well as expectations for faculty to attend multiple evening events. Several faculty members who responded to the survey mentioned that colloquium events seemed to be scheduled too frequently and that we already have issues attracting audiences for speakers from other programs that DU brings in. Others were concerned about how speakers will be chosen and other issues of equity. Another big issue was how much DSEM and WRIT faculty will be expected to discuss these presentations in their classes.

Knowledge and Skills

Respondents were next asked to address strengths and weaknesses related to the "Knowledge and Skills" component of the proposal. Overall, there were almost twice as many comments that identified weaknesses compared to comments that identified strengths. For this analysis, strengths and weaknesses were separated into those comments regarding the overall effect of the proposal and those specifically addressing science, language, and math. Of the thirteen comments in this section regarding the general effect of the GERI proposal, ten respondents stated that the strength of the Knowledge and Skills portion of the GERI proposal was that the proposed science, language, and math curriculum either preserves or is identical to the current science, language, and math curriculum. Other identified strengths were: science, language, and math were "important facets of a liberal arts education;" the science, language, and math changes don't look difficult to implement; and the Knowledge and Skills components of the proposal were the most reasonable set of classes to implement.

Of the twelve comments identifying general weaknesses of this area of the proposal, two areas were identified by multiple respondents: 1) comments about how science, language, and math were weakened by the proposal, not improved, or how science, language, and math need more emphasis in the proposal, and 2) comments associated with uncertainty regarding the proposal (ie, the proposal was too abstract/confusing, how will the transition to the new program work, cost analysis, and consultation with departments). Additional comments concerned how the

proposal would affect transfer students and that the sciences were *over* represented in the proposal.

The major overall strength identified by respondents in this section was that the GERI proposal changed little if anything in the current science, language, and math curriculum. Two major weaknesses identified were that the proposal was confusing regarding structure and implementation and that the proposal does not improve or weakens the existing science, language, and math portion of the general education curriculum. Thus, responses to the general strengths/weaknesses of this area of the proposal were mixed.

Faculty responses to changes in languages, science and math were generally negative. Respondents indicated that implementation of the changes would require major revisions to current course offerings and potentially hurt teaching loads of numerous faculty. Language faculty were deeply concerned that there will be significantly fewer students to fill courses and potentially hurt the recruitment of majors to the languages or result in the loss of language faculty. The impacts on teaching assistants and graduate student recruitment in the sciences was also a concern, with faculty concerned the proposal might force a reduction in research output without top graduate students to share in innovation and research.

Science

The top two strengths identified by respondents were that the science requirement was more flexible without the third course in the sequence and the change in the science sequence addressed student demands. Other strengths identified were: keeping science with labs, shortening the science sequence would lead to a reduction in class size, and the modification to the science sequence may improve student interest in science.

There were, however, nearly twice as many comments related to the weaknesses of the changes to the science requirements as those related to the strengths. The top concern identified was that more science is needed in the common curriculum, followed by the science requirement was not clearly laid out in the proposal and STEM is not adequately incorporated into the public good component of the proposal. Three respondents indicated that there should be less science and either fewer labs or an elimination of labs entirely. Other concerns were that implementation of the third science course would be difficult if this class was not tied to prerequisites, the reduction of the science requirement sends a bad message to students on the importance of science, the third quarter of science does not actually reduce the science requirement per student requests, the “free-standing” science class will be generalized to “feel-good topics,” the general education science sequences are already themed, creating a free-standing course will be difficult to implement, and that faculty development needs to be compensated more than it is in the proposal.

The overall responses to changes in the science requirement were generally negative. The top two strengths were that the new proposal adds flexibility to the science requirement by allowing the students to take a different and potentially unrelated science course in third quarter and that this addressed student concerns about the current science sequences. However, other responders claimed that uncoupling the third quarter science course from the current sequence is

problematic in that students may change to a science course for which they do not have background knowledge. Respondents also indicated that the current science sequence is already thematic, and a reduction of the three-sequence course might send the wrong message on the importance of science to society.

Five of the nine responses stated that the Science faculty would be negatively-impacted by the proposal. Funding teaching assistants and graduate student recruitment were cited as being detrimental to the sciences, given how current science sequences allow departments to finance TA positions. Alteration of the third science course might impact class size, hampering the ability to fund teaching assistants. Changes to the science sequence might also hinder the ability to fill courses to capacity.

Languages

The greatest strength identified with the new proposal centers around allowing the language requirement to be satisfied by allowing the students to demonstrate proficiency in the language or transfer language credits from another institution. Three respondents stated that the new proposal makes the language program more flexible. One respondent indicated that the new proposal would allow the language faculty to develop new courses. Other comments identified as strengths were that students will like the change and that the change is good since students often don't choose a country for study abroad that speaks the language they are taking.

There were, however, more than twice as many comments related to the weaknesses of the change to the language requirement as comments related to the strength of the changes. The most common comments identifying weaknesses centered on the theme that *more language* courses are needed and the new proposal is insufficient and weakens the language program. A common concern involves how students that come from non-English speaking countries or homes will be incorporated into this new proposal. The proposal does not clearly address the language requirements for non-native English speakers. Other responses indicating weaknesses with the new proposal include: the language component is not adequately enmeshed with the "public good" component of the proposal, students should not be allowed to opt out of the language requirement, languages are becoming irrelevant with automated translation programs and therefore language requirements should be reduced even more, machine language should be included in the language requirement, and proficiency in language cannot be gauged by a written test.

The overall responses to changes in the language requirement were overwhelmingly negative. Although several respondents wrote that new requirements created flexibility, the impacts on the language department and required courses were deemed too severe by respondents. Responses were also concerned that proficiency cannot be determined by a single test and reduction in language requirements goes against global trends, impacts diversity, and hurts internationalization initiatives at the university.

In summary, for this subsection some of the greatest concerns with the proposal involved the potential negative impacts on the Language Departments and faculty. If students were no longer required to take language courses, faculty may not have enough students to fill designated

courses. Reduction in language was cited as promoting an “opt-out” culture, hurting internationalization efforts, and going against global trends of multilingual proficiency. Respondents indicated this would hurt students’ competitive edge while going against DU’s mission laid out for Impact 2025 and would not serve the public good. The new language requirement was also cited as weakening study abroad and impacting student recruitment.

Math

Two of the four responses indicate that the new proposal will make the math requirement more flexible. Keeping the math requirement was cited as a strength by one respondent and one response indicated that math not having to change at all was a strength.

There were three times as many comments about weaknesses as strengths. Eleven of the thirteen responses identifying weaknesses in the math portion of the new proposal centered on the ideas that more math is needed in the common curriculum; that the math requirement should be expanded to include computer science, statistics, logic, and reasoning; or that computer science (programming) should be a separate requirement from math. Other weaknesses identified were that the math requirement was not clearly defined and that the math requirement wasn’t better incorporated with the public good.

The overall impression was that the math requirement will be minimally affected. While continuing to include a math requirement was seen as a strength, not mandating statistics or computer science as a separate requirement was seen as an overall weakness. Two of the responses cited concerns of a university-wide disruption and lack of resources to implement the changes in this proposal. An additional concern was that most of the changes would impact humanities and social sciences disproportionately, while science and math remain relatively unchanged in terms of credit requirements.

Thematic Groups and Attributes

The survey continued by asking faculty to identify strengths and weaknesses in the proposed thematic groups and attributes. The themes, while designed to create cohesion across the undergraduate experience (which many appreciated), were ultimately highly political. They determine what courses will “count” towards General Education for years to come, and thus have huge resource implications for faculty. The fact that the plan for changing and drafting these themes was not transparent left many faculty worried. In addition, many faculty were under the impression that the themes were already set and not open to new suggestions. Many concerns took the form of “this is bad for my department” because faculty recognized that the themes would exclude courses in the department, their area of expertise, or require the department to offer new courses.

The most common positive responses related to the way that this would help students integrate their undergraduate coursework in a cohesive way, while also offering opportunities for collaboration among faculty from different disciplines. Respondents liked that the themes would “unify General Education requirements” and help students integrate their learning. However, the

other side of this was that some faculty felt that themes were contrary to the idea of General Education. They argued that students receive breadth from General Education, and then focus on themes and “depth” in majors and minors. Related concerns were that the idea of the “public good” was not helpful, and that the “Denver” theme was redundant with the DSEMs.

Beyond that, faculty worried that the proposed curriculum would negatively affect student experience because it would make common curriculum far too complicated. Respondents worried students might have to take some extra classes if they switch themes or if themes switch part way through their undergraduate degrees. Faculty also expressed concerns that transfer students’ credits won’t transfer. One faculty respondent pointed out that the same challenge came up for students bringing in AP credits, potentially leading to the need of frequent academic exceptions. A couple of responses just argued that the students would not like these themes.

There were also concerns that it would be too complicated for DU as a whole, and that we wouldn’t have the resources to execute this effectively without building a large bureaucracy to support it. The main concern was who would manage and coordinate the thematic groups, decide whether or not attributes applied, and track common curriculum requirements. This implies a lot of work at different levels (from student advising to course preparation and scheduling, possibly ending up with the need to create a new bureaucratic body that would oversee the program). Concerns for faculty largely related to having to overhaul courses—first to fit the existing themes, and then again, every time the themes change—though others noted that many General Education courses are in need of an overhaul, and this would be a positive outcome. Many also really liked the opportunities for faculty development, the campus community, and collaboration.

Many faculty members were also concerned that DU simply does not have the capacity to execute this vision at the institution. Because the themes limit what counts, many classes that currently are in the common curriculum will no longer work and we will not be able to offer enough seats with the current DU faculty. The other major institutional concern related to advising—the proposal was so complicated faculty worry about explaining it to students. The attributes also received some criticism. While many responses liked the fact that the attributes explicitly brought the goals of the General Education program into every class, others worried that the attributes were “watered down” and that they were so broad as to be meaningless. This was particularly a concern in the area of diversity and inclusion.

Some patterns emerged when looking at the answers by respondents’ acceptance or rejection of the overall proposal. Even faculty who responded that they would *accept* the proposal *without amendments* expressed some dissatisfaction with the chosen themes and with the perceived rigidity of making the thematic groups a requirement. There was also some concern about how and who will manage and coordinate the thematic groups and their changes. There were fewer comments about the attributes from this group, but the comments that did address attributes expressed agreement with the attributes and the flexibility the attributes offer. There was some concern about the assessment of the attributes.

The *accept with amendments* group was mixed about the thematic groups, with some liking the idea but expressing similar concerns as the ones in the “accept without amendments” group (the

chosen themes and perceived rigidity of requiring the thematic groups), and some disliking the thematic groups for being logistically challenging or impossible to implement if they are required. The chosen themes received some criticisms for being vague, narrow, or ill defined, with some faculty noting that they exclude the Arts and the Sciences, and the loss of courses in Languages. There was also concern about the proposal's seemingly unnecessary complexity, and with the bureaucratic needs that this would create. There is also concern about how themes will be created, approved, cultivated and developed in the future. The themes also seem to lead to many academic exceptions when students have AP credits or are transfer students. This group of faculty made fewer comments about the attributes, some of which express agreement with them.

