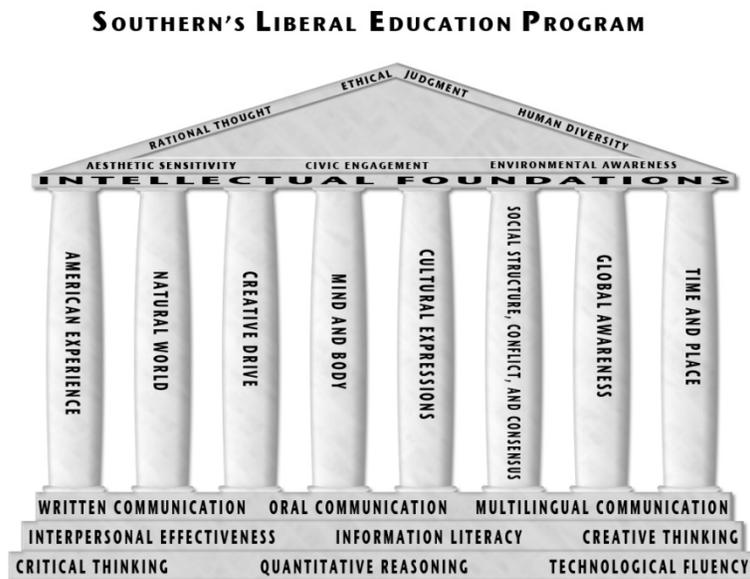


ORIGINAL DOCUMENT PREPARED BY  
THE GENERAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE

# THE LIBERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM AT SOUTHERN

VERSION 2



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## Preface

*The General Education Task Force and its forerunners have worked diligently and exhaustively for ten years to craft a program that, through its commitment to rigor and to high expectations for students, has a real potential for producing more graduates of whom we can all be especially proud. After its 6-10 years of research into general education through review of scholarly publications, participation in conferences, and examination of other programs at other institutions, the Task Force can say with confidence that the proposed Liberal Education Program at Southern, if fully supported, will be one of the most powerful general education programs at any comprehensive university in the country. We realize that the changes we are proposing present some risks or at least some uncertainties for the entire university. We have done our best to work with the administration to see that these risks are minimized. This is ultimately about our students and the Task Force strongly believes that the proposed program, due to its particular characteristics, will be significantly better for the students and significantly better for the faculty in the long run.*

# THE LIBERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM AT SOUTHERN

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## **BACKGROUND**

In the fall of 1999, the Undergraduate Curriculum Forum (UCF) charged the University-Wide Impact Committee (UWIC) to review general education at Southern Connecticut State University. After three years of extensive research, a UWIC subcommittee produced a report entitled “General Education Review” (<http://www.southernct.edu/committees/ucf/GETF/>), recommending that UCF form a General Education Task Force and charge it with “proposing a coherent general education program based on current thinking and practices . . . [for] a UCF vote and faculty referendum” (page 16 of that report).

After much research and University-wide debate, the General Education Task Force submitted “The Liberal Education Program, Southern Connecticut State University” (see Appendix D) to a general faculty referendum in 2005. This document laid the philosophical groundwork of general education by advocating a rigorous program of active learning centered on 24 goals: 9 *Competencies*, 9 *Areas of Knowledge and Experience*, and 6 *Discussions of Values*. It promised to create an integrated learning experience transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries while also respecting academic traditions of basic skills proficiency, intellectual rigor, and the value and methods of critical inquiry. Over 70% of all full-time faculty voted with over 90% in favor of adopting these goals for general education at Southern.

Building on those approved goals, this 48-credit general education program, the Liberal Education Program at Southern, looks to the needs of the future while building on the successes of the past. The current All-University Requirement (AUR) arrangement, a general education model developed in the early 1970s, addressed students’ needs at that time. While steeped in rich traditions that have nurtured tens of thousands of students over two generations, this AUR paradigm no longer meets the educational needs of current Southern students. Today almost three-fourths of high school graduates enter higher education. These students face enormous changes in technology and information access. Southern must update its general education approach to address this new twenty-first-century demographic.

## **TIMELINE**

1999	UCF commissions UWIC to study general education reform.
2002	UWIC General Education subcommittee report: “General Education Review”.
Spring 2002	Subcommittee recommendations approved by UCF.
2002-2004	General Education Task Force formed. Task Force study of general education principles, conference participation, literature review, research, examination of general education at other universities. Faculty and student open discussions on general education. Task Force poll of faculty on general goals.
2004-2005	Proposals and Feedback. Focus group meetings with faculty & students. Task Force meetings with individual departments, programs, and administrators. Faculty referendum approval of “The Liberal Education” outline.
2005-2007	Reconfiguration of General Education Task Force. Meetings with faculty to define goals. Meetings with faculty to refine goals. Development of program structure. Development of structural overview. Meetings with faculty and administrators to present and refine structure.
Spring 2008	Meetings with individual departments, programs, and administrators. Submission of Liberal Education Program to UCF and Senate. Election of new Task Force members.
Summer 2008	Orientation of new Task Force members.

## CHARACTERISTICS

In the “The Liberal Education Program” document approved by faculty referendum in 2005, the following points characterize Southern’s approach to general education:

- **Concretely articulated goals**
- **Curricular coherence** throughout (as in LINKS and the Honors College)
- **Assessment and review** to determine its success
- **Dynamic and amendable** for improvement over time
- **Oversight** through an elected liberal education faculty committee and a director
- **Flexibility** in dealing with the needs of students, transfer students, and departments where appropriate

## GOALS

In response to faculty and student input, the Liberal Education Program at Southern identifies and defines goals for each of three groups:

*Competencies* – what should an educated citizen be able to do?

*Areas of Knowledge and Experience* – what should an educated citizen know?

*Discussions of Values* – with what values should an educated citizen be conversant?

In the 2005 referendum, Southern’s faculty approved specific items for each of these three groups. The Liberal Education Program at Southern addresses all these items throughout the program, intertwining elements from each of these three groups within each individual course. Every course in the program has at least one *Area of Knowledge and Experience*, attends to at least one major *Competency*, and presents at least one *Discussion of Values*. Including all three groups in every course provides program coherence.

In accordance with the “The Liberal Education Program” document provisions, the General Education Task Force presents a program with the 24 goals (9 *Competencies*, 9 *Areas of Knowledge and Experience*, and 6 *Discussions of Values*) further defined, more developed, and thoroughly integrated. Each individual goal has a stated purpose and a list of key elements that any course addressing that goal must contain. These goals, along with their stated purpose and key elements, can be modified and improved as times change and as the program undergoes assessment and review.

## STRUCTURE

Students in the Liberal Education Program at Southern progress through three tiers, each one focusing primarily on **one** of the three goal groups, while addressing the other two groups as well. In the first tier, small classes help students develop foundational *Competencies* essential to academic discourse; these classes also include *Discussions of Values* and *Areas of Knowledge and Experience*. The second tier brings the *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* more to the forefront, while students continue both engaging in *Discussions of Values* and further developing the *Competencies* necessary for comprehending, analyzing, and communicating. In the third tier, students’ general education culminates with a limited-enrollment capstone seminar focusing on *Discussions of Values*, with one or more *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* providing a context and student *Competencies* providing the intellectual tools.

The following pages contain two outlines for the Liberal Education Program at Southern: the first gives a more detailed explanation of how the twenty-four goals fit into the three tiers, and the

second delineates how the 48 credits in the program are distributed and provides guidelines for the courses by tier.

