



## A Brief History of General Education Curriculum Review and Revision at North Carolina A&T State University 2002-2006

### Development of the University Studies Program

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#### Phase I: Curriculum Review Spring 2002 - Spring 2004



The General Education Core Curriculum Review Committee was formed during the spring semester of 2002 to review NCAT's current General Education program with the aim of recommending revisions to the core curriculum that would promote the development of a broad set of intellectual skills in students, introduce students to various methods of inquiry, provide students with the foundational skills needed to succeed in their major and career, and encourage the development of a responsive learning environment providing "visionary and distinctive interdisciplinary learning, discovery, and engagement" (Goal 2 of the FUTURES Vision Statement).

During the curriculum review stage, the Committee undertook a comprehensive review of NCAT's current General Education program, including comparisons with peer institutions, surveys of faculty, student transcript reviews, and student focus groups. The result of this review was a Summary Report, completed in June, 2002. During the fall semester of 2003, external consultants from the University of Minnesota and NC State University visited campus to review the General Education program and provided the Committee with a report of their findings. The Committee responded to the external reviewers' recommendations in spring of 2003 and also developed an initial draft of General Education objectives and expected outcomes.

During the summer of 2003 a General Education Core Curriculum Review Committee Executive Committee was formed to begin developing a detailed General Education Review and Revision Plan, including a timeline.

At the August, 2003 Faculty-Staff Institute the General Education Core Curriculum Committee's draft objectives/expected outcomes and review plan were shared with the faculty. During the fall, 2003 semester the Committee conducted a series of Town Hall meetings to solicit feedback on the initial draft of the General Education objectives/expected outcomes, with the aim of developing a revised set of objectives/expected outcomes that would form the foundation for the revised general education curriculum. These revised learning objectives, as well as a general education mission statement and "guiding principles" were endorsed by faculty in each school/college in spring, 2004.

During late spring and summer, 2004, the committee's work turned toward developing a revised general education curriculum, program assessment process, and governance structure.

#### Phase II: Curriculum Revision and Development

Spring, 2004 - Summer, 2006

Development of a revised general education core curriculum, assessment process, and governance structure began during spring, 2004, following attendance by three of the executive committee members at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) annual Assessment Conference in Long Beach, CA, in March, 2004.

In the following two months the General Education Core Curriculum Committee developed drafts of a preliminary model of a revised general education structure for NC A&T based on the highly successful (and nationally-recognized) Portland State University University Studies program. A preliminary draft of the general structure of this model, based on an intentional intellectual development process for students highlighting four knowledge areas (communication; critical thinking; social responsibility, civic engagement, and ethics; and diversity and world cultures), can be found in the [committee's minutes](#) during late spring, 2004. In addition, the committee began to discuss potential governance models.

In May, 2004, North Carolina A&T was selected to attend the AAC&U Institute on General Education (May 21-26) in Newport, RI, following a competitive proposal process. A team of five members of the General Education Core Curriculum Committee participated in the Institute, working on the areas of program structure, program and course assessment, and program governance. During the Institute the team had the opportunity to work one-on-one with a number of nationally-recognized experts in general education revision. The work of the team led to a number of action items to be undertaken during the 2004-2005 academic year.

During summer, 2004, 20 faculty members were engaged in redesigning current courses to serve as pilot general education courses during fall, 2004. The objective of this course redesign was to align the courses with the new general education learning objectives, increase the interdisciplinary nature of the courses, and experiment with innovative teaching pedagogy and assessment techniques. Five faculty members from the History Department (part of the 20 noted above) worked on revising the HIST 101 course as part of UNC-wide "Large Enrollment Course Redesign" initiative. This course was team taught for the first time in spring, 2005 in large-enrollment sections using University Studies learning objectives as its foundation. In fall, 2005 this course was renamed The Contemporary World and was slated for inclusion in the Foundation-level courses of University Studies.

In fall, 2004 a proposed University Studies curriculum structure was drafted for campus-wide discussion and the Faculty Senate endorsed the University Studies learning objectives and curriculum model, as well as the program name, University Studies (replacing "General Education"). In late fall the University Studies Committee held Town Hall meetings and met with every department on campus to update the campus on the University Studies curriculum, the development of thematic clusters, and departmental implications of the new University Studies curriculum. Four initial thematic clusters were selected. In addition, a Faculty Roundtable was developed to set policies related to University Studies curricular matters and serve as the vehicle for approving courses to be included in the thematic clusters. The Faculty Roundtable will work closely with the Dean of University Studies and the University Studies Committee.

In spring, 2005 planning for the new University Studies program kicked into high gear. Advertisements were drafted and sent out for University Studies faculty positions and a Dean of University Studies. Paggy Maki and Terry Rhodes led a two-day series of workshops on interdisciplinary teaching and learning and assessment of student learning. Departmental curriculum guides began to be updated to meet University Studies requirements, and a formal presentation was made to the Faculty Senate seeking formal approval of the University Studies curriculum and thematic clusters. However, in February, 2005 the Chancellor

announced that implementation of University Studies would be delayed one year, from fall, 2005 to fall, 2006.

Later in spring, 2005 a Call for Proposals for University Studies course development during the summer of 2005 was published. Ultimately, more than 75 faculty members were involved in developing or revising 21 University Studies courses during May and June, 2005 under the direction of Scott Simkins, director of the Academy for Teaching and Learning. Over \$250,000 was spent on this course development initiative. In April, 2005 the Faculty Senate approved the Foundation-level courses and other administrative details of the University Studies program but tabled the thematic cluster portion of the program until fall.

In August, 2005 a University Studies Dean was named and will oversee a brand-new administrative unit and the University Studies program and curriculum. In September the NC A&T Board of Trustees formally endorsed the University Studies curriculum and implementation schedule. Later in fall the Faculty Senate approved the initial set of University Studies thematic clusters and courses, paving the way for implementation of the University Studies curriculum in fall, 2006. During fall, 2005 and spring, 2006 University Studies faculty members were hired to teach Foundation-level courses: Critical Writing, Analytical Reasoning, and The African-American Experience. In addition, an associate dean for University Studies was hired in late spring, 2006. The new University Studies program is also attracting national attention after presentations at the national AAC&U conference and a regional teaching and learning conference.

#### Phase III: Implementation and Dissemination of Program Fall, 2006

During summer, 2006 University Studies faculty members were busy preparing Foundation-level courses for implementation in fall, 2006, parents and incoming freshman were introduced to University Studies during Freshman Orientation sessions, and the University Studies administrative staff and faculty members moved to renovated office space on the first floor of Hines Hall. In late summer the Academy for Teaching and Learning led a two-day teaching-learning workshop for University Studies faculty focusing on course design, active student learning, effective teaching pedagogies, and assessment of student learning. Adjunct and tenure-track faculty members, along with graduate student teaching assistants, participated in the workshop. Course-based teams held initial team meetings and initiated plans for regular team meetings throughout the semester. In August, 2006 the University Studies program was implemented for the first time, offering Foundation-level courses to all entering freshman students.

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