Several respondents expressed concerns about the attributes' poor/narrow definition, especially diversity and public good. More importantly, there was a sense that the attributes will just become boxes to check off by faculty and students, turning them meaningless and unlikely to add to a sense of cohesion. There was also concern about who will assess the attributes and how they will be assessed. There were at least two comments that point to the need to revitalize teaching practices to make a new curriculum actually work, instead of just changing the structure and the names while keeping the same teaching practices (old wine, new bottle). There were also some comments about the goal of General Education (exploring and expanding rather than focusing), and about how these themes would relate (or perhaps affect) to the current minors.

The *reject group* did not show substantial thematic differences (but perhaps some differences in breadth or depth of the criticisms) with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the "accept with amendments" group. The concerns about attributes were particularly pronounced in this group, though, as were concerns about how the themes would be chosen.

Some responses included constructive feedback across response groups:

- Many suggested an environment / sustainability / global warming theme
- Many suggested that thematic groups be optional, with one person suggesting a certificate instead
- There needs to be a clear plan for how the themes will be chosen, as the thematic groups end up having huge consequences for different departments in terms of course enrollment; some people just insisted on the need for transparency in thematic group management; some people felt that the whole process just opened the door to a nasty political process
- Several respondents insisted on a better definition of attributes, particularly diversity and inclusivity, needing to set a higher bar.

Study Abroad/University Project/Portfolio

Of the faculty who responded to the survey, 110 respondents (40%) liked the overall concept of a Practice in the Public Good featuring some configuration of the Study Abroad/University Project/Portfolio. The most frequent theme among respondents supporting the practicum was the positive impact on students (36 respondents, or 13%), either in terms of overall learning and meaning-making across contexts through reflection, or practical, preparatory experience for the workplace later on.

When asked about the weaknesses of the Practice in the Public Good component, sixty-six respondents (24%) rejected the practicum concept altogether, with thirty-eight (14%) anticipating negative impact on students. These faculty were concerned about student resentment of mandatory volunteerism, unnecessary workload, skepticism about student uptake with lack of meaningful stakes, and perceived rigidity of requirements not suited to all majors. Twenty-one respondents (8%) anticipated a negative impact on faculty. These respondents were concerned about labor issues created by additional technologies, lack of training, and redundancies between Gen Ed and programmatic/major requirements. Thirty-six (13%) respondents expressed skepticism about the feasibility and implementation of all aspects of these proposals, the Study Abroad requirements, University Project, and Portfolio requirements. These comments expressed concerns ranging from staffing and finance issues, to student equity issues, technological implementation, and coordinating over time and space. Twenty-one respondents (8%) avoided evaluating the proposed practicum at all, instead offering critiques of current programming (e.g., concerns about the superficial nature of Study Abroad education, its bias towards students of economic means, the vagueness of what “community engagement” entails, the lack of rigor in community-engaged projects, and the incompatibility of community-engaged learning with the university).

Portfolio

Because Q12 and Q13 of the survey were not structured to allow individual responses to specifically comment on the sub-features of the practicum (Study Abroad/University Project/Portfolio), respondents did not always explicitly address the portfolio, the team-taught capstone, or the public engagement options per se. For that reason, we traced responses to individual features across questions. Fifty-five respondents over the course of the entire survey as a whole (20%) favored the idea of a portfolio. There were twenty-three (8%) that discussed the weaknesses of the portfolio. A number of respondents (18, or 6%) offered concrete recommendations for how the portfolio should be implemented in order to be feasible, flexible, and less burdensome. Concerns about the portfolio concerned who will examine the portfolios, what the criteria for evaluation will be, how the examiners will be trained, and if a random sampling is a useful measure. In addition, there is a strong vein of skepticism about the portfolio requirement, many times related to a lack of understanding about what it is and how it may benefit students. Finally, there is concern about the feasibility of portfolios given DU’s current technology. It should be noted that while this concern was shared by the Provost’s office, the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs indicated that it was possible to purchase software that would make the portfolio an option.

Community Engagement

Many respondents were in favor of Study Abroad, especially with partner universities, and supported the flexibility of options (study abroad, community engagement or university project). The strengths included helping students understand diversity and engage in local and global communities. There was concern that Study Abroad is not the most effective way to engage in community engagement programs, and opinions expressed the need for substantial funding for local community programs. Several expressed the community component was biased toward students of the social sciences, and suggested developing some sort of option for students

in STEM majors. Concern was also expressed about how music and engineering majors (who have a significant number of required classes) and how performing arts and athletic students could manage these requirements given their additional required time commitments. A number of respondents wrote that more specificity was needed when discussing the community engagement and study abroad engagement requirements.

Capstone

The Capstone received a number of comments about strengths, more than some other aspects of the proposal. In addition, fifteen respondents indicated there were “no weaknesses” associated with the Capstone portion of the proposal. Many comments expressed support for some form of Capstone, the general concept of team teaching, and the opportunity for interdisciplinary teaching. Many called the team-teaching aspect of Capstones “visionary.” Even within the comments about the strengths of the Capstone proposal, however, faculty expressed anxiety about the feasibility of the proposal. The greatest number of comments about the strength of Capstones related to the transformative, interdisciplinary, and collaborative aspects of Capstones. Comments focused on the “visionary and creative” aspects of the team-taught capstone and the great potential in these structures. Other comments suggested that the team-taught Capstone would also help distinguish DU as a unique university. The Capstone and the portfolio working together made the GERI proposal something that graduating students would take with them in a way current ASEM’s can’t do alone. Even in these positive comments, however, faculty expressed anxiety about replacing what is seen as a fairly successful program (ASEM’s).

Other comments expressed a great deal of support, but worried about the feasibility of finding faculty to teach the courses and the work that must go into team taught courses. One respondent wrote, “I really like the capstone idea, as interdisciplinary and team taught. This seems ambitious but also exciting, and allows co-teaching and deepens the interdisciplinary thrust of ASEM even more.” One commenter, who particularly liked the final capstone interdisciplinary plan “with three separate disciplines and three separate lecturers” compared this course to a previously “successful version of the Core,” “The Making of the Modern Mind.”

Those who noted weaknesses expressed concern that the demand will outpace the supply of courses available with current faculty and many respondents wondered if it was actually feasible with current finances of DU and structure of credit. There were also concerns that Capstone courses would require the hiring of more faculty with backgrounds in non-traditional academic fields outside of tenure lines and this would deplete resources for more focused academic units. It was also noted that team teaching, while admirable, is very costly and time consuming. Commenters also noted that it was unclear how teams would be formed, who would help faculty connect, and how faculty with shared interests would find each other. Some respondents called it a logistical or scheduling nightmare and believed it would take way more time to make it work well than would benefit the students. One suggested finding out if it is even feasible with current demand of teaching in departments to even see if it can be entertained as an option (they believed it wasn’t). Questions were raised about how team-taught courses would be organized and optimized.

There were also concerns that good team teaching takes resources and time. In addition, there were concerns that the need to build teams could lead to a constant stream of new preps for

faculty and detract from other core teaching duties. Funding and compensation also weighed heavily in this section. Faculty noted they wanted to be compensated for the additional time and resources that team teaching would take, rather than have team teaching simply added on to their current workload.

Comments noted that ASEMs and other Capstone programs within majors or colleges are already seeking to accomplish what this new Capstone seems to intend, but at varying degrees of success and failure. Departments are already struggling to make the ASEM work well and Capstones in departments may be diffused or pushed aside. Respondents also argued that Capstone projects and courses better fit in majors and don't belong as part of the common curriculum. Some thought it was forcing a general education to fit into some major-type construct where all the courses are sequenced, build on some major theme, and conclude with a final seminar/capstone which looks a lot like what a major is supposed to do rather than general education. Many wanted the Capstone idea wedded to the major where more depth can be built. Others noted that Capstones were a better fit for majors because a capstone experience should reflect depth and not just a two-credit overview and reflection of common curriculum. Several faculty members were concerned about how this Capstone would relate to existing formats and structures that are key to some units such as departments that require a senior research project or the "Keystone Experience" that has been proposed by CAHSS.

There were also concerns related to the content of the Capstone courses. A number of these comments surrounded the focus on the public good. For example, faculty wonder how the public good would it be integrated with student research, internships and other opportunities like PinS that frequently operate as Capstone-type projects for students at DU. The format of Capstones would not encourage "deep synthesis, reflection and composing of students' individual portfolios." Concerns raised about whether the public good, difference and democracy focus would alienate students, not draw upon the best work of faculty and dilute the actual depth of the specific areas of discipline.

Other comments about weaknesses noted the proposal was causing confusion. Some respondents did not understand what the Capstone would look like and wondered how it would be put into practice. Too much is "left to the imagination" and therefore frustrated some faculty members who had difficulty determining what the strengths and weaknesses would be. There was confusion about how this related to the Portfolio's purpose and many noted clarity was lacking with the actual purpose of the Capstone.

Consideration from Administrators and Undergraduate Units

In addition to conducting the faculty survey, the APC solicited information from the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, the Vice Chancellor of Admissions, the Faculty Athletic Representative, and academic units responsible for delivering undergraduate education. Not all units that provide undergraduate courses chose to respond to the APC's request for input. It has been made clear to the APC that the implementation of the proposal will not involve the addition of new faculty lines to the University of Denver, although the current allocation of faculty lines might shift as faculty contracts expire or faculty retire from DU. Therefore, the APC deemed it necessary to gather feedback on the proposal from administrative units on campus, particularly

as it relates to faculty resources, the ability to schedule courses, and the appeal of the proposed curriculum to potential students.

The College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (CNSM) identified several additional concerns related to the proposal. The main issue identified by CNSM was the complexity of the proposal. The layers of requirements embedded in many of the general education courses make the delivery of these courses much more difficult from an academic planning perspective. Like faculty, administrators in the unit also anticipated students and faculty will have many more problems planning paths through the different requirements. While students could potentially navigate the proposed common curriculum in the same number of classes as in the current model, many students, especially transfer students, will end up taking more general education classes than they would have otherwise. CAHSS was also concerned about the complexity of the proposal. Administrators in CAHSS believe the proposal is so complex, CAHSS faculty will no longer be able to serve as advisors for students on the Common Curriculum. The university would need to hire and students would need to meet with professional staff advisors to ensure that students are meeting all the requirements for the Common Curriculum.

