

# **AGES 2.0: The Core Curriculum**

## **A Proposal to the Augustana Faculty**

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### **I. Introduction**

**Why are we proposing changes to the AGES curriculum and requirements?**

#### **1) Student Learning Outcomes**

In 2013, the Augustana faculty approved nine student learning outcomes. These outcomes represent the knowledge, skills and values we intend to cultivate in each Augustana student. This proposal document represents the first efforts of the General Education committee to intentionally align the core curriculum with these learning outcomes.

For example, Gen Ed recommends a shift from our current G (Global) and D (Diversity) Suffix requirements to a two-course ICC (Inter-Cultural Competency) requirement that aligns with Inter-Cultural Competency as a student learning outcome.

#### **2) Assessment**

There are components of our core curriculum whose outcomes have been assessed and are well understood. Data from the First-Year Survey, NSSE and Teagle Studies have demonstrated areas of strength and areas for improvement for the LSFY sequence, for example. However, most components of the AGES curriculum have not been similarly assessed. Therefore, we cannot specifically measure the effects of key dimensions of our core curriculum including Learning Perspectives courses, which constitute the bulk of students' core curriculum requirements.

In order to perform meaningful assessment, clear goals and outcomes need to be articulated. In this proposal, Gen Ed lays out assessment parameters for Learning Perspectives, Learning Communities and the Inter-Cultural Competency Requirement. We will work with the Assessment for Improvement Committee to refine and implement assessment of these dimensions of AGES in the next two years.

#### **3) Streamlining**

We are not proposing a new core curriculum, but proposing changes that we hope will make students' learning experiences in our core curriculum even more cohesive and meaningful, and will make faculty members' experiences of proposing, teaching and

evaluating their courses within AGES more transparent and intentional.

AGES has been Augustana's core curriculum since 2004. Over the ensuing decade we have encountered challenges in its implementation. In the 2008-2009 academic year, the language of the D and G Suffixes was changed to reflect a distinction between diversity within the US (D) and outside of the US (G) versus the West (G) versus the non-West (D). In 2009, the Evergreen II proposal modified the original parameters for Learning Communities to generate more LC options. We have continued to struggle with these aspects of the core curriculum and the changes proposed here will, we hope, prove effective at resolving these issues.

## **Overview of Proposed Changes**

We are proposing changes to three dimensions of the AGES core curriculum:

1. Replacing the D and G Suffix requirements (2 courses) with an Inter-Cultural Competency requirement (2 courses)
2. Expanding the definition of Learning Communities to better reflect students' integrative learning experiences and generate additional models for LCs.
3. Orienting Learning Perspectives around the idea of "Inquiry Across the Disciplines" and signature questions for each LP.
  - A. Incorporating the requirements of the Investigative (I) Suffix into Perspectives on the Natural World (PN) courses and eliminating the I Suffix requirement.

## **AGES 2.0 Core Curriculum Student Requirements**

**FYI (First Year Inquiry, formerly LSFY)**--3 courses  
(or Foundations or Logos—3 4-credit courses)  
Learning Perspectives—9 courses  
Inter-Cultural Competency—2 courses  
Learning Community—2 courses (4+ credits)  
Quantitative Reasoning—1 course  
Christian Traditions—1 course  
Foreign Language--3 courses or equivalent  
Health/Physical Education—2 courses

## **II. Inter-Cultural Competency Requirement**

### **1) What is the current model for diversity coursework?**

Students are currently required to take two "diversity suffix" courses: D (multi-cultural diversity) and G (global diversity). The requirement is described in the catalog as follows:

Diversity/Global Perspectives (6 credits)

- One 3-credit course (designated by the G suffix) that focuses significantly on the

- differences between U.S. traditions and those that are culturally distinct from them.
- One 3-credit course (designated by the D suffix) which focuses significantly on factors that have contributed to the creation of identities of cultural or social subgroups within the United States.
- G and D courses can also fulfill other learning perspective distribution requirements or major requirements.
- G and D requirements cannot be met in a first-year liberal studies course.

## 2) Why are we proposing changes to the G and D suffix requirements?

The Augustana Faculty adopted nine college-wide learning outcomes during the 2012-2013 academic year. One of these outcomes is “Inter-Cultural Competency”:

[Augustana students will] demonstrate an awareness of similarity and difference across cultural groups, exhibit sensitivity to the implications of real and imaginary similarities and differences, employ diverse perspectives in understanding issues and interacting with others, and appreciate diverse cultural values.

