

Reconciliation Committee Recommendations for General Education

(Prepared by Faculty Senate’s Reconciliation Committee, April 2022)

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I. Six Recommendations, Four Motions

In this document, you will find details about six recommendations from the Reconciliation Committee of the Faculty Senate regarding the general education curriculum at DU. These recommendations give rise to four motions.

The First Reading of the motions will be at Senate on May 6 followed by a review by Undergraduate Council. The Second Reading (and expected Senate vote) will be on May 27 followed by a full faculty vote.

For a fuller sense of the history and context of this committee, [see Appendix A](#).

For a fuller sense of the timeline, [see Section II below](#).

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Based on review of data and materials from multiple sources, the committee's work was in part framed by seven directives:

1. Build greater attention to DEI in the student experience
2. Take into account data that shows that many faculty see strengths in the existing gen ed structure/content (for example, many faculty express support for the current FSEM and ASEM structure)
3. Develop a greater sense of coherence/cohesion in students' gen ed experience by clarifying existing structures and/or developing a clearer narrative arc
4. Increase innovative, interdisciplinary faculty opportunities to think and teach together (related to faculty development, enhanced student experience, keeping DU responsive to the times, and giving us some standout 'signature' elements)
5. Retain/augment faculty flexibility and choice (e.g., no fixed general education theme or required co-teaching) and a structure that upholds the current strength of breadth and the value of introducing students to topics to which they might not otherwise be exposed, while allowing us to remain nimble in light of changing needs
6. Avoid adding many more hours to the general education curriculum as we work to remain mindful of student needs to graduate in a timely and fiscally responsible way
7. Ensure "recommendations-with-resources." Faculty don't just want to hear more ideas—they want to hear ideas that have been reviewed with relevant administrators regarding funds, implementability, etc.

These points (among others) helped frame the committee’s sense of the “why?” and “why now?” as did:

- The 2025 enrollment cliff and changing student demographics and needs (and a call to remain relevant to our students and the evolving higher ed landscape)
- Critical emerging changes in the world, from racial justice reckonings to democracies in peril to climate change.

Responding to tensions in the data (see more in Appendix A), the committee also found itself engaging the following question:

- How do we provide students with greater coherence in their gen ed experience while giving faculty the flexibility to do what they do best?

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Below are the committee’s six recommendations. (Note: The committee views these recommendations as the first next step in a longer process, and three of our recommendations directly relate to the kind of process/structure groundwork that needs to be set for ongoing conversations as we continue to think together about how to deliver the best experience for our students).

In terms of process, we recommend the following three interrelated changes:

- 1) **Sustained Partnerships.** Building on the success of increased collaborations, we recommend that general education review at DU continue to root itself in strong partnerships between the Provost’s office, the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (VPAA), and the Faculty Senate—including partnerships with the Academic Planning Committee (APC), the Chair of the APC, and the Faculty Senate President. This process (overseen by a new Faculty Director; see below) will supplement, not replace, the role of Faculty Senate in deliberating and voting on proposed changes to the general education curriculum.
- 2) **New Faculty Director of General Education.** We recommend the addition of a new Faculty Director for General Education, who will be an appointed faculty member with experience teaching in DU’s general education program. The Director will help oversee a thriving culture of general education at DU by:
 - Cultivating the aforementioned partnerships
 - Creating support structures and pedagogical cohorts for faculty
 - Overseeing and refining materials to provide students and student advisors with a clear sense of the spirit, purpose, and details of the gen ed curriculum
 - Helping create and implement an assessment plan
 - Conducting various administrative tasks

In all these regards, the Director will also chair a “General Committee” (vice-chaired by the Chair of APC) composed of administrators and faculty to help oversee various details while maximizing communication channels across campus. Following an internal search, the Director will be appointed to a three-year term by the Provost with input from Faculty Senate. They will report to the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs (VPAA) and work closely with the Academic Planning Committee (APC) and Senate leadership. This position will supplement, not replace, the role of Faculty Senate in deliberating and voting on proposed changes to the general education curriculum.

- 3) **Iterative, Nimble, and Responsive Process.** We further recommend that general education review occur in an iterative, ongoing way with multiple constituents meeting regularly to co-review assessment data and to reflect together on what sorts of changes might be needed in a future year to ensure best learning outcomes for our students. We are not recommending frequent, student-facing changes to the common curriculum, but an annual review of assessment data and faculty feedback in order to refine our practices and ensure a clear and responsive process to address changing student and faculty needs. This process (overseen by the new Faculty Director in partnership with the VPAA and APC) will supplement, not replace, the role of Faculty Senate in deliberating and voting on proposed changes to the general education curriculum.