In addition, the CNSM expressed concerns with its ability to deliver DSEMs. Presumably, the same number of FSEM courses currently offered by the college will be equal to the number of DSEMs offered in the future. However, like faculty, the unit anticipated challenges with finding faculty who would be willing to teach in the modified seminar. While some current FSEMs will fit into the proposed format, many seminars taught by faculty in CNSM focus on topics of interest in the professor's field. These FSEM topics do not particularly fit with themes of "public good" or the "city of Denver." The insertion of even the "modest" approach to the public good could make the course sufficiently unattractive to CNSM faculty that it will make it difficult for CNSM to provide the same number of DSEMs as FSEMs. This would increase the pressure to deliver DSEMs on other units, such as the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS).

The addition of themes to the general education requirement would make scheduling much more difficult overall for administrators and might require the addition of staff and/or administrators in CNSM. Not only would the university need to ensure that there are enough seats in the various subject areas, but some office will also need to ensure that there are enough seats in each of the themes. The non-major science courses from Biology, Chemistry, Geography, and Physics are taught in three course sequences, typically in classes of about 80 seats per class. In a given year, CNSM currently offers about 12 such non-major sequences. In order to meet the demand for themed seats, CNSM would likely need to convert all of these non-major sequences into two course sequences plus a selection of stand-alone courses that fit into the chosen themes. At current staffing levels, it is difficult for CNSM to imagine that there would be enough flexibility in these 12 courses in order to fit the demands of the various themes or that this would provide enough themed seats from the college in order to make it work overall. Moreover, in order to be able to create science courses that fit into themes, it would be imperative that the themes have scientific angles to them. The two suggested themes, however, Internationalization and City Futures: The Case of Denver, do not lend themselves particularly well to laboratory science. At the very least, additional themes would need to be created that are more science-focused. In addition, even if new themes were added that attracted CNSM faculty, new science courses

would need to be created and staffed. Currently, science courses are typically set up with a very rigid pre-requisite structure. For example, all 2000-level and above Biology, Chemistry, or Physics courses have a first-year major sequence (or higher) as a prerequisite. So it is impractical to expect to be able to find pre-existing courses in these departments that would work as themed courses for non-majors.

It is also important to note that while there appears to be an assumption built into the proposal that Natural Sciences and Mathematics will contribute to the Capstone courses, CNSM currently offers a single ASEM course. Thus, without additional faculty hires there are not enough resources in order for CNSM to teach any Capstone courses even if they were able to easily convert existing ASEM courses into Capstone courses. Therefore, teaching all Capstone courses would fall to CAHSS.

The Ritchie School of Engineering and Computer Science (RSECS) also submitted concerns related to the administration of the proposal. First, like faculty, administrators in RSECS had concerns about the effect of the proposal on transfer credits and study abroad credits. In addition, RSECS was particularly concerned about AP credits. When students get credit from AP exams, or use a course that is transferred from another university, will they still be used even though they may not fit into a theme category? Additionally, it can be assumed that AP courses and courses from other universities will most likely not contain the “public good” aspects, themes, or attributes that are to be embedded into the DU courses. This means that if these courses are counted some students may graduate without these attributes, or perhaps a watered-down version of the themes/attributes. Administrators in CAHSS shared these concerns related to transfer, AP, and IB courses. CAHSS administrators particularly noted that given that DU is committed to ensuring a seamless transition for community college students, it is problematic to impose a system that is likely to create significant additional barriers to these transfers.

In addition, like CNSM, RSECS had concerns that the addition of themes to the general education requirement will make it difficult for students in the School to find common curriculum courses that fit with their schedules. Many times RSECS students end up taking the only common curriculum course that is both open and fits their schedule. The addition of themes would make scheduling much more difficult for these students.

Like CNSM and RSECS, administrators in CAHSS had serious concerns about the feasibility of the proposal given current resources. CAHSS already struggles to provide the number of seats each year needed for the FSEM, where faculty have complete freedom of course content. Including the “Denver” component will add significantly to the difficulty. While some courses will map smoothly into the new requirement, others will end up effectively as an 8-week course with two weeks of entirely unrelated content tacked on. Furthermore, while the proposal seems to map onto a similar number of courses as those already offered, as currently written, these guidelines seem to exclude most creative arts courses from the common curriculum, despite the reference to “arts and humanities.” This will mean that those students, who can now meet a Common Curriculum requirement with a course in their major, will now need to take an additional course, since they will still need to take the major course but it won’t count toward the Common Curriculum. The themes will also be especially problematic for the social science

courses, most of which are large introductions to the discipline and will frequently not fit into a theme.

Finally, CAHSS has noted that it does not have the resources to take responsibility for the team teaching required by the Capstone Courses and that this cannot be left to individual departments or instructors. As an example of what's involved, CAHSS noted that through the John Madden Center for Innovation in the Liberal and Creative Arts, the CAHSS Dean's office seeks to support faculty members who are interested in innovative and collaborative work. Right now, to support three or four collaborative teaching initiatives, it requires the nearly full-time work of a faculty director along with administrative support and course releases for the faculty involved.

In addition, like faculty, the administrators who responded were concerned that the proposal would create additional levels of bureaucracy at DU. Several indicated they would need to shift responsibility for managing curriculum to "a Center for General Education" with a new assistant provost, which would likely be necessary to implement the proposal and would also draw significant resources. CAHSS noted that the requirements for the "Human Cultures and Physical World" courses to include at least three attributes and address themes will create scheduling issues that will be impossible for administrators in CAHSS to manage. There will need to be a central University office that oversees all the courses in this category and ensures that there are enough courses each year to fit the themes *and* to meet the required attributes. Every aspect of the proposed Common Curriculum, which is now largely managed and scheduled through the CAHSS, would need to be overseen by this central University office.

Some of the management issues include the following:

- Organizing the Public Good Colloquium Series
- Matching DSEM instructors with Writing Program instructors into faculty cohorts
- Managing themes, including ensuring ample seats in the various themes, advising students on completing the requirement, approving transfer courses as satisfying/not satisfying themes, etc.
- Checking that course proposals satisfy the attribute requirements
- Management of the University-level public good project
- Management of the digital portfolio
- Putting together instructor teams for teaching capstone courses
- Managing all of the proposed professional development workshops

Other units on campus either declined the APCs invitation to submit feedback or did not submit feedback in time to be included in this report.

The APC also solicited information from the Faculty Athletic Representative, as the proposal could affect the ability of student athletes to complete the common curriculum. The Faculty Athletic Representative identified two major concerns that would make it a challenge for student athletes to make progress towards and complete degrees in four years (which might impact eligibility). In addition, these proposed changes have the potential to encourage a shift of student athletes away from many of our degree programs, concentrating the student athletes in a limited number of programs.

First, the Thematic Group requirement of 5 courses would be restrictive and difficult for student athletes to plan courses from at least 3 of the required areas. Practice schedules and competitions already restrict the available classes these students can take. In addition, specific majors already require a great deal of planning, especially those that have sequential requirements.

Second, the Practice in the Public Good requirement will also challenge student athletes. While this challenge can be planned around, the proposed requirements as outlined in the proposal appear to be very limited. Student athletes, in general, cannot participate in Study Abroad and few have the schedule flexibility to participate in independent research. A common misunderstanding across campus is that student athletes have more time when they are not “in season.” While this is true to an extent, their practice schedules still consume a significant part of their day, thus restricting their ability to participate in an extended research program. It is true that some student athletes will find time to do research, but these students are generally the exception.

There are also some proposed changes that will have a positive impact on degree attainment, including progress towards degree requirements, for student athletes. The reduction of the science sequence to only two courses will increase the options student athletes will have in degree planning, especially if some of the two-course sequences can start in the Winter quarter. In addition, the proposed change of removing “proficiency plus” world language requirement would benefit student athletes.

Finally, because the proposal discussed the need to change common curriculum because of changes to the demographics of incoming college students, the APC also solicited feedback on the proposal from the Vice Chancellor of Admissions. The Vice Chancellor noted that there has not been any research nor is there a plan to conduct surveys or focus groups with prospective high school students and/or parents to assess their reactions to the new proposal. He was willing to research ways his office could help the faculty senate conduct this research. He noted it was unclear how “public good” would resonate with high school students. While it certainly is attractive in concept to many people, one thing research on DU has shown is that concepts, even when they are appealing, don’t necessarily drive additional applications or enrollments and in some cases, result in declining applications and/or enrollments. Like some faculty members, the Vice Chancellor agreed that the program was unique. The portfolios, presentations, engagement with the city of Denver, etc. all point to a unique experience. Finally, the Vice Chancellor noted there were “challenges” to “putting all our eggs in one basket” by focusing on the public good. While the University of Denver and a focus on the public good could be attractive to some students it would be less attractive to others. As the GERI report mentions, universities are facing a declining population, and DU wants to ensure that whatever the university is promoting generates enough students desiring this type of curriculum to meet our enrollment goals.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As noted in our introduction, based on faculty feedback, other information that was gathered from units and administrators, and our own deliberative process, the APC does not recommend that the GERI proposal be adopted in its current state.

In addition, as noted, the APC has serious concerns about the amendment process being used at this time to modify such a divisive proposal. Therefore, the APC supports the creation of a new committee to work on a new common curriculum proposal using the best of what the GERI proposal offered, while explicitly considering what the feasibility of the common curriculum. It is our understanding that GERI was told to “dream big” without regard to resources. While their proposal does that, and we commend them for their work, it is now time to work on implementation and practical applications.

If the proposal is referred to a committee or if the Senate chooses to follow through with the amendment process, the APC has recommendations regarding both general areas and specific aspects of the subcomponents of the proposal we believe should be considered. Our recommendations emanate from the faculty survey results, information obtained from administrators, and our own deliberative process and are addressed below. The APC was not able to reach a consensus on every aspect of the proposal; therefore some aspects of the proposal are not addressed in this section of our report. The following recommendations and only those the APC felt there was clear support for.

General recommendations

1. Rethink the importance of the common curriculum to attracting undergraduate students and establishing a sense of identity for DU

While much of the proposal was based on the idea that a common curriculum could be use to attract undergraduate students to DU, would establish DU as a unique institution, or should be the unifying theme of an undergraduate’s experience at DU, our analysis does not wholly support this argument. In particular, information from the Vice Chancellor of Admissions raised doubts that students would choose DU based on a common curriculum. In addition, we share the Vice Chancellor’s concerns that such a heavy focus on the common curriculum would be “putting all of our eggs into one basket.” While some students would be attracted to DU, others would be deterred from applying. We also recommend that the faculty senate contact the Vice Chancellor of Admissions to work on cosponsoring focus groups and survey research with prospective students and parents.