The General Education Committee embraces this Learning Outcome and views its adoption as an opportunity to re-think our existing diversity requirements (D and G) and replace them with core curriculum coursework designed to intentionally provide every Augustana student with an academic avenue for achieving this outcome.

We consider Inter-Cultural Competency (ICC) to be a skill that educated persons must develop in order to successfully navigate our diverse and changing world. We propose that this skill, when adequately developed, is transferrable to new cultural contexts. That is, the individual who demonstrates inter-cultural sensitivity, understanding, appreciation, analysis, and learning in one context is likely to apply these same skills in yet another unique context. Such an individual is therefore likely to successfully navigate social and cultural difference throughout her/his life. For this reason, the Committee does not feel that every Augustana student should be required to take a course focusing on domestic diversity (D) and another course focusing on global diversity (G). Both sources of intercultural knowledge, those within the United States and those across the globe, are valuable and can serve as appropriate contexts for helping our students develop inter-cultural competency.

Our proposal promotes “rich and meaningful learning experiences” by emphasizing experiential encounters with difference. Experiential learning is recognized as a high-impact pedagogical practice for developing multiple learning outcomes, and for promoting inter-cultural competency in particular (Kuh 2008). Direct and meaningful contact with cultural diversity is perhaps the most powerful means of reducing prejudice and promoting cross-cultural understanding (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). While we do not propose that *all* ICC courses include an experiential component, all ICC courses should push our students to reconsider assumptions about how humans interact with the world, and therefore prompt students to construct new and more complex ways of thinking about human social and cultural dynamics.

## 3) What are the proposed changes?

The existing D and G requirement will be replaced with a 6-credit ICC coursework requirement. Courses carrying the ICC designation may also hold a Learning Perspective designation, and ICC courses can be included in a package of learning experiences that constitute a Learning Community.

Students will take two ICC courses, reflecting a broad spectrum of ideas and disciplinary approaches, including at least one course with a substantial experiential component. This latter type will be designated as ICC-X. The Inter-Cultural Competency Learning Outcome is clearly focused on the student's competence in dealing with difference she/he will encounter: a nuanced awareness of difference across multiple domains, a sensitivity to the implications of those differences, a comfort in employing diverse perspectives to understand issues and interact with others, and a relativistic appreciation of cultural values. "Culture" may be represented through ethnicity, religion, politics, economics, or creative expression, among other means.

ICC courses will need to demonstrate how the set of Inter-Cultural Competency Learning Outcomes will be met in the course.

Courses fulfilling the ICC requirements will facilitate for students a deeper understanding of at least one of the following:

- societies that have not had a major influence or a major cultural connection with the nation the United States has become, and/or
- cultures (either inside or outside the United States) with a history of being oppressed or marginalized, and/or
- the construction of social/cultural difference, which generates inequality.

#### **4) How will these changes affect existing courses?**

We anticipate that most existing D and G courses will be able to "convert" to the ICC framework, though the instructors of these courses will be required to formally apply for the ICC designation. Like all other Gen Ed course applications, the application process will require instructors to persuade the Gen Ed committee that a given course aligns with ICC requirements. In many cases, changes will need to be made to existing D and G courses to gain an ICC designation.

#### **Timeline for Implementation**

Step 1: Creation of ICC proposal forms--Summer 2014

Description:

Online forms for ICC and ICC-X courses will be created to reflect the new requirement guidelines.

Step 2: Development, Vetting and Implementation of ICC courses--Fall 2014-Spring 2016

Description:

Faculty development programming will be implemented in order to orient faculty to the new ICC guidelines. Faculty will receive support as they work on converting existing courses into ICC courses or as they create new ICC courses.

New course proposals for D and G suffixes will no longer be considered. ICC proposals will be reviewed. ICC courses may be available to students as early as Winter 2014/15.

Any ICC course a student takes can be substituted for a D or G course on the

student's program evaluation.

**Step 3: Phasing Out of D and G Suffixes--Fall 2015-Spring 2016**

**Description:**

2015/16 is the last academic year when D and G courses will be available to students. Faculty who wish to maintain a Gen Ed designation for their existing D and G courses beyond this year must apply for the ICC designation.