In terms of content, we recommend the following three changes:

- 4) We recommend seating a committee of faculty—to work in partnership with ODEI, OTL, and other core stakeholders—to develop a 4-credit DEI attribute requirement. To note: This will be an attribute, and we expect most students will be able to meet this learning outcome through courses that already count for other general education requirements or major/minor credit. For more details—including the recommended timeline and pilot period—see [Appendix B](#).
- 5) We recommend Curricular Innovation Pilot Courses that will satisfy up to 12 credits of general education requirements through innovative, interdisciplinary, and collaborative course options. The Provost supports a two-year pilot period in the amount of \$50k per year. For more details, see [Appendix C](#).
- 6) Beyond these two important substantive changes, we recommend retaining the overall general education structure at this time, including credit distributions and student learning outcomes. We arrived at this decision after considering multiple factors, including the support many faculty have continued to express for the existing general curriculum. That said, in response to calls to tighten our existing framework, we

recommend **expanding from our current “ways of knowing” to “ways of thinking, creating, and taking action,”** refining the current titles and descriptions, and inviting (not requiring) faculty to “infuse and amplify” their existing gen ed courses in relation to a list of seven areas that emerged from the data. For more details—including the recommended updated titles and descriptions—see [Appendices D and E](#).

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These six recommendations take the form of four motions:

- **Motion 1:** Faculty Director of Gen Ed (as understood in the context of additional process recommendations discussed above)
- **Motion 2:** Seating a new Gen Ed DEI Faculty Committee to help develop a new DEI attribute requirement (see more details in Appendix B)
- **Motion 3:** Curricular Innovation Pilot Courses (see more details in Appendix C)
- **Motion 4:** Refined Core Area Titles and Descriptions (see more details in Appendix E)

II. Timeline and Input

In an effort to be maximally collaborative and give faculty, chairs, and directors more time to engage with this process, we have extended multiple opportunities to learn about the committee’s recommendations *prior* to the official First Reading on the Senate floor on 5.6.

Numerous presentation and conversation sessions were conducted by the Reconciliation Committee Chair and Co-chairs, with a similar presentation and feedback session during the Faculty Senate meeting on April 22. The First Reading will occur in Senate on May 6, followed that same day by an Undergraduate Council review. The Second Reading and expected Senate voting is May 27, followed by an all-faculty vote.

On April 15, APC and FSEC were given an opportunity to provide further input into the draft previews. They will also be consulted following the April 22 presentation to provide input in advance of the First Reading on May 6 and, following that reading, to provide input in advance of the Second Reading on May 27.

To aid with collection of input, faculty are encouraged to complete this Qualtrics:

https://udenver.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_07cVyj8MljGp11I

Furthermore, Senators will be assigned SharePoints that include the full text of the refined area titles and descriptions. (Senators from a single school will share a SharePoint, and if there are too many, we'll divide them up to a few shared SharePoints.) This will be an additional way for faculty to share feedback with Senate.

Appendix A: Brief History and Context

The Reconciliation Committee is a Faculty Senate committee seated in Winter 2020 after a motion for a new general curriculum was met with some support, some concerns, and 50 pages of proposed amendments (more details below).

The committee, made up of Senators from across campus, was asked to assess multiple data points (see below) and has also received input from: the Academic Planning Committee (APC); the Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC); the Provost and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (VPAA); the Vice Chancellor of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs; Deans' teams from every school; the Office of Teaching and Learning; University Counsel; Undergraduate Student Government leaders; and other core stakeholders.

This process is an important exercise in shared governance as faculty work together, through our elected faculty representatives, and in partnership with administrators and core constituents, to arrive at thoughtful and practical decisions about when, how, and why we make curricular changes, especially large-scale curricular changes that impact students across multiple divisions and schools/colleges. Senate curricular oversight is a longstanding core value of faculty senates across the country, and three of the committee's recommendation seek transparent and structural ways to strengthen the role of Faculty Senate in curricular oversight, which in turn supports students.

Reconciliation Committee Brief History, Charge, and Gratitude to GERI

The review of DU's general education curriculum has been underway for the past few years, slowed in part by the ordinary cycle of Senate leadership changes, in part by the devastating emergence of COVID, and in part by the pressing need to adjust existing campus processes to ensure a suitably robust role for Faculty Senate—the official elected representative faculty body—in matters of curricular change.

Some further background: In winter 2020, the Senate received a motion for a new general education curriculum created by the General Education Review Inquiry committee (GERI), a University (not Senate) committee of faculty (including some Senate-seated Senators) brought together through the work of Impact 2025.¹ This motion for a new general education curriculum generated approximately 50 pages of proposed amendments through Senate after being met with some support and some concerns, including as expressed in a faculty survey, an ODEI/FOCA town hall, and an APC summary report (which includes the ODEI/FOCA presentation

¹ Based on the list of membership [here](#) (where you can also find key documents from this process), the GERI team included: Doug Hesse, Chair; Barbekka Hurtt; Tonnett Luedtke; Kateri McRae; Nic Ormes; Gregory Robbins; Billy J. Stratton; John Tiedemann; Cheri Young; *Previous members: Chris Coleman; Matt Rutherford; Alejandro Ceron; Alison Schofield; Laura Sponsler.*

slides and feedback).²

In response to the feedback from the survey and 50 pages of proposed amendments, Senate leadership recommended seating a Reconciliation Committee and referring the motion—and the proposed amendments—to this new committee. The Reconciliation Committee’s membership and charge were approved by the Senate by unanimous consent (without objection).