2. Rethink the Public Good

A single cohesive idea that ties common curriculum together is appealing. It is clear, however, the unifying theme of “the public good” as outlined in the proposal is deeply divisive and conflicted and has not received broad support from the faculty. The public good is not a good choice for this theme. What the ‘Public Good’ is and how it might be implemented thematically and practically is understood by some faculty to be so broad as to be unhelpful and by other faculty to be so restrictive it does not include their teaching, creative work, or scholarship. If DU does maintain this as the overarching theme of the undergrad curriculum, a new common curriculum proposal will need clearer guidelines, resources, and professional development for faculty to feel included. In addition, the APC is very concerned about issues related to class, race, power, gender, and privilege and believe these issues should be addressed more strongly in the common curriculum. The treatment of diversity and inclusion in the current proposal is

problematic and should be reconsidered. In addition, the public good should include the sciences and the creative arts. As noted above, much of what faculty do at DU encompasses the public good but is not captured in the proposal.

3. *Common curriculum requirements should be less rigid*

The issue of rigidity came in reference to a few components of the proposal: (1) in the context of the thematic groups, (2) in links to the public good, and (3) in links to Denver in seminars. Respondents were concerned both that this be too rigid for faculty and that it would not allow students enough flexibility in navigating their undergraduate programs.

Many people raised concerns that the proposal would negatively affect transfer and AP students who would no longer be able to transfer as many credits as general education requirements. We respect that people want to find greater cohesiveness in the common core. But this comes at the expense of flexibility for students.

4. *Simplify the requirements*

Multiple faculty and administrators noted the proposal was incredibly complex and would be difficult to explain to students. In addition, tracking the various aspects of the proposal was described as a “bureaucratic nightmare.” Therefore, any new common curriculum should be far less complex.

5. *Feasibility*

A new common curriculum should be written to ensure that DU can deliver the courses with its current faculty, staff and administration. Therefore, the Faculty Senate should ensure that administrators are involved in the design of revisions to the GERI proposal or the creation of a new proposal. In addition, colleges, departments, and units and departments that are tasked with delivering the common curriculum (e.g., CAHSS, CNSM, RSECS, Writing Program, etc) must be consulted and have a strong role in devising any new proposal. It became clear to the APC during our evaluation process that units that do not currently deliver common curriculum do not see the proposal as an opportunity to increase the number of classes their faculty teach related to the common curriculum.

Specific recommendations

1. *Themes*

The use of themes in common curriculum courses is highly problematic. Many faculty were concerned the themes discussed in the proposal were too narrow. Others had concerns about how themes would be chosen, if themes would change over time, and what would happen when a theme was changed. In addition, tracking themes for students would be very difficult and scheduling courses with the right themes to make sure undergraduates could graduate on time seems difficult if not impossible. The thematic groups end up having huge consequences for

different departments in terms of course enrollment and their ability to teach courses that both meet major requirements and common curriculum requirements.

At a theoretical level, many survey respondents noted that the purpose of general education was to increase the breadth of a student's learning without forcing them to commit to depth. If we want to expand opportunities for interdisciplinary depth, we may want to consider adding more interdisciplinary courses, research opportunities, or minors.

If the Senate decides to keep themes, there needs to be a clear plan for how they will be chosen and they must be broad enough to encompass more faculty's interest. In addition, the should accommodate faculty interests, research areas, creative work, and scholarship from a broad range of campus. At a minimum, the process must be transparent, and there needs to be clear avenues for people to contribute to this discussion.

2. *Attributes*

The faculty were generally supportive of attributes. There were concerns, however, about the narrowness, the lack of outlets for the creative arts, the number of attributes required for each course, and the way diversity and inclusivity was handled by the attributes section of the proposal. Requiring three attributes per course is likely to create such a broad interpretation of each attribute that it loses its meaning. While there will still be significant logistical issues involved in evaluating which courses are approved for which attributes, ensuring that there are enough courses with each attribute being offered each year (and the responsibility still cannot devolve into individual colleges or departments), and enforcing the requirements, but removing the themes would make the use of attributes be more manageable.

3. *DSEM*

It is clear, the DSEM is very unpopular, particularly because of its narrow focus. The APC recommends removing the DSEM elements from the common curriculum and maintaining the FSEM in a similar form to what exists. The FSEMs are popular with faculty and students. The APC suggests that FSEMs can have Denver-centric course options--perhaps several FSEMs could be part of a DSEM pilot by instructor by choice-- but this focus should not be mandated. In addition, the university can maintain and increase Denver connections and community engagement during Discoveries and co-curricular activities throughout the year, as well as through more intentional asset-based community development' strategies and initiatives planned in deliberate and in-depth consultation with colleagues trained in the ethics and logistics of working with community partners.

4. *First Year Cohort*

The DSEM/FSEM/WRIT cohorts would present many logistical problems, including scheduling, workload and compensation, impacts on curriculum, and registrations. The APC recommends the Faculty Senate consider alternative methods of creating understanding and cohesion between DSEM/FSEM and WRIT via orientation content and voluntary partnerships. Mandated team teaching in these cohorts is unpopular, unrealistic, and unsupportable given DU's current

financial realities. As with the Capstone, team teaching should be explored, supported, and encouraged, but mandatory team teaching in and in the Capstones appears problematic.

5. *Colloquium*

The colloquium received positive feedback with caveats and concerns about logistics. The biggest issues revolve around who will coordinate the program; who selects speakers; frequency of events; attendance requirements, tracking, and obstacles; time commitment for faculty; imposition of content on FSEM and WRIT. A possible amendment would be to keep the colloquium series in some format but to tap into existing university speakers/programs and add flexibility. The colloquia might have multiple speakers in fewer sessions, and/or guest speakers from outside of DU. For example, the faculty could decide on a university-wide theme each year that is the primary unifying directive by which all university bodies evaluate and make invitations to guest lecturers to campus, including those associated with Diversity Summit, Women's Conference, Internationalization Summit, and the Provost's office. Students could be required to attend a minimum of three of these events each academic year. Faculty of record in common curriculum courses could be encouraged to offer one assignment through which students may receive class credit for attending one event during their time in the class.

6. *Writing Sequence*

Feedback on the Writing Sequence suggests that the common curriculum should largely maintain the current system. All courses should, however, include multimodal composing. There are also concerns about the introduction and management of the Portfolio (WRIT credit for 1122/transfer students/faculty workloads). Any substantial changes or additions to the WRIT curriculum should be determined in consultation with the WRIT program faculty as existing goals and requirements will need to be reduced.

7. *Community engagement*

The APC does not believe that community engagement should be required of either students or faculty. Asking students and faculty who are not interested in engaging in this type of work will be unproductive at best and destructive to communities at the worst. We are very concerned about unethical outcomes around equity and inclusion even by the most well-intentioned faculty and students: Very specific and mindful training is required to ensure we do not encourage our colleagues and students to fall into the "service" / "savior" model of community engagement; missteps in this matter can result in serious ethical lapses on the part of faculty and students and damage and injustice to communities, especially communities of color.

8. *Portfolio*

The portfolio received a good deal of support from the faculty and the APC believes a portfolio requirement should be worked into a new proposal.

9. *Capstone*

The APC believes that Capstone experience can be an important part of undergraduate experience and the Capstone received a number of comments related to its strengths. Even within the comments about the strengths of the Capstone proposal, however, faculty expressed anxiety about the feasibility of the proposal and many faculty explicitly stated they did not want to be required to team teach. The APC also has serious concerns about the logistics of requiring faculty to team teach these courses. We are also concerned that the entire burden of teaching Capstones will fall to CAHSS. Furthermore, faculty expressed anxiety about replacing what is seen as a fairly successful program (ASEMs). Therefore, we recommend that the Capstone as it is discussed in the proposal not be implemented widely at first. Rather, co-taught courses should continue to be encouraged at DU but not enforced or required. In addition, the common curriculum should be mindful that many majors already have capstone experiences and common curriculum capstone experience should be renamed and care should be taken to not disrupt major experiences. Finally, the APC would recommend that every major requires a capstone experience.

10. *4D Student*

Finally, as Chancellor Haefner more fully develops his concept of the 4D student, APC recommends that the Faculty Senate ensure that any common curriculum changes are in line with his vision of the University of Denver experience and that the Chancellor explicate his vision of the 4D experience to the Faculty Senate as soon as possible.

Appendix A



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OFFICE OF DIVERSITY
EQUITY & INCLUSION

MEMO

Date: January 16, 2020
To: Derigan Silver, Chair of the Academic Planning Committee, University of Denver
Faculty Senate
From: Tom I. Romero, II, Associate Provost of Inclusive Excellence Research and
Curricular Initiatives, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Subject: Data and Results from ODEI-FOCA GERI Proposal Town Hall

On January 9, 2020, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI) and the Faculty of Color Association (FOCA) hosted a 1.5 hour Town Hall to discuss and get substantive feedback for the Faculty Senate regarding the General Education Review and Inquiry (GERI) Committee proposal, “A Common Curriculum for the Public Good.” In the process of GERI putting together the proposal during the 2018-2019 and fall 2019 academic years, there had been very little to no engagement with our office about how and in what ways diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) would be part of these efforts.

Once the final GERI proposal was completed and sent to the Faculty Senate, ODEI (in collaboration with FOCA) has worked to provide the Faculty Senate nuanced answers to the broad question, “How does the GERI proposal meet DU’s commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion?” Given that the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion were centered as values in DU Impact 2025, and Chancellor Haefner has identified a commitment to diversity and inclusion as one of his five strategic imperatives for DU, our goal is to provide the Faculty Senate with evidence concerning whether the GERI proposal would align with and advance this vision and align as well with evolving inclusive teaching initiatives at DU, including the Critical Race and Ethnic Studies curriculum and the inclusive teaching initiatives being developed by the Office of Teaching and Learning.

The Town Hall had forty-eight registered participants and represented a broad cross section of faculty and staff from across the University of Denver. Town Hall participants were given a quick overview of the meaning of diversity, equity and inclusion as well as the major contours of the GERI proposal (see Appendix). The bulk of the time was devoted to providing attendees a space to voice their thoughts about how and in what ways diversity, equity, and inclusion commitments were identified and subsequently met or not in the GERI proposal. The Town Hall was followed by the distribution of a Qualtrics survey to those who registered for the Town Hall as well as to various campus list serves. This also gave those who were not able to attend the Town Hall an opportunity to weigh in on the proposal. Seventy-two respondents completed the survey which closed on January 13, 2020.

Findings

The feedback from participants at the Town Hall and the responses to the subsequent survey include very little support for the proposed Common Curriculum for the Public Good when it is examined through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In general, participants at the Town Hall and respondents to the IRISE/ODEI survey indicated that the current proposal failed to meaningfully integrate or explicitly address DEI as an essential or a necessary part of the proposal. Indeed, the GERI proposal explicitly mentions diversity and inclusion in only three instances (Pages 4, 15, 18) and it does so as a non-required option of “attributes” available for students to learn about “Human Cultures and the Physical World.”