## 24 Goals and 3 Tiers

**Tier 1: Foundations** – Using intellectual competencies as the foundational tier prepares students to have a rich experience and to perform to high standards in the rest of their university education. This tier benefits faculty as well as students, allowing for greater sophistication in courses offered in Tiers 2 and 3; advanced-level courses should be more satisfying to all concerned as a result of improved student preparation. Tier 1 courses briefly introduce the *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* and *Discussions of Values* while maintaining a focus on the development of intellectual skills, or competencies. As students progress from Tier 1, their liberal education program builds upon and strengthens each of these competencies. These intellectual skills are not exclusive to any Tier 1 course. For example, a “Critical Thinking” course could also strengthen reading and writing or quantitative reasoning. Similarly, a “Multilingual Communication” course might expose students to technology and hone their critical thinking skills. Faculty members may choose to explicitly link their Tier 1 courses. This practice is strongly encouraged, as is the use of other methods of creating a cohesive learning experience, for example using a common text.

In order to focus effectively on providing students with fundamental academic *Competencies*, Tier 1 courses are generally capped at 20 students. Each Tier 1 course must also address at least one of the *Competencies* listed under the right-hand column as an embedded competency. An embedded competency is one that is addressed within a course without being the primary focus of the course. Tier 1 courses should also be given a context and should incorporate at least one *Area of Knowledge and Experience* and at least one *Discussion of Values*. To ensure uniformity and rigor, in this tier Written Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, and Multilingual Communication will be taught by the English, Mathematics, and Foreign Language departments respectively.

### Competency Courses

Critical Thinking  
Multilingual Communication  
Quantitative Reasoning  
Technological Fluency  
Written Communication (writing & reading)

### Embedded Competencies

Creative Thinking  
Information Literacy  
Interpersonal Effectiveness  
Oral Communication (speaking & listening)

**Tier 2: Explorations** - Tier 2 courses serve as foundations of knowledge in areas that prepare students for self-realization, life-long learning, and citizenry in the twenty-first century. Tier 2 courses continue to develop and reinforce the competencies introduced in Tier 1. Rather than acting as introductions to specific academic majors, they incorporate knowledge from several disciplines while being rooted in the discipline of the department offering them. They are broad enough to serve as a foundation to an area of knowledge, and yet provide sufficient depth to allow for critical thinking and the development of insight. This approach promotes coherence of knowledge from the students’ point of view and offers faculty new opportunities for creative interaction. In the long term, faculty teaching these courses may well attempt to coordinate or otherwise link their courses with other Tier 2 courses, or even propose team-taught courses.

### Areas of Knowledge and Experience

American Experience	Natural World I: Physical Realm
Creative Drive	Natural World II: Life and the Environment
Cultural Expressions	Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus
Global Awareness	Time and Place
Mind and Body	

The other faculty-approved *Area of Knowledge and Experience* is Intellectual Foundations. For the Intellectual Foundations component, every Tier 2 knowledge-based course must include at least one primary expository text that is intellectually influential in the course subject area.

**Tier 3: Connections** - The Capstone Experience integrates *Competencies, Areas of Knowledge, and Discussions of Values*. It addresses both the role of values in decision-making and any relationships among the values. Particular focus is on contemporary issues and how values inform one's perspective on these issues. The subject area is drawn from the *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* that the program has plumbed since Tier 1. *Competencies* developed throughout the program serve as tools for understanding and expression. This course addresses the highest levels of thinking (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), allows students to integrate their liberal education learning experiences, and may involve a community service component.

### Discussions of Values

Aesthetic Sensitivity	Ethical Judgment
Civic Engagement	Human Diversity
Environmental Awareness	Rational Thought

**Summary** - Tier 1 provides foundations for learning and Tier 2 expands students' knowledge of the world; Tier 3 integrates both at the highest levels of thinking: analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

## **The 48 Credits**

### **Tier 1: Foundations (18 Credits)**

Students develop facility with foundational *Competencies* necessary for thinking and communicating about a wide variety of issues and themes. Courses are taught in a context that addresses at least one *Area of Knowledge and Experience* and includes at least one *Discussion of Values*. Students take one 100-level course in each of these categories:

Critical Thinking	3 credits
First Year Experience Seminar	3 credits
Multilingual Communication (200-level)	3 credits
Quantitative Reasoning	3 credits
Technological Fluency	3 credits
Written Communication (writing <b>and</b> reading)	3 credits

All courses in Tier 1:

- address at least one *Area of Knowledge and Experience*,
- incorporate at least one *Discussion of Values*,
- address at least one embedded competency in a significant manner, and
- present competencies in context.

**Tier 2: Explorations (27 Credits)**

Students explore *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* in depth, engaging in at least one *Discussion of Values*. In every course, students continue developing critical thinking and writing skills, as well as at least one other *Competency*. Each course assigns at least one primary (non-textbook) expository source to incorporate an “Intellectual Foundations” component. Students take one course, generally at the 200-level, in each of these categories:

American Experience	3 credits
Creative Drive	3 credits
Cultural Expressions	3 credits
Global Awareness	3 credits
Mind and Body	3 credits
Natural World I: The Physical Realm	3 credits
Natural World II: Life and the Environment	3 credits
Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus	3 credits
Time and Place	3 credits

All courses in Tier 2:

- have enough scope to provide an adequate foundation to the particular *Area of Knowledge and Experience*,
- address a number of key topics in depth,
- make an effort to integrate knowledge from a variety of perspectives,
- provide insight to issues of the 21st century and/or important issues in students’ lives,
- include problem-based learning appropriate to the topic, and
- provide an introduction to the analytical tools of the discipline(s) offering the course.

In order to maximize breadth of exposure to different disciplinary perspectives, students may take no more than one Tier 2 course from a particular department. As in the LINKS Program and the Honors College, connections among courses are encouraged.

**Tier 3: Connections (3 Credits)**

Students connect material from Tier 1 and Tier 2 in a capstone course designed to probe a contemporary open-ended issue. Students draw on the *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* studied in the program’s first two tiers to work and discuss collaboratively while resolving a conflict, or solving a problem, that engages the program’s six *Discussions of Values* .

Competencies developed throughout the program serve as the tools for academic inquiry: written and oral communication, critical thinking and quantitative problem solving, technological skills and intelligent access to and use of information, and the use of foreign language (for example, online foreign language newspaper materials may provide some interesting perspectives on the issue at hand). The General Education Task Force encourages Tier 3 faculty to coordinate seminars such that they address a common topic but from different disciplinary perspectives.

Capstone: Current Issues in X	3 credits
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All courses in Tier 3:

- address one or more capacious contemporary issues,
- engage students in 3-6 *Discussions of Values* and any interrelationships,
- draw on at least one Tier 2 *Area of Knowledge and Experience*,
- utilize many of the *Competencies* at an advanced level, and
- require a culminating project that encourages students to integrate their liberal education experiences

Departments may create a Tier 3 course for their majors, provided that all requirements for a Tier 3 course are addressed.

See Appendix A for information about transfer students and Appendix B for examples of potential content or possible themes for each of the various Tiers.

### **PRE-REQUISITES FOR THE LIBERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM AT SOUTHERN**

The Liberal Education Program consists of college level work and students must be prepared for it. Admission to the quantitative reasoning, written communication, and multilingual communication courses in the Liberal Education Program is based on placement tests to determine whether the student's mastery of high school mathematics, English, and foreign language is adequate. Typically, a full college preparatory program in high school that includes four years in these subjects will provide an adequate background. Southern provides a developmental program for those students who do not place into Liberal Education in these subjects. The deadlines for completing Liberal Education in quantitative reasoning and written communication are designed to permit students who place into the developmental level to complete the requirements on time.

For students whose placement exam scores indicate that substantial developmental work will be necessary, the committee recommends to the administration that a summer academy be instituted that will allow students to do much of their developmental work before starting as first-year students in the fall.

### **INTENSIVE WRITING**

Students take 3 writing intensive courses (W classes). Faculty members may propose any course in Tier 2 or Tier 3 for designation as a W class.

### **FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE**

The Task Force recommends that the first semester of written communication be combined with the FYE seminar such that the first semester of the freshman experience has a major focus on writing, including an introduction to information literacy. For students with additional needs, a developmental writing course would be required as a companion course to the FYE seminar.

