

Report of GE Ad Hoc Group 3

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Q3. How can I live responsibly and prepare for challenges in a dynamic, global society?

Focused on learning that is experienced in the classroom and through active engagement with diverse communities and complex challenges:

Areas of learning for this question are likely to include:

- the ability to work together to tackle complex problems creatively.
- the ability to reflect on their own choices and the choices of others, based on learning about ethical considerations and faith and values across multiple cultural and community contexts.
- the ability to reflect on their vocation and possibilities for integrating multiple disciplinary tools to construct, contextualize, and integrate knowledge to address complex challenges.

Process and Implementation Ideas:

Over the course of four meetings, our group approached the process of developing ILOs for Q3 through several phases. We discussed the available models for GE curricula (including course attribute, first- and fourth-year experience, and module models). We brainstormed and workshopped expansions of the “areas of learning” suggested by the GE Task Force. We looked for commonalities in our individual ideas around those areas of learning, ultimately discerning six major areas of agreement. In two smaller groups, we wrote a total of six ILOS, and after group discussion and revision, we wrote explanations for each ILO as individuals. We ultimately did not resolve the question of what GE curriculum model would best accommodate our ILOs; all models remain possible. But we imagined that all ILOs could be encountered at any point in a student’s time at St. Olaf (with some ILOs particularly well suited to first- and fourth-year experiences).

It is worth highlighting several significant departures from current practice: we advocate that experiences currently understood as co-curricular - including but not limited to internships and mentored undergraduate research experiences - should also qualify for GE credit under whatever model we adopt. We would also require students to participate in critical self-reflection across a number of academic experiences, including coursework as well as co-curricular work, although this requirement might work better within a module rather than a course attribute model.

1. The ability to analyze power, privilege, justice, and oppression, past and present.

We want students to be introduced to these concepts in order that they have the tools to live responsibly in a dynamic, global society. Students should be exposed to, and have a deep understanding of, structures, institutions, and categories of difference. We anticipate that, across the curriculum, students will be exposed to the intersectional, iterative, and dynamic nature of these categories. In keeping with the purpose of the “To Include Is To Excel” grant, we believe that students should come to understand how they can ‘develop their own sense of mission in a world that desperately needs their talents.’ Without the ability to understand power, privilege, justice, and oppression, students will be unable to develop a ‘nuanced understanding of who [they] are, how they engage with knowledge and areas of study, and what makes them thrive as learners.’

2. The ability to investigate how questions of faith and values have shaped individual and collective identities.

We expect students to gain a knowledge and appreciation of the ways that religious thought and practice shape how many people live responsibly in a dynamic, global society. We anticipate that students will gain a deep understanding of particular traditions and beliefs while also attending to dialog between traditions. Through this work students are encouraged to construct nuanced, complicated understandings of religious thought and practice that can confront and interrogate reductive or relativistic explanations of faith and values. Given the College's history, identity, and outlook, we expect that students will explore Christian religious approaches. For the same reasons we expect that students will also explore non-Christian religious approaches. Because St. Olaf is an institution "nourished by the Lutheran tradition," students should come to appreciate how the study of faith and values springs directly from Lutheran theological claims about grace, freedom, humility, and hospitality.

3. The ability to apply methods and content across disciplines to address challenges in a dynamic, global society.

Living responsibly in a dynamic, global society requires us all to recognize that there are no easy, unilateral solutions to vexing challenges. Accordingly, students should have opportunities to practice responding to challenges through a combination of approaches and perspectives, drawing on the variety of experiences, tools, and areas of knowledge that they encounter in their coursework. Combining insights from coursework in different departments will require that students have some familiarity with the normative methods and habits of mind of specific disciplines, guilds, or creative traditions, but also that they receive training in combining those methods and habits of mind outside of the foundational courses in which they are taught. Courses or units fulfilling this ILO might require students to reflect on the ways different disciplines complement or constructively critique one another; work with students from diverse disciplinary backgrounds to creatively problem-solve; and apply supra-disciplinary skills related to information and data literacy as part of the critical thinking process. First-year experience courses and fourth-year capstone projects - whether explicitly interdisciplinary or not - would provide ideal opportunities to satisfy this ILO. First-year courses might introduce students to the necessity of applying multiple disciplinary insights to explorations and interventions around big-picture themes (water, health, faith, wealth, beauty). Capstone projects would allow students to develop their own topics (within their discipline) and would require reflection around and application of skills or bodies of knowledge acquired throughout their coursework.

4. The ability to engage meaningfully with communities around you through a variety of immersive experiences.

Living in a dynamic, global society offers opportunities for meaningful engagement with diverse communities, both locally and beyond. Each student should have opportunities within the GE curriculum to develop a deep understanding of oneself (values, beliefs, vocational interests, talents, cultural norms, personality traits), to engage in transformational dialogue with diverse others, and to immerse in new environments. The Ad Hoc group advocates for two experiential high impact practices to be required in the GE curriculum, with students choosing among opportunities for internships, off-campus study, academic civic engagement or mentored undergraduate research to

fulfill this ILO. These high impact practices are already a feature of 90-95% of St. Olaf undergraduates' education. They are demonstrated to improve retention, with an especially positive impact for underrepresented students of color and first generation students. Participation in academic civic engagement, mentored research, off-campus study or an internship allows students to immerse in a new environment, apply knowledge and skills gained in the classroom, explore meaningful vocation, and contribute to the communities and challenges of the world around them.

5. The ability to communicate and collaborate with others in situations defined by multiple interests and objectives.

Communication is crucial in our society and students need to develop tools to facilitate productive engagement with others in a world of diverse ideas, interests, and objectives. Students need an array of communication skills and should have facility in a combination of the following: writing, reading, speaking, listening, acting, musicking, creating/performing. This way students are able to add to/enhance their communication skills, while the school honors each and everyone's diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and interests. Furthermore, students should be capable of using these skills in a global society, outside of St. Olaf, and live while communicating in a productive way. Through these skills students should be capable of exploring diverse perspectives, while developing empathy and respect for the positions and characters of others. Students need not to agree with one another, but must be able to demonstrate respect and empathy when discussing and negotiating potentially conflicting views, needs, and values. Communication should be integrated and emphasized across disciplines, not only in a first-year course or within one's home department.

6. The ability to reflect critically on learning.

The ability to reflect critically engages students in critical self-evaluation, or the ability to assess their own performance, and metacognition, or the ability to assess their own learning. Students will demonstrate the ability to think about when and how their learning took place, but also what that learning means and why it matters. Students will reflect on ways that this learning may connect to challenges in a dynamic, global society (number 3). Students will also frame that learning within their own developing personal and professional identities as part of a process of vocational discernment. Critical reflection should be integrated throughout the curriculum and at all stages of students' careers; it should be scaffolded, iterative, and cumulative so that students' writing, thinking, and speaking are deepened by a drafting process and enriched by a perspective that reaches across multiple courses and experiences. Like number 3, first-year writing courses and capstone experiences are ideal sites of focus for this ILO; in addition, critical reflection should be attached to each of the high-impact learning experiences identified in number 4.