Both the Town Hall and the survey detailed deep concerns about the lack of DEI in the proposal despite an emphasis on creating publically engaged global citizens. In fact, several comments referenced that students could get through much of their undergraduate career without more than one reading related to DEI. Participants also felt that, in order to fulfill the learning goals of the proposal in relation to DEI, there would need to be extensive training and support for faculty and staff. Among those who do have this expertise, the feedback also indicated that the work would fall heavily on the shoulders of underrepresented faculty while providing little to no incentive for majority students or faculty to gain useful and substantive skills in DEI. Indeed, respondents indicated that this gap could do much harm in a superficial pursuit of the “public good.”

These concerns accordingly are best understood in three interrelated areas of the GERI proposal: Public Good, Community Engagement, and Professional Development.

Public Good

The concept of the “public good” clearly connects DU’s vision to its common curricular offerings. While participants in the Town Hall and survey remarked that it was “well-intentioned” and a potentially “smart framework” for the GERI proposal, it failed to integrate core principles of diversity, equity and inclusion nor referenced or incorporated existing classes or programs that would be an obvious fit. Representative responses included:

- “The discussion of diversity and inclusion is only named in the Human Cultures & Physical World category, but this can be such a small part of the curriculum and students could possibly go through their entire time here without encountering these ideas.”
- “The guidelines for determining what classes attain the Diversity/Inclusion attribute seem insufficient for students to learn about DEI because the class only needs ‘one or more readings/activities that directly address issues of identity/inclusivity plus one or more class meetings in which these ideas are a substantial focus’. In other words, if students only take one class with a Diversity/Inclusion attribute, they can graduate with having only reviewed one reading and attending one class meeting about DEI.
- “There are no guidelines about how many classes the university intends to offer with the Diversity/Inclusion attribute, which means that if there are few classes affiliated

with this attribute, many students can graduate without ever engaging with DEI academically.”

- “I don't see a broad focus on DEI education in this common curriculum proposal. I find the public good focus both a bit narrow and also too broad to serve the specific needs of various marginalized communities OR the specific need to integrate DEI into the fabric of higher education.”
- “If we are to implement a common curriculum that creates an equitable experience for all students, a lot more thought will need to be put into defining “public good” in a way that specifically addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion.”
- “...it would be possible for students to go through whole curriculum without taking a class that addresses diversity, race, or gender in a substantive manner. The CRES minor has a lot of classes in these areas but wasn't mentioned.”
- “The utility of the term ‘public good’ is directly proportional to its lack of definition and so serves a rhetorical or marketing function (“yay good!”) rather than a pedagogic or philosophical goal.... there is no evidence that GERI has considered the DEI elements to investigating this very concept re: ‘Whom Must We Treat Equally for Educational Opportunity to be Equal?’ by Christopher Jencks. *Ethics*, Vol. 98, No. 3 (Apr., 1988), pp. 518-533.”
- “Do not pretend that devoting one class session to ‘diversity/inclusion’ as an ‘attribute’ will make any meaningful contribution to fostering any toleration, respect, or enthusiasm for diversity and inclusion. It is an insulting sort of tokenism.”
- “Well intentioned proposal that goes nowhere. It doesn't have the difficult discussions. We will not be able to practice ‘public good’ unless we talk about race, gender, class, and other equities.”
- “Even in attempting to define public good there is no engagement with DEI. The definitions are so broad they are meaningless. Anything can be plugged in there, so there is no point.”
- “Public good is a smart framework, but we need to approach it critically. It needs diversity threaded through and critical reflection.”
- “I find this part of the proposal to be problematic. It feels like we're promoting the public good as a sales pitch to students, their families, and donors, without thinking through the implications of what the term means and how faculty can deliver courses based on this term.”
- “I understand and appreciate the proposals desire to make the ‘public good’ a cornerstone of the new common curriculum. However, the public good -- and the courses ranging from the D-Sem to the thematic arts, humanities, and social sciences courses, reduce IE to one of seven possible attributes. According to this proposal, academic departments/programs that are already doing important IE work for the current common curriculum will be forced to redesign courses to fit the narrow themes identified by the GERI committee (e.g., Cities and Internationalization, that will replace current AI and SI classes)...this proposal will undercut and potentially eliminate work that is already happening in current courses (e.g., CRES, GWST, Sociolegal, Sociology, etc.).”

- “We are a global society -- and our students must be prepared to embrace difference; we should strive to develop equitable leaders, and to foster inclusion within our student, faculty, staff, alumni, and community. Diminishing students' intercultural competence (by eliminating the FOLA + one) and forcibly encouraging monolingualism directly contradicts Impact 2025, actively works against studying abroad in a language other than English (reminiscent of colonialism), and clearly obstructs student development in the essential spheres of diversity, equity, and inclusion.”
- “We need to be especially mindful about how to scaffold learning for different student populations. There will likely be conservative students who might feel like “‘public good’ talk is disguised as DEI and will create backlash; there will also likely be students of color and students with non-dominant identities who may feel further disenfranchised if their professor might be well-meaning, but ill-equipped to handle DEI conversations. To truly cultivate robust learning, DU must be intentional about how to create appropriate entry points for students.”
- “What about international students? The GERI proposed changes to common curriculum could be leaving many international students who are in a variety of unique situations and backgrounds with a less quality experience at DU in terms of the proposed ‘public good’ requirement and the proposed FOLA requirements.
- “The inability of the committee to effectively define ‘the public good’ -- indeed, their total punt on a definition -- is a warning sign. ‘The public good’ means something very different to, say, a Native community whose lands were taken via eminent domain, or a Black community gutted by an eminent domain taken so that a municipality could build a freeway through it, than it does to Joe or Jane MiddleClassWhitePerson. It is deeply troubling that one of the competencies that students will supposedly emerge from the new GenEd experience with is the ability to define ‘the public good,’ when the committee that wrote the GERI proposal was unable or unwilling to perform that competency themselves.”
- “The Common Curriculum should address local, national, and global issues in ways that are explicitly stated using terms like race, white supremacy, etc. The current proposal rests comfortably on safe ideas that don't actually challenge students. A predominantly white institution like DU should be more global in its appeal. Where is the physical representation of different cultures, languages, or even people on campus?”
- “There are classes that already exist for things like the ‘Public good’ but this document is very dissimilar from what is taught in that class. How does this curriculum align with the new Critical Race and Ethnic Studies minor?”

Revealing in this regard were the responses to our question of whether the GERI proposal would give DU students now and into the future the tools and skills to become either “competent” or “transformative” agents of DEI work as part of their collective DU experience. A large majority of respondents answered in the negative to both questions.

Question 1: *Does the proposed “Common Curriculum for the Public Good” give our students the tools and skills to become competent agents in the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion?*

total	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
72	36%	29%	20%	11%	4%

Question 2: *“Does the proposed “Common Curriculum for the Public Good” give our students the tools and skills to become transformative agents in the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion?”*

total	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
72	44%	26%	13%	14%	3%

Community Engagement

A connected concern revolved around the proposal’s robust expansion of community engagement in Denver neighborhoods. Many of the respondents felt that it would do substantial harm because so few students would acquire DEI training, skills, and knowledge to “engage” respectfully in the community.

Of critical concern for many of the respondents was that the proposal seemed to be geared towards a student body that was homogenous racially as well as culturally, as opposed to one that was racially and culturally diverse. One participant in the Town Hall remarked:

- “It is very “white savior-y”. There is no reflection of culture beyond white at DU.”

Another survey respondent noted:

- “Students need to engage in a process of identity exploration in order to understand their current and potential impact on the community. If students only encounter a single reading or activity that invites them to do so, we risk allowing students to check a superficial box of awareness, and further do harm to the community by potentially perpetuating an oppressive cycle of socialization in which neoliberal ideals promote a savior identity among our students rather than a true opportunity to understand service in the context of education.”

These sentiments were also reflected in two questions asking whether the GERI proposal met the needs of either present or future students:

Question 3: *Does the proposed “Common Curriculum for the Public Good” meet the present needs for those who will be graduating from the university in the next 5-7 years?*

total	NO	YES
70	83%	17%

Question 4: *Considering the future challenges laid out by the Chancellor regarding the coming enrollment cliff, as well as sizable shifts in the demographics of who will be attending DU, does the proposed “Common Curriculum for the Public Good” meet these needs?*

total	NO	YES
70	87%	13%

To dig deeper into why the latest version of the GERI proposal failed the needs of present or future students, many of the survey respondents felt that the common curriculum would result in DU students as well as faculty being poorly prepared to “engage” with Denver’s diverse communities. Representative comments included the following:

- “Experiential learning bit: Are experiential learning classes actively harming the communities that they think they are helping? This could be actively harmful for public good.”
- “The proposal does not articulate any reference to race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, ability, oppression, privilege, and a myriad of facets alluding to concepts and already-existing courses regarding identity/inclusion. This will be problematic especially if DU does not purposefully design learning experiences so students critically question their privilege and what approaches they take in ‘public good’ community engagement projects. This might unintentionally reify ‘white savior’ paternalistic colonial approaches which would ultimately undermine the notion of ‘public good’.”
- “There is a contradiction in the proposal. We think of diversity as something that happens far far away but when we think about the city and the more localized view we don’t look at it from the bodies that are here. How can we expect to have a class on city futures but not expect to interrogate conversations on diversity here?”
- “Don’t assume that any prof who is “willing” to do community engaged learning can or should; community engaged education requires a long term commitment to the communities engaged, and requires that the professor actually have intellectual/academic competencies in community engaged work; it is NOT going to do students or DU any favors to require students to take a community-based course that replicates a ‘white man’s burden mentality.’”

- “The experiential/service learning components could lead to reinforcement of traditional whiteness -- students could either get stuck in a white bubble, or they could do activities that perpetuate the white savior myth.”
- “Professors and students who do not want to do public good will damage others if they do not genuinely want to engage - the community is not an empathy training ground.”