The Reconciliation Committee is Chaired by the Senate President (in 2020, Darrin Hicks; currently Sarah Pessin) and is co-chaired by the incoming or outgoing President (at the time, Sarah Pessin; currently Renée Botta) and the Chair of the Academic Planning Committee (at the time Derigan Silver; currently Jen Campbell). Membership was made open to Senators on a volunteer basis.

The Reconciliation Committee’s seating principle was open and Senators from across campus were invited to join. The committee was charged with making recommendations on next steps based on a number of factors, including a review of various materials, including:

- DU’s existing general education curriculum
- The GERI proposal, which was raised as a motion on the Senate floor in February 2020
- The 50 pages of proposed amendments in response to that motion
- The data assembled by the GERI committee (including faculty and student input)
- Data from a faculty poll, an ODEI/FOCA town hall, and an APC report
- Consultation with multiple stakeholders and other relevant data sources

The Reconciliation Committee was slowed by COVID but has been meeting and consulting with multiple stakeholders since then. This year, the committee has developed productive new partnerships with the Provost’s team, deans, the VC for DEI, and other key constituents on campus to best advance this work. This has been a core addition to the general education review structure at DU; it is a vital element and affords faculty a generative new set of cooperative opportunities for shared governance with multiple stakeholders moving forward.

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The Reconciliation Committee would like to express its thanks to members of the GERI committee for their years of hard work and engagement with constituents across campus; we reviewed and learned tremendously from GERI’s work. The Reconciliation Committee also

² On 11.25.19, Chair of the APC (at the time, Derigan Silver) sent to faculty a link to a survey asking for input about the GERI proposed gen ed curriculum; findings are summarized in the APC report from 2020, along with the ODEI/FOCA materials.

wants to recognize the difficulty of its charge, due in large part to wider structural and process problems that—by no fault of GERI or the Reconciliation Committee—effectively resulted in GERI colleagues working diligently under a process whose rules changed partway through as the process was adjusted to include a Senate vote. The emerging new structure (which the Reconciliation Committee directly addresses in its first three recommendations) affords great opportunities for better processes, better outcomes, and better faculty experiences in the future; that said, we do want to pause to acknowledge the challenging experience of many members of both committees over the past five years.

Some Further Context: Coherence meets Flexibility

The committee sees its recommendations as supporting many of the parameters and contexts within which we were asked to conduct our review, including the question raised above:

How do we provide students with greater coherence in their gen ed experience while giving faculty the flexibility to do what they do best?

Here are five ways we see our recommendations as helping balance coherence and flexibility:

1. Enhanced DEI outcomes via a new flexible attribute. While a new DEI emphasis helps give students a more coherent and in-depth learning experience, the emphasis on an attribute modality—as well as the rollout schedule through 2024—helps emphasize needed flexibility to help faculty best support students.
2. A pilot for innovative interdisciplinary courses. By taking up Curricular Innovation Pilots, we can give students more coherence around innovative new themes—but we can retain flexibility by allowing faculty to design themes in response to their own areas of interest and changing student needs.
3. Pilot structure. By engaging pilot rollouts for the DEI attribute and for the proposed Curricular Innovation Pilot courses, we uphold a spirit of flexibility, iteration, and experimentation as we continue to meet student needs.
4. Iterative process. Embracing a new culture of iterative, inclusive gen ed reflection helps us live into a healthy spirit of “if we don’t get it fully right this time, we’ll revisit as we go”—and we’ll do so with more of the necessary stakeholders at the table.
5. Refine, expand, amplify, and infuse. As addressed above and in Section IV below, except for the new DEI attribute and new pilots, we do not recommend changing DU’s existing general education distribution and credit structure at this time. That said, we do recommend a structure that is refined and expanded, and we do recommend faculty “infuse” and “amplify” some existing areas of focus related to DU initiatives in which students are already involved. These are all ways of adding increased clarity, purpose, and coherence to students’ experience within the overall context of our existing structure.

Appendix B: Gen Ed DEI Faculty Committee → New DEI Attribute (+Timeline)

The Reconciliation Committee recommends seating a new Gen Ed DEI Faculty Committee to develop a new 4-credit DEI attributed general education course requirement to ensure students have a more substantive engagement with DEI as part of their time at DU. (While we recognize that one course cannot meet all of our student’s DEI learning needs, it is an important start; we also encourage faculty to infuse DEI content and pedagogies throughout all their general education—and other—courses.)

The committee will work closely with the proposed Faculty Director of General Education, the VC of DEI, OTL, and other stakeholders to arrive at Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for this new attribute, define criteria for how syllabi qualify for this attribute, review course proposals, and facilitate professional development opportunities. The committee will also decide on the title and acronym of the new attribute. (*Note: The Reconciliation Committee received conflicting feedback regarding the name of the attribute and recognizes the importance of the Gen Ed DEI Committee taking this up in a thoughtful way with input from multiple stakeholders).