### **MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES**

Faculty developing courses for the Liberal Education Program at Southern are encouraged to aspire to the multidisciplinary and co-teaching models of Honors College and the Links program.

### **ASSESSMENT**

In the Liberal Education Program at Southern, assessment is used in an ongoing way to improve the program. Assessment methods are dictated by content and pedagogy, not the other way around. Assessment may take many forms and, as a system, is also susceptible to reform. Assessment methods are to be user-friendly and effective.

In the Liberal Education Program at Southern, both student achievement and program effectiveness are assessed throughout the three tiers. An electronic portfolio in which students place their best work at each tier represents their progression through the entire program and demonstrates their successes vis-a-vis the liberal education goals; students' selection and justification of material for this portfolio allow them to reflect on their progress and to draw connections among their courses. Competency demonstrations mark the transition from Tier 1 to Tier 2. Papers, presentations, and performances represent student command of content in Tier 2. Final projects in Tier 3 demonstrate student abilities to examine an area of knowledge in light of a discussion of values. A list of the assessment tools is given below:

- Competency demonstrations – Tier 1
- Papers, presentations, and performances – Tier 2
- Final projects – Tier 3
- Student portfolios (electronic) – Tiers 1, 2 & 3

Competency demonstrations will be administered either inside or outside the five Tier 1 courses that focus on particular competencies, and will be assessed by a committee of Tier 1 instructors (fairly compensated) teaching that competency. The English, Mathematics, and Foreign Language departments will design the written communication, quantitative reasoning, and foreign language competency demonstrations respectively. In the program's first few years, the competency demonstration results will be used to calibrate program achievements and expectations; later, a student proficiency level will be a prerequisite for admission into Tier 2 courses to ensure that students have developed these competencies to an acceptable level. The latter method places responsibility for learning the competencies on the students and helps make the instructor their ally.

The papers, presentations, and performances produced by students in Tier 2 courses will be assessed by the respective instructors.

The final projects are assessed by a committee of Tier 3 instructors (fairly compensated). Yearly assessment of a random sampling of student portfolios, which students could start during their FYE class, will yield data on the effectiveness of the program as a whole to allow for program changes and improvement.

An important part of the assessment process requires that faculty members participating in each liberal education area, say the Natural World or Written Communication, meet once a year for at least two hours, compare successes and failures, and agree on at least one action item that would strengthen student success in that area.

### **COMPETENCY COMPLETION DEADLINES**

To help students become better prepared for, and thus more able to profit from, instruction in Tier 2 courses and in their majors, the preferred model is that students satisfy all of their competency requirements in their first year. However, programs that entail a heavy credit load and students that have developmental issues may require greater flexibility. In light of this caveat, students should satisfy their written communication and critical thinking requirements by the end of their first year. Students should not take any Tier 2 courses until the FYE and critical thinking requirements are met. In addition, the written communication requirement is co-requisite for all Tier 2 courses. Students taking Tier 2 courses that also satisfy the "W" requirement must fulfill the prerequisite for "W" courses. Students should satisfy their quantitative reasoning requirement and technological fluency requirement before the second semester of their sophomore year and

before taking any Tier 2 course that includes reinforcement of quantitative reasoning skills or technological fluency skills, respectively. The multilingual requirement should be satisfied by the end of the junior year. All Tier 1 courses and 7 of the 9 Tier 2 courses must be completed before taking the Tier 3 capstone. Exceptions to these deadlines may be approved by the Director of the Liberal Education Program.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

The Liberal Education Program at Southern is overseen and administered by the Liberal Education Program Committee and a Program Director. The Liberal Education Program Committee comprises elected faculty and functions as an autonomous standing committee of the UCF (similar to the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee). In keeping with current practice, UCF through UWIC approves all new courses, revised courses, and program revisions in the Liberal Education Program.

The duties of the Committee and Director include

- creating a smooth transition from the old AUR program to the new Liberal Education Program,
- working with faculty in proposing new liberal education courses and reworking existing courses to meet the new guidelines,
- developing guidelines for course approval (to be approved by UCF)
- helping the UCF interpret the various goals' purposes and key elements during the course approval process,
- representing the committee at UCF meetings,
- overseeing the development of the Liberal Education Program,
- responding to problems and issues that arise with the implementation of the new program,
- ensuring that program review and assessment are carried out in an effective and timely manner, and,
- proposing program changes based on the committee's review or input from faculty.
- revising the LEP document to reflect UCF-approved program changes

The Director administers the program by

- implementing the policies established by the Liberal Education Committee,
- proposing and developing opportunities for Faculty Development,
- handling transfer student issues,
- organizing seminars and workshops for faculty, students, and staff,
- coordinating the scheduling of courses with Departments and Deans,
- assuring that a sufficient number of courses is offered, and
- representing the program to the Southern administration.

The Director has 18-21 credits reassigned time, a sufficient budget, staff support, office space, and 6-9 credits in the summer. The Director serves a 2-year renewable term and is selected in a manner consistent with other faculty administrative positions.

Critical Thinking and Technological Fluency, because they are competencies and therefore involve competency demonstrations, should be more tightly coordinated than Tier 2 courses. It is recommended that a coordinator for Critical Thinking be located in the Philosophy Department and that a coordinator for the Technological Fluency competency be located in the Computer Science Department. A steering committee for each of the two areas should be formed with a representative from each department that teaches in that competency.

The duties associated with coordination might include

\*Communicating with other departments that teach the competency

\*Organizing the competency steering committee that will

- Create a competency course template
- Organize course development workshops
- Serve in an advisory capacity to UWIC in the course approval process
- Develop a competency demonstration
- Evaluate competency demonstration data

It is recommended that each coordinator receive appropriate reassigned time.

The Liberal Education Program Committee has nine elected and several non-voting advisory ex-officio members, including LEP director, FYE director, Honors College director, Links director, chair of University Wide Impact Committee (standing committee of UCF), Writing Program director, library liaison, and representative from Registrar's Office. Elected LEPC members shall not be required to have previous LEP teaching experience in order to serve on the committee. Every year beginning Spring 2008, three new members will be elected to three-year terms with terms beginning in the fall.

#### **AMENDMENT OF THE PROGRAM**

Amendment of the Liberal Education program that does not entail major restructuring will be pursued via the normal procedures for program revision. The Liberal Education Committee will play the role normally played by departments, and UWIC will be the subcommittee that reviews the proposal. Final approval will be conferred by a vote of the UCF.

Major restructuring refers to changes that would violate the fundamental structure of the program including 1) its characteristics (from 2005 faculty referendum), 2) basic curricular goals and 3) fundamental architecture, as outlined below:

##### **1) Characteristics:**

- Concretely articulated goals
- Curricular coherence throughout
- Assessment and review to determine its success
- Dynamic and amendable for improvement over time
- Oversight through an elected liberal education faculty committee and a director
- Flexibility in dealing with the needs of students, transfer students, and departments

##### **2) Inclusion of basic curricular goals infused throughout the program:**

- **Competencies**– skills of intellectual inquiry and communication that an educated person should possess (providing a foundation for subsequent development)
- **Areas of Knowledge and Experience**– multidisciplinary areas of inquiry with which an educated person should be familiar (approachable by more than one academic discipline)
- **Discussion of Values** – conversance with a set of socially important values (familiarity with the values and their relevance to important societal issues rather than inculcation of particular values per se)

##### **3) Fundamental architecture:**

- Inclusion of the three sequential **Tiers** 1) A foundation of basic competencies (Foundations), 2) Exploring Areas of Knowledge and Experience (Explorations), and

3) Integrating Competencies and Knowledge in a capstone experience that focuses on value-laden issues (Connections)

- Programmatic **Sequence** and **Recursion**
- Inclusion of concrete objectives for the curricular goals that utilize a **Purpose** statement and **Key Elements** and assessment throughout the three Tiers

### **RESOURCES**

The administration has committed to providing the resources necessary for the implementation and support of the Liberal Education Program at Southern. Further, the administration has agreed that departments will not lose faculty lines while making adjustments to the new program.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Liberal Education Program at Southern is goal-driven, coherent, dynamic, and reinforces skills and knowledge at several levels. It is self-improving through the use of assessment, review, and subsequent modification. It provides students with greater choice while raising expectations for student performance. It allows faculty members flexibility and innovation while also holding the whole faculty responsible for student outcomes.