Professional Development

Feedback at the Town Hall and responses to the survey highlighted a substantial amount of anxiety about the necessary training faculty would need to deliver the proposed Common Curriculum for the Public Good’s many outcomes. When we specifically asked this question with regard to diversity, equity, and inclusion, it was evident that much support would be needed. Survey respondents made the following observations and suggestions:

- “This document does not explain the training and support that will be necessary for having difficult conversations. Students of color and students from underrepresented groups often talk about the microaggressions that take place in classrooms from their instructors. Putting discussions of DEI into their hands without real training seems unwise, but there is also a danger that these classes will be more work on the shoulders of instructors from these communities who already deal with micro- and macroaggressions.”
- “To do effective and ‘authentic’ engagement (or fieldwork) requires extensive training and social, emotional skills and it is arrogant to think that anyone--faculty or students--can acquire these in a short workshop or few days of class. Real training and knowledge acquisition in any arena, but especially diversity and inclusion, is not a box to be checked off as meeting a requirement.”
- “As of right now, any faculty member that offers a service-learning course goes through an in-depth, multi-day training with CCESL--this would need to be required of all involved faculty. But DEI trainings for faculty and all DU students would also need to be mandatory. Faculty of color and students of color would also need extra support as they will be engaging with very challenging subject matter at a primarily white institution, and we do not want expose these communities to more harm and trauma.”
- “There are faculty like myself who have invested significant time into being trained to ‘effectively deliver and evaluate diversity, equity, and inclusion skills’, yet whose expertise and interests are not in Denver or community engagement. I wasn’t hired with the expectation that I would offer courses on Denver or facilitate community engagement. Forcing me make those a focus of my teaching will make me less effective and squander my abilities and training.”
- “There needs to be a higher level University team helping to cultivate long term partners in the city. The work needed to make those partnerships is immense. The damage done to communities in need but not prepared for students could be overwhelming and make problems worse.”
- “It is expensive for already stretched communities to work with the University so they must be compensated with funding and support, not just the hope of some useful labor from students.”

- “Not all faculty--in fact many--do not have the cross cultural skills needed to effectively guide these conversations:
--have they themselves received diversity training in regards to privilege, oppression, microaggressions, systemic racism at a level to allow them to effectively guide the conversation and effectively respond when situations get heated in the classroom. Not only that, are they effectively prepared to support marginalized students in their classrooms who may feel tokenized/forced into conversations on deeply sensitive issues with classmates who may be offensive?”
- “Training that helps faculty understand how issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion affect their respective fields. Include training on such things as microaggression, implicit bias, resources available in one's discipline specific to these topics.”
- “Faculty will need information about activities and organizations in Denver that focus either on diversity, equity, and inclusion or on the interests of groups that suffer from lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the city's power, economic, and cultural structures.”
- “Faculty may also need training in ways to discuss diversity topics. Suggestions about the faculty's own progress in the topics might be useful. For instance, faculty might be assisted with a small, finite project for a course the first time they teach it and then with a modest expansion of it the third or fourth time the course is offered. Or they might start with assigning material that is familiar to themselves and then seek out other readings, projects, experts, or course modules to deepen the diversity/equity/inclusion part(s) of the course in later years.”
- “Provide training that starts at many different levels and covers many areas - class, race, gender and sexual identity, international students and national students, age, ability, etc. Acknowledge those that have the training/knowledge/skills rather than force them through specific trainings.”
- “Workshops with members from communities that DU is serving. Workshops about the indigenous people of the Denver area, as well as discussions with indigenous communities.”
- “At a minimum, we need to include courses and training related to working with/in diverse communities, courses related to power, privilege, and oppression, social inequalities, particularly as they relate to race, and ethical community engagement practices, and diversity, equity, and inclusion 101.”

The GERI Proposal Moving Forward

While the proposed Common Curriculum for the Public Good has minimized diversity, equity and inclusion in its framework, survey respondents identified areas where it could be made robust. We particularly asked for feedback in embedding DEI in the first year, public engagement and capstone components of the proposal.

Respondents positively responded in the following ways.

Question 6: *Should the proposed Common Curriculum for the Public Good include as part of the first year experience an explicit focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion as...*

TOTAL	63
Option 1 : A separate class	16%
Option 2: Integrated as an essential component into the three-course sequence	52%
Option 3: A required lecture, event, or co-curricular activity	9%
Options 1 & 2	5%
Option 1 & 3	0%
Options 2 & 3	13%
ALL 3	5%

Question 7: *Should the proposed Common Curriculum for the Public Good Community Engagement and Capstone components require that diversity, equity, and inclusion skills and reflection be added as core learning outcomes?*

total	NO	YES
70	26%	74%

Although participants at the Town Hall acknowledged the problematic nature of adding DEI to the current proposal in an “ad-hoc” and “piece-meal” way at the end of a process, we at ODEI believe there are opportunities to make DEI a more robust and essential component of the current proposal.

A final statement from our survey sums up best the task before us:

“I realize that there are some people who will resist this or who will think that diversity is a niche interest. It is not. I say this as a white professor who initially read the proposal and had some blind spots. I didn't even notice at first how extensive the absence of diversity was. That's evidence of how extensive it is. *We need to do better.*” (emphasis added).

The proposed Common Curriculum for the Public Good has many positive and exciting features. Unfortunately, there is a strong potential to do much emotional harm both on and off campus. Without much more care given to the centrality of DEI in operationalizing the “public good” in either the first year experience, community engaged projects, or in preparing our students as well as our faculty to engage thoughtfully and collaboratively with a rapidly diversifying Denver and world, we miss a grand opportunity for DU to meet the challenges of both our present and our future.

Appendix



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ODEI-FOCA Town Hall on the General Education Review and Inquiry (GERI) Proposal

January 9, 2020



Objectives

Definitions & Its Discontents

The GERI Proposal: A Common

Curriculum for the Public Good

DEI and the GERI Proposal

8 Questions

Next Steps

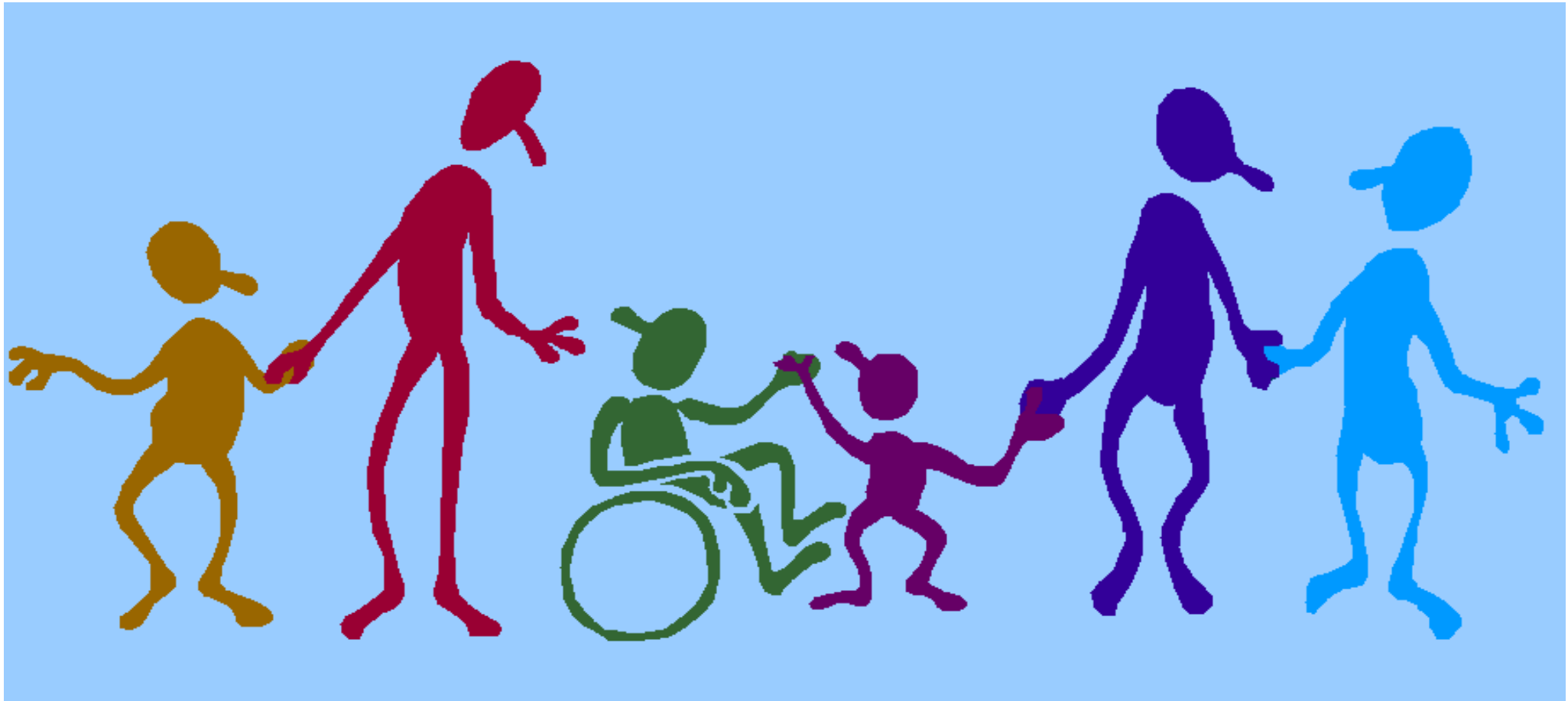
Objectives

To provide qualitative feedback to the Faculty Senate about how and in what ways the GERI Proposal meets DU's commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion now and into the future.

To identify ways that the GERI Proposal could be strengthened to meet these values.



Definitions and Its Discontents



ODEI-FOCA Town Hall

Definitions and Its Discontents

Diversity: Individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations).

AACU <https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive>

Equality: Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are not treated differently or less favorably, on the basis of their specific protected characteristic, including areas of race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity/about/equality-diversity>

Equity: The creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion.

AACU <https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive>

Inclusion or Inclusive Excellence: The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in people, in the programs, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase one's awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

AACU <https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive>

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is...

Troublesome: It conflicts with the assumption that fairness means treating students the same (equally).

Integrative: Once educators understand it, they see institutional processes as related rather than separate.

Transformative: It leads educators to view their students as possessing assets rather than deficits and to see themselves as responsible for creating conditions for students to succeed.