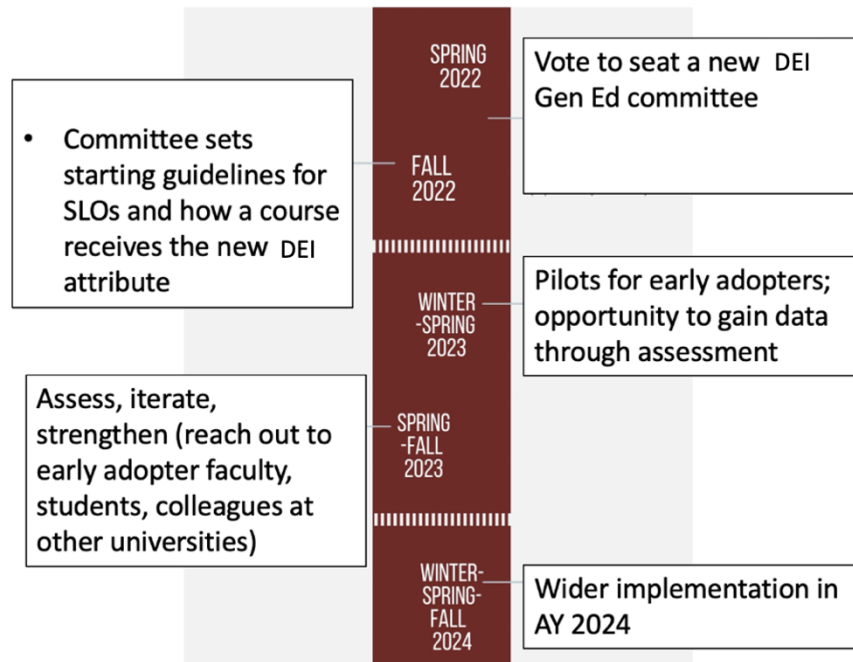
The proposed timeline for this work has been developed in consultation with Chris Whitt, Vice Chancellor of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Subject to the Senate passing the motion, here is the anticipated timeline:

- Fall 2022: Gen Ed DEI Committee is seated and develops SLOs and other parameters in consultation with ODEI, OTL, and other stakeholders.
- Winter-Spring 2023: Early adopter faculty volunteer to pilot the new learning outcomes.
- End of Spring 2023 through Fall 2023: Gen Ed DEI Committee (in partnership with ODEI, OTL and other stakeholders, including comparisons with national data) does a thorough assessment data review and makes needed adjustments.
- Fuller rollout will occur in 2024 (Winter, Spring, or Fall depending on other details).

Once SLOs are established, we also recommend suitable review by Undergraduate Council and Senate. Here is a visual representation of the timeline:

TIMELINE OF DEI Attribute

[+ Appropriate further reviews by Undergraduate Council and Faculty Senate in partnerships with ODEI, OTL, and other partners]



Regarding the anticipated new attribute: Most students will be able to meet the DEI requirement through courses that count for other general education or major/minor credit. Some courses likely already meet criteria the committee will define, including courses in Critical Race & Ethnic Studies, Intercultural Communications, existing FSEMs and ASEMs, and others. Additionally, many courses could be revised or designed as DEI courses. Some obvious initial sites include FSEM, ASEM, and 'Topics' courses for many departments. In these cases, after approval from the DEI Committee, courses would receive the new DEI attribute in addition to whatever attributes and course code/s they already have.

We will also need to develop new DEI courses. All colleges and units will be encouraged to propose courses, including outreach to departments that have not traditionally offered courses with DEI emphasis. The DEI committee will work with relevant DU offices to offer professional development opportunities and course design support.

For classes in the majors/minors/concentrations, the Gen Ed DEI Faculty Committee and Director of General Education will partner with departments and deans to determine DEI course designations. For general education courses, proposals will be reviewed by the DEI Committee to determine DEI course designations.

Appendix C: Curricular Innovation Pilot Courses (+ Three Samples)

What and why?

After reviewing faculty and student data, including the extensive work of the GERI committee and aspects of their 2020 proposal most supported by faculty, the Reconciliation Committee recommends a pilot of innovative interdisciplinary opportunities that encourage creative learning opportunities for our students while giving faculty the flexibility to innovate and to meet current and future student needs. In effect, faculty are given opportunities (though are not required) to partner with colleagues across disciplines to create innovative new course offerings; courses are vetted by a committee of faculty peers (working in suitable partnership with the Provost and Deans' offices) to approve these pilots, which students can take to satisfy up to 12 credits of general education requirements.

The Provost supports this as an initial two-year pilot in the amount of \$50k per year.

The pilots help general education combine tradition with innovation, structure with flexibility, a shared repository of knowledge and values with the freedom to chart our distinctive individual paths. Through coordinated teaching, the pilots will provide faculty with an opportunity to experiment with creating multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, even post-disciplinary learning experiences. We view this as an opportunity for faculty to address pressing topics of most relevance to our students. Opportunities include immersion in the scholarly and the creative arts; robust opportunities for local or international community engagement; developing the synthetic, cross-disciplinary thinking needed to tackle irreducibly complex real-world problems; and building collaborative skills, cultural competencies, and ethical dispositions essential to better futures. As such, the pilots allow faculty to prepare students not only for further study in a major field or career but for a life of independent thinking, civic participation, creative practice, and an evolving relationship to the self.