# CURRICULAR GOALS

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# COMPETENCIES

## Creative Thinking

(Competency)

### Purpose

To prepare students to think creatively by engaging them in a process that generates new ideas. This ability leads students to fresh insights and perspectives, novel approaches to problems, and new ways of understanding, and it is a prerequisite for excellence in all of the academic disciplines, especially in a rapidly changing society.

### Key Elements

- 1) Articulation of Objectives - Identifying an issue, problem, or idea to which innovative and/or original solutions or outcomes may be applied.
- 2) Idea Generation - Posing questions and challenging presuppositions in order to expand the horizons of possible solutions and to make connections among different areas.
- 3) Analysis - Reflecting on and examining the alternative approaches generated for the question or problem that lead to seeing things in imaginative ways and creating new solutions or resolutions.
- 4) Synthesis - Concretely illustrating how the new ideas resolve the original question.
- 5) Evaluation – Considering the success of the one's solutions to a problem or the value of new ideas.

## **Critical Thinking**

(Competency)

### **Purpose**

To prepare students to identify problems and to think effectively about their solutions, both of which require making good arguments and critically assessing information. These skills are necessary for active learning and independent thinking; they also are essential for academic success and good decision-making in students' personal, professional, and public lives.

### **Key Elements**

Using real world problems, the course will provide instruction in:

- 1) Logical Argumentation – Identifying various types of arguments, analyzing components of arguments, and formulating good arguments, including a significant focus on inductive reasoning.
- 2) Evaluation – Identifying assumptions, and assessing the quality and reliability of sources of evidence, and learning the criteria for evaluating the success of each kind of inference.
- 3) Analysis – Breaking concepts and assertions down into components and identifying the interrelations of these parts in order to ascertain the defining features of the concepts and the meaning of assertions.
- 4) Synthesis – Drawing together disparate claims into a coherent whole in order to arrive at well-reasoned and well-supported inferences.

## **Information Literacy**

(Competency)

### **Purpose**

To provide students with the ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. In their academic, professional, personal and civic endeavors, students face an expanding quantity of information from sources whose quality is often uncertain, and have an increasing number of tools available to them for information retrieval and evaluation.

### **Key Elements**

- 1) Determination of Needs – Defining and articulating the information needed and identifying potential information sources.
- 2) Retrieval – Efficiently constructing and implementing well-designed search strategies, refining the search strategies, and extracting, organizing, and recording the information and its sources.
- 3) Critical Evaluation – Assessing the quality and relevance of the information and the reliability of its sources.
- 4) Ethical and Legal Issues – Understanding the many ethical and legal issues surrounding the use of information and the application of information technology.
- 5) Incorporation – Appropriately using the processes of acquiring, questioning, analyzing and synthesizing information.

## **Interpersonal Effectiveness**

(Competency)

### **Purpose**

To help students develop a capacity to interact successfully with others. In the twenty-first century, the ability to work collaboratively is a necessity and has become one of the characteristics of an educated person.

### **Key Elements**

- 1) Teamwork – Contributing, interacting, and making compromises in pursuit of a common goal.
- 2) Empathic Listening – Hearing and responding to others with thoughtfulness, courtesy and respect.
- 3) Communication – Clearly articulating a coherent point of view.
- 4) Responsibility – Following through on commitments.
- 5) Integrity -- Adhering to ethical principles in interactions with others.

## Multilingual Communication

(Competency)

### Purpose

To develop students' proficiency in a language and create awareness of cultures other than their own. These capacities enhance the students' ability to think critically about themselves in relation to others, to appreciate the complexity of language and the richness of cultures, and to live as informed and responsible citizens in an increasingly interdependent world.

### Key Elements

- 1) Language Proficiency - Participating in interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive modes of communication at the following levels as defined by the standards of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL): western language – *intermediate low*; non-western language - *novice high*.
- 2) Cultural and Linguistic Awareness - Making informed comparisons of one's own and another culture, including cultural values and linguistic diversity, and making informed comparisons across languages, including one's native language, which may include dialectical, stylistic, and syntactic variation.
- 3) Communities - Acquiring tools necessary to continue developing language proficiency and cultural understanding and to approach other unfamiliar languages and cultures, using the target language beyond the classroom setting.
- 4) Connections - Connecting a developing cultural understanding to other fields of study and to other aspects of one's life.
- 5) Critical analysis - Analyzing products of the target culture, such as visual arts, literature, music and performing arts, as well as everyday cultural practices and perspectives, such as cultural attitudes toward food, clothing, transportation and the media.

## **Oral Communication**

(Competency)

### **Purpose**

To provide students with the tools to express themselves coherently and cogently in face-to-face interactions. In the twenty-first century, students must be able to interact effectively in the community and in the workplace to succeed in their professional, personal, and community roles.

### **Key Elements**

- 1) Oral Interactions - Engaging in oral interactions to accurately convey or obtain information, to express feelings in an appropriate manner, and to exchange ideas.
- 2) Effective Listening - Understanding and interpreting language concerning a wide variety of subjects in an accurate and meaningful fashion.
- 3) Presentation and Audience - Effectively presenting information and ideas to diverse audiences using appropriate technology.

## Quantitative Reasoning

(Competency)

### Purpose

To enable students to recognize, understand, and use the quantitative elements they may encounter in various aspects of their lives, to foster abstract quantitative thought, to build self-confidence, and to appreciate the beauty and power of quantitative reasoning. Increasingly, success in modern life, academic disciplines, and career paths depends upon quantitative reasoning.

### Key Elements

- 1) Quantitative Situations – Identifying the essential quantitative elements in both routine and novel situations and understanding the relationships between those quantitative elements, and producing mathematical models appropriate for the intended analysis (e.g., writing equation(s) to represent the situation).
- 2) Quantitative Data – Representing quantitative information in both technical and common language by using symbolic, graphical, and tabular formats, and drawing correct inferences from quantitative information through the interpretations of such representations.
- 3) Methods - Acquiring the tools and methods necessary to resolve both routine and novel quantitative questions, including a correct sequencing of procedures, and using them appropriately, given the nature and constraints of a situation. In addition to using knowledge previously acquired in intermediate algebra, students will demonstrate proficiency with information presented in numerical or statistical form and mathematical concepts of growth and decay with their applications (e.g., linear, quadratic, exponential, etc.).
- 4) Reliability of Data and Solutions – Correctly evaluating the level of accuracy stated or implied for given data, and assessing the correctness and accuracy of an analysis, including the assessment of the method and model used and the reasonableness of the solution.
- 5) Mathematical Process – Using discovery (e.g., exploration and pattern-recognition), conjecture, and testing to develop mathematical formulas, theorems, and then giving persuasive mathematical arguments to establish their validity.

## Technological Fluency

(Competency)

### Purpose

To provide students fluency in contemporary and emerging technologies that transform the way we work, and to prepare them to respond to future technological changes. In today's highly technological society, comfort with and fluency in rapidly evolving technology provide students with a competitive edge professionally and with important tools for social interaction and collaboration.

### Key Elements

- 1) Common Tasks – Solving problems, accessing information, and communicating information and ideas using appropriate technologies.
- 2) Focus – Using emergent or recently developed technologies (hardware or software) to address specialized tasks.
- 3) Future Technological Change - Navigating and adapting to future technological developments.
- 4) Broader Implications – Being cognizant of ethical and social implications of revolutionary technologies, including but not limited to their impact on security, privacy, censorship, intellectual property, and the reliability of information.