Christina Chavéz-Reyes, Emily Daniell Magruder, and Debra David, "From Faculty Fellows to Equity-Minded Collaborators: The California Faculty Collaborative's Story," Peer Review, AACU, 2017



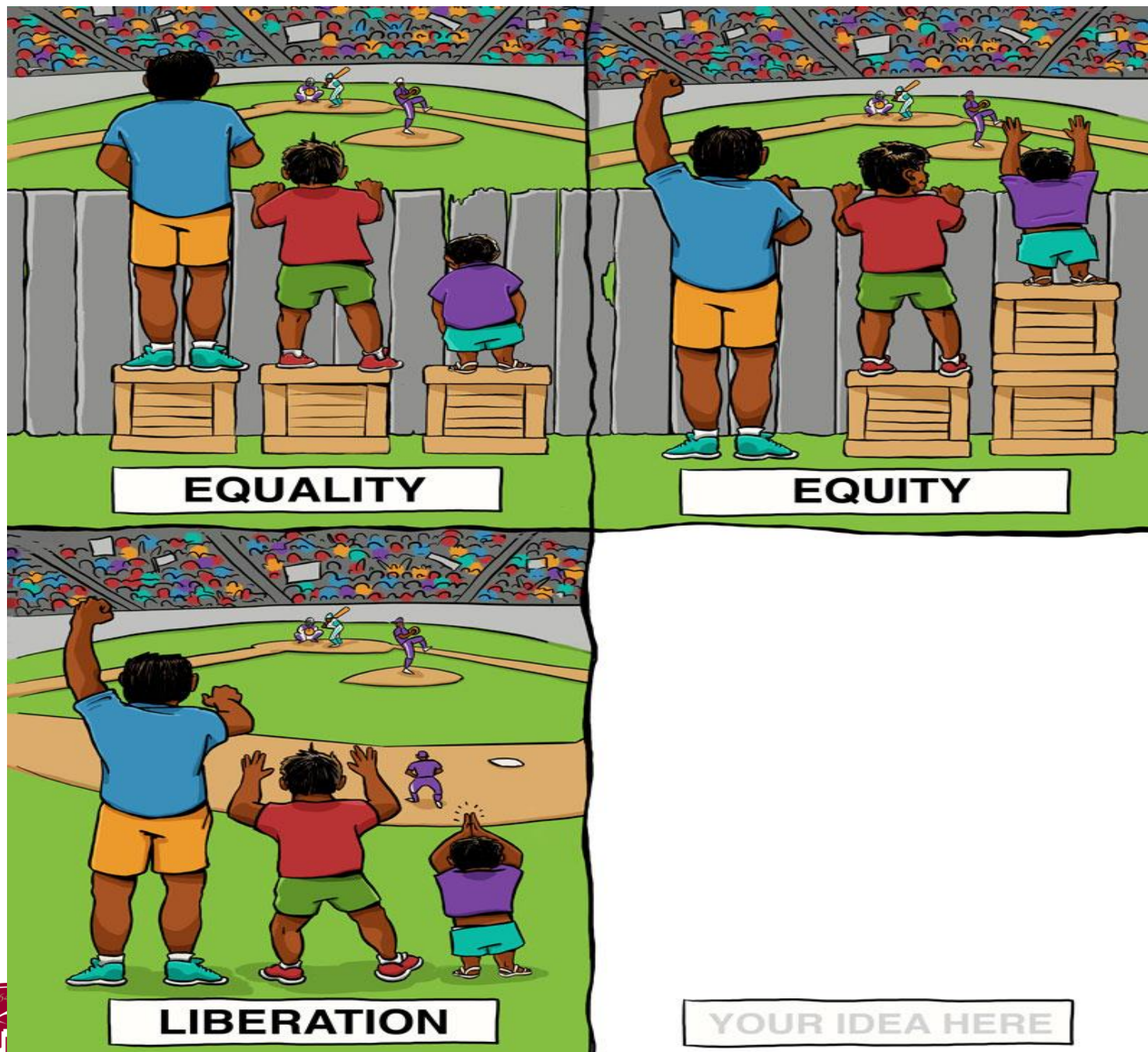
EQUALITY



EQUITY



INCLUSION



Kuttner, P. (2016, October 29). The problem with that equity vs. equality graphic you're using. *Cultural Organizing*. Retrieved from <http://culturalorganizing.org/the-problem-with-that-equity-vs-equality-graphic/>

Diversity asks, “Who’s in the room?”

Equity responds: “Who is trying to get in the room but can’t? Whose presence in the room is under constant threat of erasure?”

Inclusion asks, “Has everyone’s ideas been heard?”

Justice responds, “Whose ideas won’t be taken as seriously because they aren’t in the majority?”

(Dafine-Lazrus Stewart, “Colleges Need a Language Shift, But Not the One You Think,” Inside Higher Ed, March 20, 2017.)

Diversity asks, “How many more of [pick any minoritized identity] group do we have this year than last?”

Equity responds, “What conditions have we created that maintain certain groups as the perpetual majority here?”

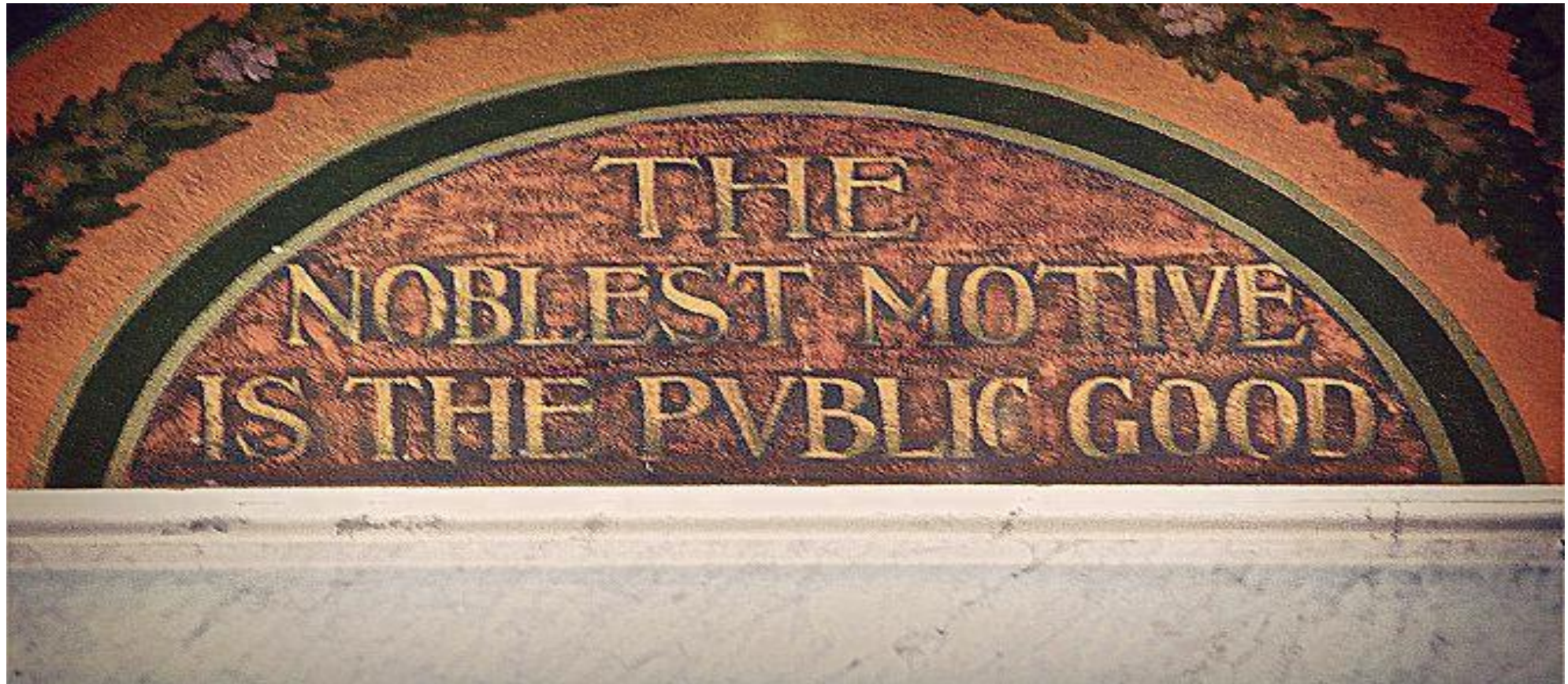
Inclusion asks, “Is this environment safe for everyone to feel like they belong?”

Justice challenges, “Whose safety is being sacrificed and minimized to allow others to be comfortable maintaining dehumanizing views?”

Inclusion asks, “Wouldn’t it be a great program to have a panel debate Black Lives Matter? We had a Black Lives Matter activist here last semester, so this semester we should invite someone from the alt-right.”

Justice answers, “Why would we allow the humanity and dignity of people or our students to be the subject of debate or the target of harassment and hate speech?”

The GERI Proposal



A Common Curriculum for the Public Good

A Call for Citizen-Scholars (First Year Backbone)

Knowledge and Skills Repertory

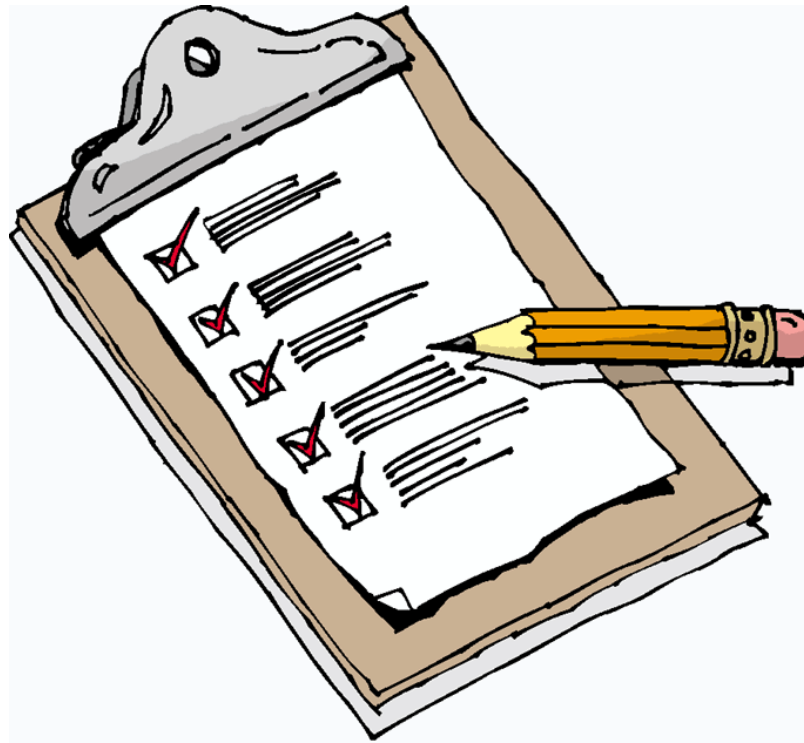
Exploring Public Questions: Human Culture and the Physical World

Practice in the Public Good: Community Engagement



Capstone

DEI & the GERI Proposal



<https://tinyurl.com/GERIsurvey>

ODEI-FOCA Town Hall

Proposed General Education Review and Inquiry (GERI)

Items related to DEI on the GERI Proposal...

PAGE 3

Mission: "... to foster in each undergraduate the knowledge, skills, and critical abilities that are crucial to informed, responsible, and effective participation in civic, scholarly, and professional lives."

Vision: "A sense of identity, purpose, coherence and intentional design & a commitment to meaningful reflection and faculty development."

PAGE 4

Outcomes:

- The ability to define "the public good" with thought and care, for contexts ranging from local to global, informed by how different areas of study contribute to understanding and realizing the public good.
- The ability to address complex questions by applying and synthesizing knowledge of human cultures and the physical world, using methods of inquiry and analysis practiced across the liberal arts and sciences.
- "A critical understanding of human diversity and the importance of social, historical, and cultural identities in addition to one's own."
- "The ability to work productively with others and to collaborate effectively and ethically with different communities."