**Step 4: Implementation of the ICC Requirement for Students--Fall 2016 and beyond**

**Description:**

D and G courses will not be available to students in the 2016/17 academic year.

The new ICC requirement (2 ICC courses, at least one of which is ICC-X) will be included in the catalog. The Fall 2016 cohort of incoming students will be held to this new requirement, as will future incoming cohorts.

**Step 5: Assessment—Fall 2015 and beyond**

**Description:** Gen Ed will work with the Assessment for Improvement

Committee to assess ICC and ICC-X courses and the requirement as a whole in a cyclic and ongoing fashion.

### **III) Learning Community Proposal**

**1) What is the current model for Learning Communities (LCs)?**

The following models were approved by Faculty Senate in 2009 (Evergreen II):

- A. Students complete two back-to-back courses in established Augustana class timeframes during a single term.
- B. Students complete two courses during a single term, but the courses do not meet back-to-back in established Augustana class timeframes.
- C. Students complete a specially designed sequence of two courses taught in different terms of the same academic year by two different faculty members.
- D. Students complete a course related to credit-bearing activities such as band, choir and other ensembles. For example, a subset of students participating in Augustana Choir might enroll in a literature course to examine works of literature from the same time period as pieces the choir is performing. All students enrolled in the literature course would be members of the choir, although not all members of the choir would be taking the literature course. To be eligible for this LC option, students would be required to register for participation in Augustana Choir for at least two terms.  $([0.67 \text{ credits} \times 2 \text{ terms}] + 3 \text{ credits for literature course} = 4.34 \text{ credits for LC})$ . Additional credit-bearing activities might work in this LC option.
- E. Students complete a course with a connection to a service learning experience. The learning community focuses on themes, questions, or material using the different approaches of theory vs. application. A three-credit course taught

by an Augustana faculty member provides the theory to frame the themes, questions, or material, while a community leader guides the practical application of the theory. Students would register for the three-credit course plus a one-credit internship. The faculty member and community leader would be in close contact to determine the need of the community and to facilitate a service learning experience for students. On-campus resources to develop this type of LC are available through the CVR. Needs unique to the Augustana campus could also be addressed using this LC format, in which the greater community would be defined as the Augustana campus.

F. Successful completion of designated Augustana international terms (10-week and 5-week programs), HONR 220, 221 or 222, or the CEDEI program in Cuenca, Ecuador fulfill the LC requirement.

## 2) Why are we proposing changes to LCs?

We aim to broaden our definition to encourage new and innovative Learning Communities. Through study abroad, internships, independent research and other learning opportunities, students are integrating classroom learning with experiences beyond our campus. They are also meaningfully engaging with communities near and far as they undertake these experiences. This kind of learning meets the spirit of a Learning Community, and we propose to broaden our definition of what constitutes an LC to incorporate more of these learning experiences.

Further, since we instituted Learning Communities as a component of the core curriculum and as graduation requirement, meeting student need through an adequate number and variety of LCs has been a challenge. Despite expanding the original set of criteria for LCs in 2009, we have not solved the problem of inadequate offerings. We suggest that the options suggested below will have a more significant effect on both the number of LCs on offer per year and the breadth of learning experiences that can constitute a Learning Community.

## 3) What are the proposed changes?

Faculty, functioning as instructors or advisors, will need to address the following questions when proposing a new Learning Community:

1. How will students engage with the community? How is the community defined?
2. How is interdisciplinarity and/or integration of different approaches built into this experience?
3. How will interdisciplinary and/or integrative learning be demonstrated and evaluated?

We propose further expanding our definition of what a Learning Community can be, while taking these two foundational ideas into account:

1. **Interdisciplinarity and Integration:** The original Learning Community (Evergreen) Proposal set out a model for LCs that emphasized interdisciplinarity: “A Learning

Community is a pair of three-credit, topically related courses taught in the same term by cooperating instructors and taken by the same group of students. The instructors collaborate to help students achieve understanding of the same phenomenon from two different points of view” (from General Education: The Curricular Proposal, amended 2/18/02). Under the revised document (Evergreen II), LCs may be interdisciplinary or they may allow for the integration of two different approaches: “Those distinct approaches might fall into different categories such as using two different methodologies in the LC or investigating theory vs. application” (from Summary of Evergreen II Proposal).

1. **Learning in Community:** Both Evergreen proposals have defined “community” as a cohort of students who take paired LC courses concurrently or sequentially (in back-to-back terms).