A further goal of the pilots is to cultivate in the faculty who teach in the general education program a sense of the same creative and collaborative intellectual *esprit de corps* that we hope to develop in students. The experimental spirit that animates these pilots also serves to keep general education (and teaching more broadly) buzzing with the energy of new ideas, imparting a stronger sense of purpose and coherence to the undergraduate educational experience (a common desire of students and faculty alike) without our choosing any one theme for general education.

We will also develop an assessment plan to review the pilot structure and outcomes.

The committee's recommendation for these innovative pilots is framed by the details already addressed in Section I, and emerged in response to considerations of five factors:

- (1) Student Outcomes:** We would like to help students better see the narrative arc and purpose of our general education curriculum.

- (2) Enrollment cliff:** We need to innovate to meet changing student needs. But instead of guessing what new themes will best meet changing student needs, we recommend investing in a pilot-friendly structure that invites and supports ongoing change and innovation.
- (3) DU values:** DEI. Interdisciplinarity. Public good. Internationalization. 4D. Sustainability. While there are decided downsides to picking a single theme around which to construct a new gen ed curriculum, a pilot structure is an excellent way to proactively infuse more of DU's own values into the student classroom experience.
- (4) Faculty development opportunities:** A structure of interdisciplinarity supports faculty development across and beyond traditional disciplinary constraints.
- (5) Student enrollment:** Creative opportunities to team faculty in innovative ways can help increase student enrollment in classes; it can also help draw students into minors/majors.

These pilot courses are interdisciplinary, taught in partnerships (see three examples below for linked-teaching structures), address shared topics related to existing DU initiatives (e.g., 4D, public good, etc.; see a list of 7 such initiatives in section IV), and satisfy the DEI designation (see section II and Appendix B). These innovative courses can take several forms; [see some examples in Appendix B](#).

In all cases, appropriate review structures will be in place to determine whether a given pilot course does or does not fulfill the learning outcomes of a given general education requirement. For example, the review structure will determine whether a three-course sequence from faculty across chemistry, psychology, and economics fulfills FSEM, ASEM, MACS and/or LENS sequence requirements.

Students may take up to 12 credits of these innovative pilot courses to satisfy existing general education requirements.

All pilots must:

- Meet appropriate area learning outcomes
- Qualify for the DEI attribution while integrating at least one additional theme from the list below
- Be 1000- or 2000-level classes
- Be open to all majors

Three Examples of Linked-Teaching Structures for Pilots

Clusters

Two or more courses that students take simultaneously, with direct interactions between the two and collaborative teaching. Each course counts for the appropriate area credit.

Sequences

Two or more courses that students complete in sequential quarters, with later classes building on the earlier quarter's content. Each course counts for the appropriate area credit.

Team Teaching

In addition to partnerships of the above varieties, some courses will be team-taught. Area designations will be determined by course content and review by appropriate committees. Some courses will allow students to choose between credit options. An interdisciplinary course team-taught by a physicist and philosopher might count for 4 CACE or 4 LENS credits in a case where the course is specifically designed (and approved) to be one of the three courses in a 3-sequence LENS requirement. In other cases, cross-listed courses can satisfy multiple requirements: Students might count a team-taught course on Writing and Mental Health for the Minor in Writing Practices *and* for HUBS. Faculty and their programs will negotiate how participants will be credited and compensated, with financial support from the Provost to facilitate course reassignments and other needs.

Three Sample (Wholly Imaginary) Curricular Innovation Pilot Courses*

**PLEASE NOTE: These examples aren't proposals for actual pilots, nor do they pretend to reflect disciplinary expertise in any way. They mean only to illustrate the interdisciplinary and collaborative pedagogical possibilities that the pilot program can open up.*

Course Cluster: *The Secret History of Unhousing in America*

THEMES: PUBLIC GOOD / CREATIVE EXPRESSION/CIVIC DISCOURSE/ **4D**

FACULTY PARTNERS: HISTORY, POLITICAL SCIENCE; THEATER; LAW; DCB; GSSW

From the claim jump that founded it, to the redlining that defined its neighborhoods, to the "urban camping ban" that evicted Occupy protestors from Civic Center Park and now seeks to "sweep" the homeless from its rapidly gentrifying downtown, the city of Denver has exemplified the myriad ways in which *unhousing* forms a hidden link between American politics, policy, law, and literature. Students who sign up for this fall quarter pair of classes will explore the idea and practice of *unhousing* from several angles: first, in a class team-taught by

faculty from the departments of History and Political Science on the practice of unhousing from the Gold Rush to the present day; and also in its companion class, taught by faculty from the Theater Department, in which students process, expand upon, and express their learning by group-writing and performing a Denver-set sequel to Bruce Norris's *Clybourne Park* (itself a sequel to Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*). During the Winter Interterm, students who have completed the cluster will have the opportunity to enroll in a 2-credit, three-week immersive engagement course in which they will volunteer during the day with one of the city's several homeless shelters while attending in the evenings a series of discussions with leaders from the antipoverty nonprofit community, members of City Council, and DU faculty from the Schools of Law, Business, and Social Work.