PAGE 13

The general education program calls for "the ability to address complex questions by applying and synthesizing knowledge of human cultures and the physical world, using methods of inquiry and analysis practiced across the liberal arts and sciences."

- Internationalization, City Futures and Third Theme TBD

PAGE 14

Courses approved for the Human Cultures and the Physical World category must satisfy at least three of six attributes...

Diversity/Inclusion. Explores the implications/manifestations of the course topic/content in relation to different social, historical, linguistic, or cultural identities; or focuses on non-Western traditions. Generally, for a course

to earn this attribute, there must be one or more readings/activities that directly address issues of identity/inclusivity plus one or more class meetings in which these ideas are a substantial focus.

Collaboration/Experiential Learning. Teaches how to work productively with others or to collaborate effectively and ethically with different communities. May manifest in applying general knowledge and skills in experiential learning settings. Students will have an opportunity to work with peers to complete a significant project, or they will have multiple opportunities to complete smaller projects. Or, students will have an opportunity to work with communities external to their classrooms, contributing to their addressing or understanding a problem or challenge.

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The Capstone Seminar invites students to address deeply questions such as:

How do differences in experience and identity shape the pursuit of knowledge? With what ethical consequences do knowledges created in universities interact with the wider world? How, as citizen-scholars, can we think and act together with one another and with wider communities so that our pursuit of knowledge contributes to our pursuit of the public good?

Asking questions such as these together with faculty helps students to accomplish several of the curriculum's goals including to gain a critical understanding of human diversity...

Full GERI Proposal:

Feedback Survey to be completed by Monday, Jan.13th:

1 & 2 Based on your teaching and or research expertise

does the proposed Common Curriculum for the Public Good give our students the tools and skills to become **competent** agents in the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Does the proposed Common Curriculum for the Public Good give our students the tools and skills to become **transformative** agents in the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion?



3. Based on DU's mission, vision, and commitments to DEI,

does the proposed Common Curriculum for the Public Good meet the present needs for those who will be graduating from the university in the next 5-7 years?



Undergrad Students

The class of 2023

First-Time Students – 1,349

- **879** different high schools
- **48%** - Only student from their high school
- **71%** from out of state, representing 47 states and 15 countries (ND; MS; WV)
- **67%** are 500 miles or more away from home!
- **16%** First-generation
- **16%** Pell Grant
- **23%** Students of Color
- **10%** Legacy
- **11%** of families speak a language other than English - 25 different languages!

Geography:

- **29%** - Colorado
- **15%** - West
- **21%** - Midwest
- **13%** - Northeast
- **9%** - Southeast
- **9%** - Southwest
- **4%** - International



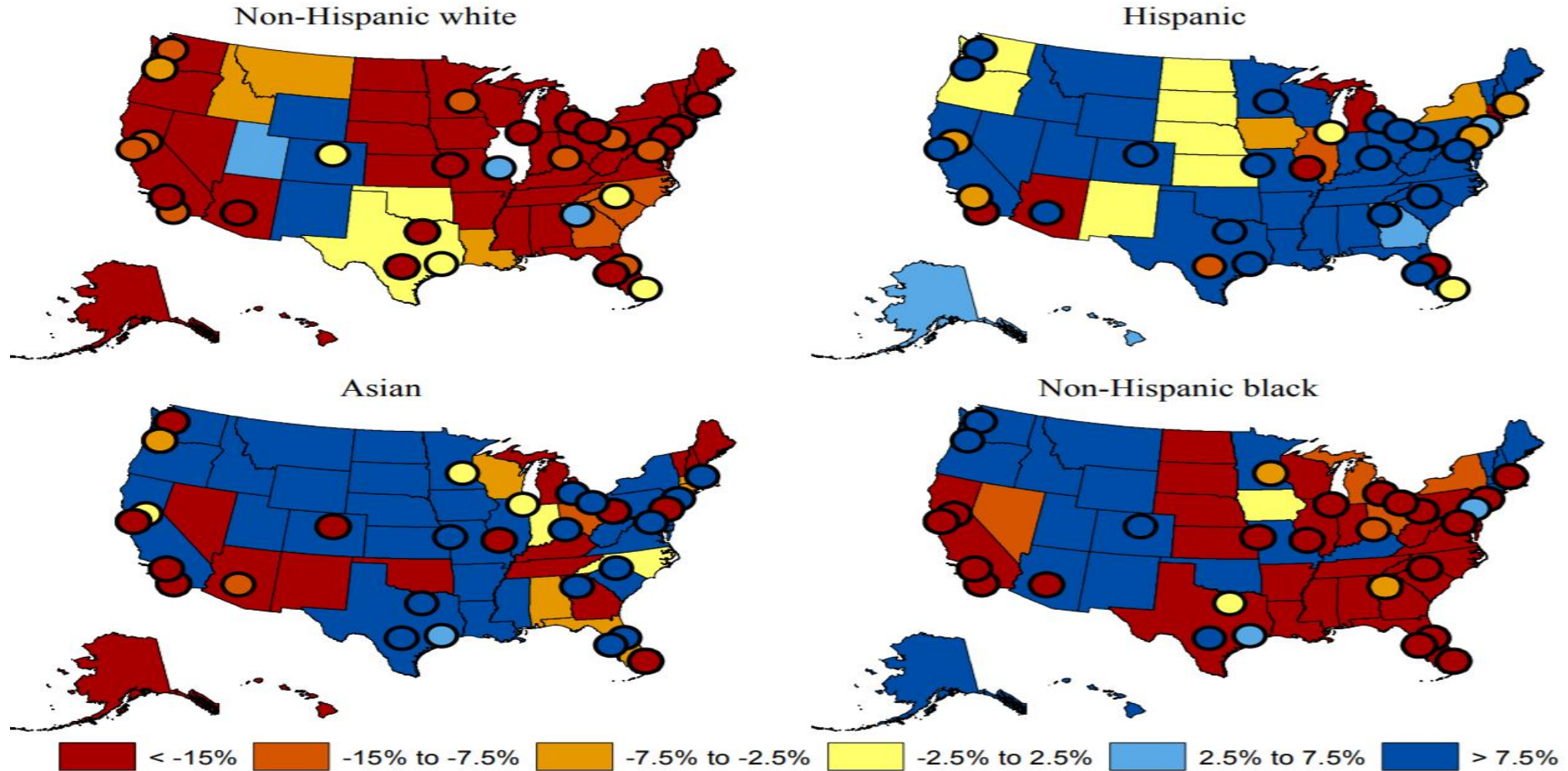
4. When you think about

the future challenges laid out by the Chancellor regarding the coming enrollment cliff as well as sizable shifts in the demographics of who will be attending DU, does the proposed Common Curriculum for the Public Good meet these needs?



FORECAST: 20 Year Trend

College attendees by race and ethnicity



5. IF your answer is no to any of questions 1-3,

how might the Common Curriculum create an equitable educational experience for all students now and into the future?



6. Should the proposed

Common Curriculum for the Public Good include as part of the first year experience an explicit focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion as...

- A separate class?
- Integrated as an essential component into the three course sequence?
- A required lecture, event, or co-curricular activity?



7. Should the proposed

Common Curriculum for the Public Good Community Engagement and Capstone components require that diversity, equity, and inclusion skills and reflection be added as core learning outcomes?



8. In the proposed

Common Curriculum for the Public Good, that centers Denver and community engagement as key features, what professional development and training will faculty need to effectively deliver and evaluate diversity, equity, and inclusion skills and competency?



Next Steps

- Faculty Senate Survey (Jan 10, 2020)
- ODEI Survey Open (Jan 13th) <https://tinyurl.com/GERIsurvey>
- ODEI Town Hall Report sent to Faculty Senate (week of January 13th, 2020)
- Faculty Senate Revision and Approval
February/March 2020



Appendix B

GERI Impact Report – The Removal of “Proficiency Plus” Requirement

Executive Summary

We hereby submit to the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs and to the Faculty Senate President our impact report on the removal of the “Proficiency Plus” language requirement to the undergraduate common curriculum.¹ We articulate how this removal will cause a ripple of negative effects reaching far beyond the Department of Languages & Literatures and the Center for World Languages and Cultures. This removal negatively impacts undergraduate student learning, student opportunities for study abroad, and the University’s bottom line. We request the removal be reversed, and that the Senate propose an amendment to this effect. We also respectfully request that you share this report with the Faculty Senate and all academic units on campus, prior to the Faculty Senate discussion and vote.

Academic Impact

Removal of required enrollment in a college-level language course will:

- **Limit student access to 44.6% of target-language study abroad partner programs**, corresponding to languages taught at DU. See Bridge [article](#) from 11_20_2019 on established success and [current study abroad programs](#) that will be impacted.
- **Significantly decrease of intercultural preparation** for students across campus, regardless if they study abroad in a country speaking the target-language they took at DU to fulfil the Proficiency Plus. Interim Vice Provost Dinger will speak to this.
- **Negatively impact numerous academic programs** that rely on the common curriculum to provide this intercultural foundation for academic preparation. Interim Vice Provost Dinger will speak to this. Please also find concerns from ELC [here](#).
- **Decrease enrollments in existing academic programs**. This will include potential cancellation of courses, faculty lines, and even non-compliance with an endowment agreement that provides significant funding to undergraduate students. See [2019 placement synopsis](#) and [corresponding data](#).

Logistical Impact

The proposed language requirement update to the Common Curriculum also will have unintended and complicated logistical consequences, such as:

- **Security concerns and costs** – Removal of the “plus” requirement would mean that these are high-stakes assessments with incentive for cheating. This is complicated by SURG. DU will need to remotely and securely administer assessments. We anticipate this will require funding of near ~\$29,000/year.
- **Increased cost for acquisition of new assessments** – DU's current placement assessments do not measure proficiency and cannot be used to “place out” of the requirement. In addition to security costs, we would need to use the most accessible, reliable, and least expensive four-skills proficiency assessment on the market. This will cost over ~\$14,500/year. We currently use these for language select minor/major program assessment and graduate proficiency requirements. By comparison, our current quick and approximate placement tests cost \$2,000/year.
- **Complicated benchmarking** – DU will have to determine what one year of language study equates to on an accepted and recognized scale. This will be different for each language. See [here](#).

¹ Submitted 19 December 2019 by Dr. Adrienne Gonzales (Director of Center for World Languages & Cultures) and Dr. Rachel A. Walsh (Head of Languages, Literatures, & Cultures), in collaboration with Dr. Casey Dinger (Interim Vice Provost of Internationalization), Dr. Salvador Mercado (Chair of Languages & Literatures), and Stephanie Roberts (Interim Director, Office of International Education)