We welcome additional LC structures that incorporate the two foundational ideas stated above. LCs will continue to entail 4 to 6 credits of student work.

To increase flexibility in structure, students may undertake their LC without a cohort of fellow students. This is a change from the current definition of LCs. However, an LC requires sustained engagement with a community, which will be defined by the student and faculty advisor in the LC proposal (see Appendix for possible models). Opportunities for students to reflect on the integrative dimension (e.g., theory and application) of these experiences will be built into/required for these LCs.

LCs should produce the following learning outcome: Students in an Augustana learning community will engage with and integrate two distinct approaches to learning.

Gen Ed will work with the Assessment for Improvement Committee to create an assessment plan for Learning Communities. We anticipate that LC faculty will need to provide evidence of student learning that requires students to work with multiple perspectives (inter-disciplinary, theory/practice, classroom/beyond the campus). Alternately, students who undertake independent learning experiences to fulfill their LC might write a summative essay or give a presentation that reflects upon the integrative dimensions of their experience.

#### **4) How will these changes affect existing LCs?**

Existing LCs will not need to reapply to Gen Ed. All previous models for LCs under Evergreen I and II work with the expanded definition. However, instructors of existing LCs should consider how they will provide evidence of the stated learning outcome for the purposes of assessment.

#### **Timeline for Implementation**

Step 1: Modification of LC proposal forms—Summer 2014

Description: Online forms for new LCs will be altered to reflect the new proposal questions.

Step 2: Gen Ed begins to review LC proposals under the new guidelines—Fall 2014 and beyond

Step 3: LC instructors modify courses for assessment—Fall 2014 and beyond

Description: In order to assess LCs, faculty instructors and advisors will begin to compile evidence of student learning.

Step 4: Assessment—Fall 2015 and beyond

Description: Focusing on LCs as learning experiences that incorporate either interdisciplinarity or an integration of approaches in combination with engagement with a community, Gen Ed will work with the Assessment for Improvement Committee to assess each Learning Community and the requirement as a whole in a cyclic and ongoing fashion.

## **IV) Learning Perspectives: Inquiry Across the Disciplines Proposal**

### **1) What is the current system of Learning Perspective requirements?**

To satisfy the Learning Perspective requirement, students must take 27 total credits distributed in the following manner: one course in each of the six Learning Perspectives [the Past (PP), the Arts (PA), Individuals and Society (PS), Literature and Texts (PL), the Natural World (PN), and Human Values and Existence (PH)] and three additional courses, each from a different Learning Perspective, for a total of nine courses.

Within a perspective, students must take courses with two different subject codes. A course that is cross-listed under more than one subject code will not count as the second area of study if either of its listings is from the same area as the first course in that LP. A maximum of two courses with the same subject code may count toward satisfying the total LP requirement.

### **2) Why are we proposing changes to the LP requirement?**

Augustana College boasts a robust General Education Program, which our graduating seniors generally credit with helping them develop their critical thinking skills (58.4%), grow their intellectual curiosity (59.2%), and “appreciate the way that different disciplines make sense of the world”(4.0 out of 5.0 )(Augustana College Senior Survey 2013). Without question, learning is happening in our General Education classes. And yet it’s worth wondering about the roughly 40% of students who don’t identify their general education classes as helping them develop their critical thinking skills, with growing their intellectual curiosity, or with helping them appreciate the way that different disciplines make sense of the world. How can we better help these students understand the value of their liberal arts education and how can we help all students grow more from these curricular experiences?

See the Learning Perspectives: Inquiry Across the Disciplines Supplemental Reading for more detail about our local data.

Recent evidence from employers and graduate schools indicates that our students struggle to



articulate a narrative of their learning and experiences. With the new strategic plan, Augustana 2020, the campus commits to being intentional about integrating student learning experiences across all boundaries. The LP requirement represents one of the largest experiences, and we interpret the feedback above to indicate that there is room to be more intentional about this program.

### **3) What are the proposed changes?**

The central idea of this proposal is to help students develop greater skills with multiple ways of knowing, an attribute that we see as central for a liberally educated person. We will accomplish this by refining the definitions of each LP, paring them down to working with a single Signature Question to foreground the different ways of knowing. (e.g., “how does this text work on a reader and how do we know?” [PL], “how does this system work and how do we know?” [PN], etc.). This emphasis on inquiry, we believe, lends greater coherence to the different classes within our Gen Ed program and allows us to help students better understand the value of LP courses (i.e. to teach them to ask questions about the world they didn’t know how to ask before).