Counts for 4 CACE credits and 4 HUBS credits (plus 2 optional elective credits for the immersive engagement course).

Course Sequence: *The Representation of Time*

THEMES: COMPUTATIONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL LITERACY / CREATIVE EXPRESSION / PUBLIC GOOD

FACULTY PARTNERS: PHYSICS, PHILOSOPHY, EDP

Through this three-course, three-quarter sequence, taught by a physicist, a philosopher, and a digital game-maker, students explore the theories and practices of representing *time* across the liberal arts. In the physics course, students study the mathematical representation of time in, e.g., relativity theory. In the philosophy course, they explore the question of the phenomenology of time as posed by, e.g., Husserl and Heidegger. And in the games course, they consider how time is constructed and experienced in open-world role-playing games.

Counts for 8 HUBS credits and 4 LENS credits

Team-taught ASEMs: *The Imagination in, across, and beyond Disciplines*

THEMES: CREATIVE EXPRESSION / CIVIC DISCOURSE /4D

FACULTY PARTNERS: CAHSS, NSM, WRITING

In these 4-credit hybrid lecture/discussion classes, four faculty representing the arts, social sciences, natural sciences, and writing give two lectures each to a cohort up to 68 students on the role that the *imagination* plays in their work and lead weekly discussion in their own sections of ASEM with 15-17 students. During the final 2 weeks of the class, students complete a portfolio in which they reflect upon the role that the imagination has played across the various kinds of thinking, creating, and action-taking they have done through their involvement in the general education program and project a plan for taking what they have learned into their lives beyond college.

Counts for 4 ASEM credits

Appendix D: Expand to “Ways of Thinking, Creating, and Taking Action” + Refine and Infuse/Amplify

Responding to multiple factors, including many faculty supporting most elements of the existing structure, we at this time recommend retaining the core area and credit structure (apart from the added DEI requirement and the opportunity to satisfy requirements through the pilots).

That said, we do recommend enhancing student experience by way of expanding, refining, and infusing/amplifying along the following lines:

- **Expand Ways of Knowing to Ways of Thinking, Creating, and Taking Action:** Currently we use the framing “Ways of Knowing” to describe four areas of the general education curriculum (AI-S, AI-N, SI-S, SI-N). We recommend changing this to a broader and more generative umbrella of “Ways of Thinking, Creating, and Taking Action,” and we recommend that we apply this new framing to the entire general education curriculum (not just four of its areas).
- **Refine titles and descriptions of courses:** Many faculty have shared (in the GERI data, in Senate materials, etc.) that our existing general education curriculum structure and content are strengths, and that we ought to do a better job with some of the terms and titles to provide students and faculty with a better sense of what these courses are designed to do. We have also heard many concerns about the current short-hands like “AI-S” and “SI-N” being hard to say and not easy to explain (e.g., many don’t remember what acronyms stand for, and also don’t find “Analytical Inquiry” and “Scientific Inquiry” to be compelling frames).

In that spirit, we worked with committee members from across relevant divisions to refine the titles and descriptions; you can see the recommendations in [Appendix E below](#). In some respect, these recommended refinements can be seen as cosmetic changes for greater ease of use (and even ease of pronunciation). More importantly, however, the title changes—along with the proposed new descriptions—are a modest but important way of adding clarity and curricular emphases. One example is the recommendation of adding the language of “literacy” to a few of the new area titles (LENS, MACS) in relation to quantitative and scientific thinking, as recommended by NSM committee members, as an important addition to our students’ experience of the existing general education curriculum.

- **Invite faculty to “infuse and amplify”:** Responding to the many faculty who view the current general education structure as a strength around which we should do more to help students gain a more coherent experience, the committee further recommends that faculty consider weaving in and/or highlighting some particular (and changing) topics/areas of inquiry. These are not themes, and not requirements. Rather, it is a list—currently seven-long—that the committee arrived at as follows: Some (1-5) are existing areas of DU focus to which students have exposure outside of our classes; and most (including 6-7) are additionally topics that arose from the 50 pages of amendments as areas in which faculty would like to see increased attention. The current proposed list of **seven topics or areas of inquiry** that, together with DEI, the committee identified as being of broad interdisciplinary relevance and as resonating with many existing DU initiatives are:

- 1) Civic discourse and information literacy
- 2) 4D outcomes, including wellness and lives of purpose
- 3) Commitment to the public good
- 4) Sustainability
- 5) Internationalization and global perspectives
- 6) Computational and technological literacy
- 7) Creative expression, production, and performance

Even without new learning outcomes around these seven, and without any one or more of these being a new “theme of general education,” and without calling for changes to the materials many of us already teach, we see great value in working to better name and highlight—and as appropriate, add (but without being required to add)—emphases on one or more of these seven areas of focus in addition to DEI. By infusing and/or amplifying these topics in our gen ed curricula, we can help our students connect the dots with a range of initiatives on our campus. This kind of small adjustment to our existing gen ed classes can, in and of itself, help give our students a more coherent experience at DU. (In initial meetings, we have strong support from OTL on ways they might help faculty make curricular connections to campus initiatives and other areas of emphasis).