## Written Communication

(Competency)

### Purpose

To provide students with the tools to comprehend what they read, to discover new ideas, to refine their thinking, and to express their thoughts cogently in writing. In our contemporary society, the capacity to grapple with complex thoughts and to communicate effectively in written form is of ever-increasing importance to students' personal, professional, academic, and public lives.

### Key Elements

- 1) Argument Comprehension - Summarizing, analyzing, and challenging sophisticated texts by evaluating evidence and the validity of an author's claims.
- 2) Argument Construction - Making a coherent written argument that gives background information, presents a reasonable claim, and uses a range of evidence to support the claim.
- 3) Academic Honesty - Avoiding plagiarism by properly using primary and secondary sources, including paraphrase, summary, and accurate citations (in an appropriate citation style).
- 4) Audience Awareness - Using the conventions of multiple genres to communicate effectively with particular audiences.
- 5) Correctness – Demonstrating control over standard English language usage (grammar, spelling, tone, style, semantics, and syntax) and revising for accuracy, clarity and depth.

# AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

## American Experience

(Area of Knowledge and Experience)

### Purpose

To develop a broad understanding of the society, politics, and culture of the United States and in particular its historical and contemporary diversity. This knowledge enables students to become informed and engaged citizens and provides a social and historical context to their lives.

### Key Elements

American experience courses should contain exposure to all of the below with emphasis on at least one.

- 1) Historical Development – Examining the evolution of American society, culture, and/or politics and interconnections among them.
- 2) Diversity in American Experience – Understanding the roles of many different peoples in creating the American experience including non-majority perspectives.
- 3) America’s Relationship with the World – Exploring historical and recent issues concerning America’s interactions with the world (e.g., immigration, globalization, etc.).

## **Creative Drive**

(Area of Knowledge and Experience)

### **Purpose**

To prepare students to think creatively through significant hands-on practice with a process that generates new conceptions and reveals new interpretations. Creativity is the well-spring of invention and delight.

### **Key Elements**

- 1) Articulation of Project - Identifying a concept and a medium.
- 2) Development of Project – Using creative thinking: examining different strategies or designs that will lead to accomplishing the project; selecting and refining the most productive strategies through constant self-reflection.
- 3) Presentation of Project – Displaying or performing the project publicly.
- 4) Creative Process and Exemplars – Examining the creative process itself as both an inspirational and problem solving endeavor; examining exemplary works.

## **Cultural Expressions**

(Area of Knowledge and Experience)

### **Purpose**

To develop the students' understanding of and aesthetic appreciation for influential cultural objects and traditions. This understanding will enable students expand their own aesthetic sensibilities and to enhance their encounters with cultural works.

### **Key Elements**

- 1) Aesthetic Evaluation – Encountering historical and/or contemporary genres of cultural expression.
- 2) Analytical Skills – Thinking critically and analytically about cultural expressions.
- 3) Cultural Significance – Examining social, historical, and aesthetic contexts of cultural expressions.

## **Global Awareness**

(Area of Knowledge and Experience)

### **Purpose**

To acquaint students with perspectives on current world affairs not centered in the American experience. To be effective citizens, students need to know and understand the conditions of others around the globe and the relationships and connections between self, local surroundings, and the broader world.

### **Key Elements**

- 1) Area or Phenomenon Outside the United States – Understanding a specific geographical region or phenomenon of international significance (e.g., the Middle East, sustainability, or globalization).
- 2) Contemporary Implications – Gaining significant insight into contemporary world issues.
- 3) Non-U.S. Perspectives – Exploring non-American points of view and ways of life.

## **Mind and Body**

(Area of Knowledge and Experience)

### **Purpose**

To develop students' understanding of various conceptions of the self and awareness of the self as a developing entity. This will enrich students' appreciation of their own personal identity and help them make effective and meaningful decisions about their lives.

### **Key Elements**

- 1) Conceptions of the Individual – Examining multiple ways that different disciplines and/or cultures define the self.
- 2) Growth – Studying the development of the individual in response to both internal and external forces.
- 3) Mind-Body Connection – Understanding conceptual and experiential interrelations between mental and physical aspects of the self.
- 4) Focus – Exploring deeply at least one approach to understanding the self (including but not limited to physical, psychological, religious, and philosophical).

## Natural World

(Area of Knowledge and Experience)

### Purpose

To familiarize students with science as a method of inquiry and to raise their awareness of the role science plays in the world. The ability to accurately and objectively articulate the scientific underpinnings of important complex issues is essential in a society that increasingly depends on science and technology.

### Key Elements

- 1) Scientific Inquiry – Understanding the nature of scientific inquiry in general and the use of the scientific method as a basic inquiry tool.
- 2) Body of Scientific Principles – Learning a coherent body of scientific knowledge.
- 3) Significant Lab or Field Experience – Collecting and analyzing scientific data in a laboratory or field setting using reasonable scientific protocols.
- 4) Quantitative Methods – Using, understanding, and analyzing numerical data to make reasonable inferences and interpretations.
- 5) Relevance to Contemporary Societal Issues – Understanding the scientific components of some important world issues (for example, biodiversity loss, genetic engineering, global climate change, land use and planning, resource depletion, or energy concerns).

## Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus

(Area of Knowledge and Experience)

### Purpose

To develop student understanding of social conflicts and their sources, and of possible means for seeking resolution. An understanding of the relationships among competing interest groups, power dynamics, conflicts, and potential resolutions of such conflicts is necessary to engage with a diverse society.

### Key Elements

- 1) Institutions and Power Dynamics – Understanding the normative structure, function and historical context of institutions (e.g., family, government, economy, education or religion, etc.), and how social power influences and is influenced by them.
- 2) Sources of Social Conflict – Examining how social conflicts evolve.
- 3) Variety of Perspectives – Recognizing the role of multiple perspectives in understanding conflict and seeking consensus.
- 4) Specific Social Conflict – Exploring extensively at least one significant social conflict.

## **Time and Place**

(Area of Knowledge and Experience)

### **Purpose**

To appreciate the rich variation in human perspectives on the human experience and on nature. Exposure to such perspectives fosters a more cosmopolitan view of the world and provides a important context for the students' understanding of themselves and their own time and place.

### **Key Elements**

- 1) Focus – Examining a specific time and/or place with an emphasis on continuity and change.
- 2) Perspective – Encountering unique viewpoints associated with that time or place.
- 3) Significance – Understanding the relevance of such perspectives to students' lives today.

## **Intellectual Foundations**

The intellectual foundations goal is achieved by incorporating one or more primary (non-textbook) expository sources into all Tier 2 courses.

# DISCUSSION OF VALUES

## Aesthetic Sensitivity

(Discussion of Values)

### Purpose

To promote awareness of how cultural expressions such as art, music literature, etc. can enrich, expand, and complicate students' life experiences and horizons. Such expansions may enable students to fully own otherwise remote cultural objects and expressions from architecture, public art installations, art in museums, and other cultural institutions. In addition, the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility can encourage an appreciation of natural beauty and of nature's complexity and diversity.

### Definition

The capacity of humans to respond to the emotional and cognitive aspects of art, broadly defined, or of other experiences directly linked to the senses.

### Potential Discussion Points

- 1) The value of understanding of the nuances of human traditions and how works of art shape and are shaped by diverse historical, social, ethnic, aesthetic, and artistic cultures.
- 2) The value of challenging cultural limitations, prejudices, and assumptions through the examining of works of art.
- 3) The determination of aesthetic values and norms.
- 4) The value of being able to recognize and critique canons in artistic fields.
- 5) The aesthetic value of violating canonical norms.
- 6) The relevancy of different cultural expressions to students' own experience, past and future.
- 7) The aesthetics of natural forms on a variety of scales.
- 8) The relationship between beauty and virtue.
- 9) The value of public support of the arts.

## **Civic Engagement**

(Discussion of Values)

### **Purpose**

To prompt students to reflect on the importance and significance of active engagement in the social, political, and cultural life of one's communities. Whether at the local, national, or international level, students should consider the roles of leadership and individual initiative in being an active citizen.