The goal of these questions is two-fold. First, we want Augustana graduates to be educated citizens who can approach problems from multiple perspectives. This is a lifelong skill, but we hope the Signature Questions can serve as a set of tools students can use to make progress on this goal. Second, we want the Signature Questions to represent an important piece of inquiry in each discipline. The goal is to empower students with a way to approach problems in the future, not to completely encode a discipline in each question. We will engage the constituent instructors deeply in discussion of these questions before this proposal comes to a vote.

#### **Example Signature Questions (subject to faculty approval):**

Using the tools and questions of this perspective...

PA - How does this art express the human experience, and how do we know?

PS - How do we understand this human behavior in context, and how do we know?

PH - How do we understand our knowledge, beliefs, and values, and how do we know?

PP - How do we understand this artifact in context, and how do we know?

PL - How does this text work on a reader, and how do we know?

PN - How does this system governed by natural laws work, and how do we know?

LP courses will continue to do far more than work with their Signature Question; for example, these courses contain compelling content, help students become better writers, and work toward college-wide learning objectives. Moreover, we expect that existing LP courses already engage with these questions; the change would be that we would ask that (i) faculty convey to students that they are engaging at some level in this perspective’s way of knowing and that (ii) students are supported as they consider the assumptions and implications of this way of knowing. The Signature Question should also appear prominently in the syllabus and be addressed explicitly in class on a regular basis.

With a refined focus on inquiry through ways of knowing, we expect to simplify the LP proposal process by asking faculty how their course is designed to address the Signature Question. On the other end of the process, with a more explicit focus to the LP courses, it becomes possible to assess and refine them using data. This common language and emphasis on inquiry also makes it easier for faculty to ask their upper-division students to draw upon their LP experiences in order to engage with different ways of knowing and seek out answers to questions from multiple

perspectives.

#### **4) How will these changes affect existing courses?**

We believe that most, if not all, current LP courses can be revised to focus on a Signature Question as outlined in this proposal; moreover, we believe this modification is in line with best practices for teaching (Bain 2004: 50). The potential implementation schedule below outlines one way that this work might be spread out appropriately over a few years.

### **A) Integration of the Perspective on the Natural World (PN) and Investigative (I) Suffix**

The Signature Question for PN courses will require all students to engage in scientific inquiry, so the distinction between PN and (PN,I) courses falls away. With this change, the Investigative (I) suffix requirement will disappear from the graduation requirements. This part of the proposed change has been vetted by GenEd and the affected faculty in several fora over the past 3 years. More detail about the reasoning for this change can be found in the Learning Perspectives: Inquiry Across the Disciplines Supplemental Reading.

#### **Timeline for Implementation**

##### **Step 1: Vet and refine the Signature Questions--Spring 2014**

Description: The committee will seek feedback from the faculty on the proposed Signature Questions through fora, both synchronously and asynchronously. The intention is to have the faculty who teach each Learning Perspective gather and discuss these questions so that they can be modified before the Faculty votes on the full proposal to update the core curriculum.

##### **Step 2: Modify the LP proposal forms--Summer 2014**

Description: Once the Signature Questions and the full core curriculum update have passed the Faculty, the proposal forms for new LP courses will be updated. All new LP proposals will be evaluated through the new forms.

##### **Step 3a: Gradual modification of the current LP courses--Fall 2014-Spring 2017**

Description: Instructors will align their LP courses with the Signature Questions. In conjunction with professional development opportunities, departments and programs will update their existing LP courses in this time window.

##### **Step 3b: Merge PN and I requirements--Fall 2014-Fall 2015**

Description: All PN course instructors will work to make sure that their courses contain enough scientific inquiry (including work with data) to warrant the revised PN designation. Instructors who do not think this designation is appropriate for their course may elect to drop the PN designation. The I suffix requirement will be removed for the Fall 2015 incoming cohort of students.

Step 4: Assessment--Fall 2015 and beyond

Description: Once the LP requirement in the core curriculum is intentionally designed to help students use multiple ways of knowing and to integrate that experience, the Gen Ed and Assessment for Improvement committees will assess each LP and the requirement as a whole in a cyclic and ongoing fashion.

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