Appendix E: Refined Core Structure and Area Titles

Summary Chart of Refined Core Structure and Area Titles

Below, please find a summary chart of the recommended refined core area titles with their updated acronyms. (We recognize that these area designations aren't exact acronyms; they are intended to be memorable shorthand codes that will work well for advising and attribute searches for scheduling purposes.) Except for the DEI addition,* the credit hours and learning outcomes remain unchanged from our current system:

First-Year Seminar	■	First-Year Seminar (FSEM) 4
Writing and Rhetoric	■	Writing and Rhetoric (WRIT) 8
Foreign Language	▶	World Languages and Cultures (WOLC) 4-12
Analytical Inquiry: Natural	▶	Mathematical and Computational Literacies (MACS) 4
Analytical Inquiry: Society	▶	Critical Analysis and Creative Expression (CACE) 8
Scientific Inquiry: Natural	▶	Literacy and Exploration in Natural Sciences (LENS) 12
Scientific Inquiry: Society	▶	Human Behavior and Social Sciences (HUBS) 8
Advanced Seminar	■	Advanced Seminar (ASEM) 4
	★	New DEI attribute (title TBD) 4*

**In most cases, we expect students to meet the DEI requirement through courses that also meet another area requirement, thus maintaining the same number of credits devoted to general education.*

Refined Core Area Titles and Descriptions

Below, please find the fuller descriptions of the refined core structure and area titles. Please note:

- The new descriptions emphasize shared topics, areas of inquiry, and new possibilities, but the underlying learning outcomes are unchanged. Existing area descriptions are available at:
<http://bulletin.du.edu/undergraduate/undergraduateprograms/traditionalbachelorsprogram/degreesanddegreerequirements/>

- Reconciliation Committee members from across relevant units collaborated in teams to draft these new category titles and descriptions; updates were added in recent weeks in response to faculty feedback.

Ways of Thinking, Creating, and Taking Action

First-year Seminar (FSEM) – 4 credits

The First-Year Seminar Program offers students an introduction to the intellectual life of the University. Through small class size and pairing with a faculty mentor for students' entire first year, FSEMs provide an in-depth academic experience that is rigorous and engaging, while developing relationships and honing the academic skills essential for successful college work.

Outcomes (these are identical to the current outcomes for FSEM):

- Engage in critical inquiry in the examination of concepts, texts, or artifacts
- Effectively communicate the results of such inquiry

Writing and Rhetoric (WRIT) – 8 credits

The ability to convey information and ideas in compelling ways to specific audiences is essential both in college and beyond. The writing sequence helps students develop strategies for writing to diverse readers in a variety of academic and nonacademic situations. Students learn how to analyze and apply rhetorical strategies; develop information literacy by evaluating, analyzing, and working responsibly with readings and source materials; conduct research using different scholarly traditions and methods; generate, revise, and edit texts for specific contexts; and consider how their writing can contribute to civic discourse and the public good. In each course, students complete a substantial number and variety of formal and informal writing tasks with systematic instructor guidance, reflect on their writing processes and rhetorical choices, and complete a final portfolio. These courses lay the foundation for writing in future general education courses, writing in students' majors, and writing in professional and civic life after graduation.

*Most students will complete WRIT 1122: Writing, Rhetoric, and Civic Discourse and WRIT 1133: Writing and Research, usually in the first year, though both courses are offered each term. Advanced and Honors sections are available for each course in sequence in the winter and spring.

Outcomes (these are identical to the current outcomes for WRIT):

- Demonstrate the ability to compose for a variety of rhetorical situations
- Demonstrate the ability to write within multiple research traditions

World Languages and Cultures (WOLC) – 4-12 credits

Through the study of other languages, literatures, and cultures, students can develop ethical intercultural competencies; cultivate inclusive engagement with people of diverse cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds; and better participate in responsible global citizenship. Students demonstrate proficiency in another language through successful completion of a language course at the 1003 level or above.

Outcomes (these are identical to the current outcome for FOLA):

- Demonstrate basic proficiency in a language of choice in the following skills: writing, speaking, listening, and reading
- Demonstrate proficiency in learning about a culture associated with a language of choice

Existing “Ways of Knowing” are revised with distinct titles under the larger umbrella of “Ways of Thinking, Creating, and Taking Action”

Outcomes (these are identical to the current outcomes for AI-S, AI-N, SI-S, SI-N):

- Apply formal reasoning, mathematics, or computational science approaches to problem solving
- Understand and communicate connections between different areas of logic, mathematics, or computational science, or their relevance to other disciplines
- Demonstrate the ability to create in written, oral, or any other performance medium or interpret texts, ideas, or cultural artifacts
- Identify and analyze the connections between texts, ideas, or cultural artifacts and the human experience

The descriptions below include more specific goals for each area.