### **Definition**

Working to make a difference in the life of one's community at the local, regional, national, or international level by individual or collective actions.

### **Potential Discussion Points**

- 1) The significance of influencing social and political issues through direct personal engagement at the community, national, and international levels.
- 2) The implications of various approaches to citizenship for the tenor of the community and for individual liberties.
- 3) Consideration of the benefits and costs of well-informed, active citizenship.
- 4) The consequences of not being an active citizen in a democratic society.

## **Environmental Awareness**

(Discussion of Values)

### **Purpose**

To encourage awareness of critical environmental issues and to help students define their position with respect to these concerns. Students shall have to make informed decisions about such issues on a civic and personal level throughout their lives.

### **Definition**

Understanding the ways in which humans and human systems impact the environment and non-human natural systems, as well as understanding the impact of natural systems on humans and human society.

### **Potential Discussion Points**

- 1) The importance of being well informed about critical global and local environmental issues.
- 2) The concept that humans have a responsibility to forge a sustainable relationship with the natural environment and that such a relationship preserves the environment for future generations.
- 3) Environmental problems entail a variety of points of view and specific differences in points of view should be discussed in a fair and impartial manner.
- 4) Many environmental problems belong to the class of highly complex, difficult-to-solve problems.
- 5) For any given choice or action, there are consequences and costs as well as benefits.
- 6) Environmental problems are political problems as well as physical and biological problems.
- 7) Many environmental conditions are the consequence of natural processes rather than anthropogenic in nature, and that natural and anthropogenic factors can be difficult to distinguish.

## **Ethical Judgment**

## (Discussion of Values)

### **Purpose**

To help students to acquire an understanding of normative principles and how they guide action, to examine the relationship of these principles to other values, and to develop the judgment to use these principles effectively in unforeseen circumstances in students' personal, academic, professional, and political lives.

### **Definition**

The study of the basic normative principles that guide individual and collective human action, including their comparative strengths and weaknesses, conflicts, and application to contemporary moral and political controversies.

### **Potential Discussion Points**

- 1) The foundations on which ethical principles are based.
- 2) The importance of being able to develop, articulate and defend ethical beliefs.
- 3) The significance of being able to understand and address competing points of view.
- 4) The importance of being able to reevaluate beliefs in light of challenges, such as unforeseen implications or new evidence.
- 5) The ethical conflict between indoctrination of values and discussion of values.
- 6) The extent to which one can assume ethical behavior on the part of others.
- 7) The relationship of ethical principles to values.

## **Human Diversity**

(Discussion of Values)

### **Purpose**

To prepare students to live in a multicultural and diverse society by exploring the different epistemologies, worldviews, and social systems that constitute human diversity; and to gain a sophisticated knowledge of and appreciation for the deep and broad variation within and between human societies.

### **Definition**

Differences among people in factors such as ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religion, or regional culture.

### **Potential Discussion Points**

- 1) The importance of understanding the biological and cultural sources of diversity.
- 2) The benefits and costs of living in a diverse society.
- 3) The significance of diversity in the political process.
- 4) Human responses to diverse environments.

## **Rational Thought**

(Discussion of Values)

### **Purpose**

To help students understand the nature of rationality and appreciate its value for inquiry and for the creation of knowledge.

### **Definition**

A practice that is informed and uses reason to justify choices and conclusions, seeking to avoid both logical and factual errors; it is sensitive to subtle details and open to revision upon the discovery of errors or additional information.

### **Potential Discussion Points**

- 1) Appreciation of the intrinsic value of rational thought (i.e., establishing a rigorous and orderly process that leads to reliable conclusions).
- 2) Its relationship to other values (including those covered in the other areas of value): the manner in which the value of rationality grounds or is grounded in other values, is consistent with them, or conflicts with them, e.g. the relationships of rationality to emotion, religious faith, and relativism.
- 3) The extent to which people make decisions based on rational analysis.
- 4) The difference between rationality and rationalization.
- 5) The role of rational thought in society and culture.

# APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX A: TRANSFER STUDENTS

In a recent articulation meeting with some of our feeder community colleges, their representatives indicated their desire to work with us to align their programs with our new liberal education requirements. The requirements of the Liberal Education Program at Southern correspond to the student's class standing at the time of transfer.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester Freshmen:

- Critical Thinking, and Technological Fluency competencies must be fulfilled by completion of Tier 1 courses.
- All other competencies must be fulfilled either by comparable accepted transfer credits, waiver examination or completion of Tier 1 courses.
- All Tier 2 courses must be completed
- Capstone Experience is required

### 1<sup>st</sup> Semester Sophomore:

- All competencies must be fulfilled either by comparable accepted transfer credits, waiver examination, or completion of Tier 1 courses
- Up to two Tier 2 courses may be waived based on comparable accepted transfer credits
- Capstone Experience is required

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester Sophomore:

- All competencies must be fulfilled either by comparable accepted transfer credits, waiver examination, or completion of Tier 1 courses;
- up to four Tier 2 courses may be waived based on comparable accepted transfer credits;
- Capstone Experience is required

### 1<sup>st</sup> Semester Junior and beyond:

- Up to 36 liberal education credits (Competencies and Areas of Knowledge) may be waived based upon comparable accepted transfer credits or waiver examination
- All transfer students must take at least two Tier 2 courses in order to integrate the competencies, values, and areas of knowledge and experience, and to prepare them for the Capstone Experience
- Capstone Experience is required

## **APPENDIX B: SAMPLE COURSE CONCEPTS**

### **Tier 1: Competencies**

#### **Examples of Incorporating Areas of Knowledge and Experience**

This is by no means an exhaustive list but merely some samples to spur the imagination. Possible *Areas of Knowledge and Experience* are indicated in parentheses. Although Tier 1 courses must present competencies in context they are not limited to a single context, nor must every context be from the *Areas of Knowledge and Experience*.

#### **Critical Thinking**

*Science and the Modern World (Natural World)*

*Philosophy and Wilderness in the American Experience (American Experience)*

*The Media and Contemporary Politics (Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus)*

*Genocide, Ethics, and the Global Community (Global Awareness)*

*Connecticut Public Policy (Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus)*

#### **Multilingual Communication**

*Current Issues in Latin America (Global Awareness)*

*The French Speaking World (Time & Place)*

*America and China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Global Awareness)*

#### **Quantitative Reasoning**

*Measuring Connecticut (American Experience)*

*Hazardous Wastes: A Quantitative Exploration of the Issues (Natural World)*

*The Economics of Poverty (Global Awareness)*

#### **Technological Fluency**

*Contemporary Film Making (Cultural Expressions)*

*Navigating our Earth (Natural World)*

*Privacy in the Information Age (Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus)*

#### **Written Communication**

*Stories of Connecticut (American Experience)*

*Africa and European Colonialism (Time & Place)*

*Literature and Society (Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus)*

*Literature in Film (Cultural Expressions)*

*Humans and the Earth (Natural World)*

## **Tier 2: The Areas of Knowledge and Experience**

### **Potential Topics or Themes for Tier 2 Courses**

This is by no means an exhaustive list but merely some samples to spur the imagination. Tier 2 was designed so that for every discipline on campus, there is an *Area of Knowledge and Experience* in which they can potentially participate.