Critical Analysis and Creative Expression (CACE) – 8 credits

Through these courses, students develop critical and creative thinking skills as they consider how ideas and creative expressions both shape and are shaped by human experiences and cultures that are specific to time and place and marked by widely varying values and practices. Engaging with diverse communities and their artifacts prepares students to participate in, contribute to, and thrive in a complex global society. Courses in the arts explore how engagement in aesthetic experiences and students’ own artistic expression can likewise enrich their world. Students take two courses in different subjects within the arts and humanities to explore culture, society, and creative production from different perspectives.

*CAHSS majors/minors may apply one Critical Analysis and Creative Expression course (four credits) per major/minor program to partially satisfy both major/minor and general education requirements if that course is listed as meeting the outcomes of a section of the general education requirements. Non-music majors may take up to four one-credit ensembles towards this requirement.

Human Behavior and Social Sciences (HUBS) – 8 credits

Understanding the principles of human behavior, the patterns of our interaction with others, and the processes by which we create and sustain relationships with others, within a wide array of social, political, and cultural contexts, is essential in a diverse and interdependent society. Through study and practice of these principles, patterns and processes, students develop a solid foundation for crafting novel responses to ongoing social problems and designing and implementing strategies to create a more just and equitable world. Although coursework is pursued through a variety of disciplines, working from an array of methods, the goal of each is to develop a deeper knowledge of the patterns and processes that make up the complexities of social living, while gaining an appreciation for diverse human experiences. Students take two courses in different subjects studied from the perspectives of the social sciences; they are thus exposed to varying approaches and levels of analysis (e.g., physiological, evolutionary, cognitive, discursive, affective, social, and cultural processes).

Literacy and Exploration in Natural Sciences (LENS) – 12 credits

Science and technology play increasing roles in the most profound challenges and the greatest opportunities that we face as global societies. Gaining knowledge of the practice and promise of science is essential for educated and responsible citizenship. Science provides the most thoroughly tested tools for developing accurate knowledge of nature, develops technologies that shape our daily living, and allows us to ask and answer questions that were not imaginable by previous generations. Courses provide students with a three-quarter experience that builds knowledge and application of scientific approaches in one core area. The three-quarter format with accompanying laboratories allows students to conduct in-depth explorations that have significant social implications and develop reasoning skills and reflective judgment. By working between classroom and laboratory to understand the nature of science in the natural and physical world, students will apply scientific methods; analyze and interpret data; and justify conclusions where evidence is conflicting. Students will also explore the strengths and weaknesses of scientific knowledge and reflect on the connections between the natural sciences, developing technologies, and other ways of knowing and constructing human experiences.

* Students in the BM degree program may choose between eight credits in the Language requirement or eight credits of a LENS sequence. Students in the BFA meet this requirement through eight credits taken in two sequential courses.

Mathematical and Computational Literacies (MACS) – 4 credits

Logical thinking and formal reasoning are important skills used to build a foundation for constructive and stepwise problem solving. Students taking a course in this area will develop basic knowledge of how to understand and use principles of mathematics, computational sciences, or logic as a formal means of interpreting occurrences in their daily lives. In these courses, students will:

- Apply deductive reasoning to solve problems in mathematics, computer science and/or other disciplines
- Create abstract models of phenomena, solve problems formally, and interpret the results within real-world contexts
- Communicate the logical processes by which they solve problems
- Develop quantitative and logical thinking skills
- Make sense of patterns arising from the natural world or from within the human mind

Advanced Seminar (ASEM) – 4 credits

While knowledge and professional skills found in a student's major and minor are important foundations, successful individuals must also be able to navigate complex political, social, cultural, and economic environments that challenge disciplinary divisions and limited concepts of higher education and competencies. For Advanced Seminar (ASEM), instructors design courses for non--majors based on their area of expertise and passion that approach the topic from multiple perspectives. Students apply concepts and skills from previous coursework in their majors, minors, and the general education curriculum to investigate new questions, solve shared problems, and collaborate and communicate effectively with others. Students further develop their ability to integrate different perspectives, synthesize ideas, and communicate arguments through intensive writing on course topics.

*This course must be taken at the University of Denver. Students must complete all other general education requirements except DEI before taking the Advanced Seminar.

Outcomes (these are identical to the current outcomes for ASEM):

- Demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply context from multiple perspectives to an appropriate intellectual topic or issue
- Write effectively, providing appropriate evidence and reasoning for assertions

New DEI Attribute (Title and acronym TBD) – 4 credits

As discussed above, the new Gen Ed DEI Faculty Committee will develop the area description, student learning outcomes, and criteria for courses across the disciplines to meet DEI outcomes; they will also work with input from key constituents to arrive at the title and acronym of this new attribute. Unlike the other core areas, students will not be required to complete this attribute prior to ASEM, as some ASEM and major/minor courses will be DEI-attributed. These courses are intended to offer a substantial engagement with DEI as a way of knowing, creating, and/or taking action; courses will also feature inclusive teaching practices. The new Director of General Education, the DEI Committee, ODEI, and OTL will collaborate to offer professional development opportunities for faculty who wish to develop DEI courses or bring these concepts into their classes, sharing expertise and ensuring ethical and effective approaches to the rich theory and practices in this area.