#### **The American Experience**

*Immigration and the Building of a Nation*

*Fundamental Change in American Society since World War II*

#### **Creative Drive**

*Explorations of Natural Forms in the Visual Arts*

*Designing and Coding Computer Games*

#### **Cultural Expressions**

*A History of Art through Images of Women*

*From Field Holler to B.B. King: A History of the Blues*

#### **Global Awareness**

*Globalization and Its Discontents (with apologies to S. Freud)*

*Islamic Fundamentalism and the West: Cultures in Collision*

*Revolution in the Modern World*

*Emerging Industrial Nations*

#### **Mind and Body**

*Cognition and the Structure of Reality*

*The Miraculous Machine: Secrets of the Human Body*

#### **The Natural World I: The Physical Realm**

*From Supernovae to Black Holes: Explorations of the Universe*

*Powering the World: Energy, Work and the Electrical Grid*

#### **The Natural World II: Life and the Environment**

*Ecosystems and Biodiversity*

*The Fossil Record and the History of Life*

#### **Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus**

*Poverty and Wealth in Connecticut*

*“The Border Crossed Us”: The Conflicts and Heritage of Latinos in the U.S.*

#### **Time and Place**

*The Culture and History of the Indigenous Peoples of the American Southwest*

*Connecticut During the Triassic: Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and Dinosaurs*

*East Asian Civilization*

## Tier 3: The Capstone Experience

### Potential Capstone Themes

- **Social Justice in America**

- Can draw from American Experience (e.g. the Hispanic experience in the U.S.); Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus (e.g. illegal immigration), Time and Place (e.g., focus on contemporary U.S. Southwest and West)

- Can address Aesthetic Sensitivity (e.g., poverty and squalor), Civic Engagement (e.g., social activism), Environmental Awareness (e.g., environmental racism), Ethical Judgment (e.g., white privilege), Human Diversity (e.g., discrimination based on race, sex, religion, etc), Rational Thought (e.g., using rational thought rather than emotion to see the world as others experience it)

- Can utilize all competencies (may feature a video podcast of interviews with first-generation Hispanics, a comprehensive paper, a panel discussion, etc.)

- **Global Environmental Sustainability**

- Can draw from American Experience (e.g. the environmental movement in the U.S.); Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus (e.g., the relationship between global poverty and environmental stability), Natural World (e.g. scientific underpinnings of global environmental change), Global Awareness (e.g., international political and economic barriers to effective global solutions)

- Can address Aesthetic Sensitivity (e.g., beauty and nature), Civic Engagement (e.g., ecological activism), Environmental Awareness (e.g., how can the planet become environmentally sustainable?), Ethical Judgment (e.g., the Vatican has recently declared environmental degradation to be a sin!), Human Diversity (e.g., who bears the brunt of global environmental change?), Rational Thought (e.g., how do we bring on the necessary cultural change?)

- Can utilize all competencies (may feature an original paper detailing what can be done on the state and local level to promote *global* sustainability and publication of that paper for distribution to the community via newly organized SCSU Virtual Press, sponsor a public symposium, produce an interactive website.)

## **APPENDIX C: TRANSITION TO THE LIBERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

To facilitate transition to the LEP, the following provisions are adopted:

### **Calendar**

The program will be phased in over three years, with current AUR courses and newly proposed courses initially populating the LEP offerings (see below). Tier 1 courses will be first offered in the Fall of 2011. Tier 2 courses will be first offered in the Spring of 2012 and Tier 3 courses will be first offered in the Fall of 2013. With phase-in and transition of courses, the new LEP will be fully implemented by Fall 2014.

### **Current AUR Courses**

Upon departmental request, current AUR courses will be temporarily incorporated as LEP courses for three years, provided the department

- 1) specifies a reasonable goal area in the LEP that the course addresses,
- 2) specifies a reasonable extent to which the course addresses each key element of the specified goal,
- 3) specifies a reasonable extent to which the course meets the other criteria for its tier, and
- 4) completes a brief form with this information and attaches a current syllabus.

During the three-year grace period, these courses will continue to satisfy the AUR program while they are adapted to satisfy the LEP requirements. This provision alleviates the need to run two parallel programs to serve students under different catalogs.

## **APPENDIX D: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **1. What is wrong with the general education program we have now?**

The findings of the 2001 NEASC Report questioned the value and effectiveness of our current All-University Requirements (AUR) paradigm. While the disciplinary strengths and faculty quality of our current AUR system were undeniable, the NEASC review team clearly stated that the

University-wide required general education program . . . lacks an organizing rationale of either purpose or outcomes. . . [and] needs thorough review, assessment, and updating. (11-12)

The team recommended that we re-envision a more coherent and integrated program, and added the following:

The general education requirements do not require that diversity issues be infused into the general education courses. This is not in line with the CSU mission of ‘serving a diverse community’ (12)

Also, the current AUR arrangement is not really a program: it has no coherence, its goals are not articulated, no one is in charge, and there is no way to tell what students are learning. Many faculty members think that it stifles innovation and seems unsuccessful at preparing students adequately for upper-division courses. It also comprises mostly 100-level courses. It consequently does not meet the NEASC Standards for Accreditation as outlined in 4.15:

The general education program requirement is coherent and substantive, and it embodies the institution’s definition of an educated person. The requirement informs the design of all general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation.

### **2. Why is the proposed Liberal Education Program right for Southern?**

Built upon the SCSU’s excellent faculty, departments, and programs, the Liberal Education Program at Southern respects the disciplinary breadth in the current program and fosters an appreciation for teaching the theories, methods, and materials of existing academic disciplines in all courses. The program nevertheless aspires to transcend traditional introductions to specific academic disciplines as the basis for a liberal education by relying on a problem-based inquiry that draws on multiple disciplines to answer questions and solve problems. Furthermore, it seeks to include ALL faculty who currently teach AUR courses and to invite other qualified and interested faculty to join in the project of liberal education.

Furthermore, the proposed Liberal Education Program at Southern aspires to the new University Strategic Plan’s goals: “Through tradition and innovation, Southern strives to empower every undergraduate and graduate student with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives essential for active participation and impassioned, ethical leadership in our rapidly changing, global society” (SCSU Mission Statement).

### **3. Why is the proposed program better for students?**

The Liberal Education Program at Southern is based on a progressive and incremental approach to learning that begins with the competencies necessary for learning and spirals up through two additional levels that recursively draw on those competencies while introducing the areas of knowledge and experience and introducing new discussions of values. Like the academic major in which students progress through multiple levels, general education will now have that same incremental approach.

The Liberal Education Program at Southern begins with Tier 1, 100-level courses focused on foundational competencies in written communication (writing **and** reading), quantitative reasoning (mathematics in problem-based application), multilingual communication, technological fluency, and critical thinking. These competencies are taught in a context that also includes discussions of at least one value. For our students not yet ready to begin college-level work, we are proposing a Summer Academy modeled along the lines of Southern's successful Summer Educational Opportunity Program (SEOP).

After demonstrating these skills, students progress to Tier 2 liberal education courses in the areas of knowledge and experience approved by the 2005 faculty referendum. These Tier 2, 200-level courses reinforce the competencies and skills taught in Tier 1 while they explore significant topics and discuss values required for educated global citizenship; they also offer an exposure to a broad range of academic disciplines with diverse theories, methods, and materials for investigation. Tier 2 may include some courses from the current AUR offerings (with appropriate revisions), as well as new courses.

The program closes with a Tier 3 course, a general education capstone experience that students take only after they have completed all their Tier 2 courses. In this 300-level course, students demonstrate their advanced capabilities in the competencies, the areas of knowledge and experience, and the discussion of values.

### **4. Why is the proposed program better for faculty to teach in?**

The Liberal Education Program at Southern respects disciplinary breadth and places the current tenure-track faculty at its core. Its progressive and incremental orientation has potential to develop students more engaged in the general education courses and better equipped for the majors' courses. In Tier 1 foundations and competencies courses, students are building their skills to access the upper tiers and to prepare for their major. In Tier 2 areas of knowledge and experience courses, faculty should have students better skilled in quantitative reasoning, written communication, critical thinking, and technological literacy. The Tier 3 capstone course should be an exciting opportunity to explore a topic in depth, have a sophisticated discussion of values, and see concrete manifestations of students' liberal education experience.

The new emphasis on competencies, areas of knowledge and experience, and values can stimulate development of fresh, new approaches to academic disciplines and traditions. With the new criteria, which are grounded in rigorous intellectual inquiry rather than in strict adherence to inflexible mandates set over forty years ago, faculty may be free to develop new, more creative course options. (The Task Force encourage that Faculty Development money be used to support faculty creating new courses for the program.)

## 5. How does the proposed program reflect current research about general education?

Throughout the process of evaluating our current AURs and creating the proposed Liberal Education Program, the General Education Task Force researched the literature in the study of general education. The following excerpt from the 2002 Association of American Colleges and Universities publication *Greater Expectations* summarizes the principles underlying our proposed program, which we believe will benefit our students' pursuit of lifelong learning:

The new educational vision this report advocates rests on the strength of liberal education. However, it brings a new shape to liberal education by assigning to it the capacity to develop mental agility, as well as intellectual power; a deep understanding of the world's variety, as well as a knowledge of Western culture; ethical action in the service of the individual and society, as well as critical judgment. As they participate in a knowledge-based economy and an increasingly interdependent world, all students will need to be nimble thinkers and creative problem solvers. To think outside the box, they will depend on intellectual flexibility, at least as much as on factual information. An ethical grounding and empathy for others will keep them centered in turbulent times. (24)

Portland State, a peer institution studied by both our Task Force and its preceding UCF subcommittee, presented its general education program to its faculty in 1993 and included the same rationale undergirding our work. As quoted in Charles White's article "A Model for Comprehensive Reform in General Education: Portland State University," general education research has identified the need to focus on "assisting students in making the critical transition from being receptors of 'facts' to becoming lifelong learners" (6).

In addition, the importance of integration throughout the curriculum is addressed in Sheldon Rothblatt's monograph, *The Living Arts: Comparative and Historical Reflections on Liberal Education* (AACU, 2003):

The direct and expected outcome of teaching, according to a vision of liberal education dating back to the ancient Greeks, is the molding of character. The task of liberal education is to bring all parts of the personality—emotion and intellect, body and mind, style and thought—into harmonious integration. (23)

Professional education puts us into society. Liberal education helps us understand society. (48)

The task force focused on creating a program that promotes this integration and coherence, not only within the Liberal Education Program at Southern, but also between the program and the disciplines. The program's tiered progression will enable students to explore the interconnections among the competencies, areas of knowledge and experience, and values that are the backbone of this program, and will nurture their abilities to make connections between these ideas and the rest of their academic study.

## **6. What are the benefits of the proposed program?**

We believe that the Liberal Education Program at Southern will offer many benefits to faculty and students, including:

- students unprepared for university courses will acquire the skills necessary for success in college-level work by participating in a Summer Academy that provides developmental work (e.g., MAT 095, ENG 100, FLA 100)
- greater faculty/student interaction will result from smaller class size in liberal education courses
- students at all levels of study will be better prepared (and therefore more engaged) because competencies are introduced at the beginning of their college career and reinforced throughout all liberal education course work
- greater teaching satisfaction will be promoted by the creative opportunities for developing general education courses
- students will be more motivated learners because of the greater range of topics in the areas of knowledge and experience courses
- All University departments can participate in the new Liberal Education Program
- departments without a prominent role in the current AUR system may choose to play a greater role in the new program
- departments heavily taxed by the current AUR system may choose to play a lesser role in the new program
- Southern's nascent FYE seminar will be integrated with the new Liberal Education Program

## APPENDIX E: ORIGINAL GOAL STATEMENT APPROVED BY FACULTY REFERENDUM IN 2005

### THE LIBERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

#### I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Southern community values education for its ability to enrich and change students' lives. We want our students to embrace their own principles from a knowledgeable position and to carry their university experience beyond the boundaries of Southern's campus. Consequently, we aspire to graduate enthusiastic and serious learners who, as critical inquirers, can find and evaluate evidence, can articulate and examine their own evolving values, and can continue to transform their lives by pursuing lifelong learning.

As a means to these ends, Southern's liberal education program promotes active student learning in an environment that demands intellectual honesty and rigor. It requires students to analyze and solve complex problems, and to express themselves cogently and articulately, both in speaking and in writing. While exposing them to issues from different disciplinary perspectives, the program encourages students to integrate their learning throughout the curriculum and to carry the learning process beyond the confines of any one particular course of study. It challenges students to confront unfamiliar ways of looking at themselves and others, to grapple with new ways of apprehending the world, and to make thoughtful choices with an informed understanding. By fostering independent, creative, and innovative thinking, Southern's liberal education program encourages a curiosity and respect for learning. Finally, we at Southern envision liberal education as liberating; therefore, we ask students to think independently and vigorously and to expand their viewpoints in order to prepare them to function as intelligent, discerning, and responsible citizens in our global society.

#### II. CHARACTERISTICS

Aiming to nurture students in their desire to know and to encourage them to take responsibility for their education, Southern's liberal education program centers on student learning by following a goal-driven model that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries and articulates a logical coherence for both faculty and students to espouse. To ensure that the program will remain true to its original vision, continual assessment constitutes a critical element, along with regular opportunities for modifying the program to continue improving student learning and to reflect our evolving understanding of the changing world. Finally, the program has the flexibility to accommodate transfer and part-time students, along with full-time students undertaking all their coursework at Southern.

#### III. GOALS

Southern's liberal education program asks students to develop certain *COMPETENCIES*, explore certain *AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE*, and become conversant with certain *VALUES*.

##### A. COMPETENCIES

To ensure that their education has provided them the intellectual skills necessary to investigate the world by *gathering information*, *evaluating* its meaning, and *presenting* their thoughts and conclusions effectively, students **demonstrate proficiency** in these core *COMPETENCIES*:

- Written Communication (reading and writing)
- Oral Communication (speaking and listening)
- Multilingual Communication
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Critical Thinking
- Creative Thinking
- Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Information Literacy
- Technological Fluency

## B. AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

To give some breadth to their education outside their major, students **work with material** in these broadly defined *AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE*:

- ❑ The American Experience--studies the world inside U.S. borders
- ❑ The Creative Drive--studies modes of expression or ways of generating or linking original ideas through a significant performance-based component
- ❑ Cultural Expressions--studies aesthetic or spiritual processes and products of human creativity
- ❑ Global Awareness--studies the world beyond U.S. borders
- ❑ Intellectual Foundations--studies influential arguments about major ideas by using primary expository texts
- ❑ Mind and Body--studies physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual conceptions of the self
- ❑ The Natural World--studies nature through hands-on inquiry, focusing on the scientific method, scientific principles, science and the environment, and science's role in society
- ❑ Social Structure, Conflict, and Consensus--studies interactions that result in social conflict, compromise, or consensus
- ❑ Time and Place--studies continuity and change over time and with respect to location

## C. VALUES

To help them think about complex issues in ways that are not merely self-interested, students **engage in discussions of** these topics in relation to *VALUES*:

- ❑ Aesthetic Sensitivity--the awareness of how different cultures validate and assess cultural production and establish methods for discussing, analyzing, and contextualizing cultural objects
- ❑ Civic Engagement--the active participation in public life and society
- ❑ Environmental Awareness--understanding the consequences of human interaction with the natural environment
- ❑ Ethical Judgment--the development of value systems that first explore the various moral, social, and behavioral conventions of a society or profession and then evaluates those conventions
- ❑ Human Diversity--the various group perspectives derived from human differences and commonalities
- ❑ Rational Thought--the disciplined, informed, and structured intellectual processes deployed in the search for understanding truths

## IV. CLOSING STATEMENT

We in the Southern community believe these guiding principles, characteristics, and goals help constitute a vibrant intellectual community for our students and our faculty in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this program faculty members have the opportunity to be innovative and to create new ties and paths in the faculty network, while students have the opportunity to expand their learning throughout the curriculum and to make connections among various areas of study. Faculty and students are encouraged to integrate competencies and knowledge when engaging issues or problems, both within major fields of study and in experience beyond the university. Finally, the Southern community believes that liberally educated persons can draw upon their backgrounds in many areas to pursue future lifelong learning and to thrive as productive citizens of the world.