



# The OLE Core

## Presented by the GE Task Force

Meeting of the  
Board of Regents of St. Olaf College  
May 2, 2019

# Overview

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- ❖ Why we are proposing changes to GE
- ❖ What we are proposing: the OLE Core
- ❖ Where we are in the design process

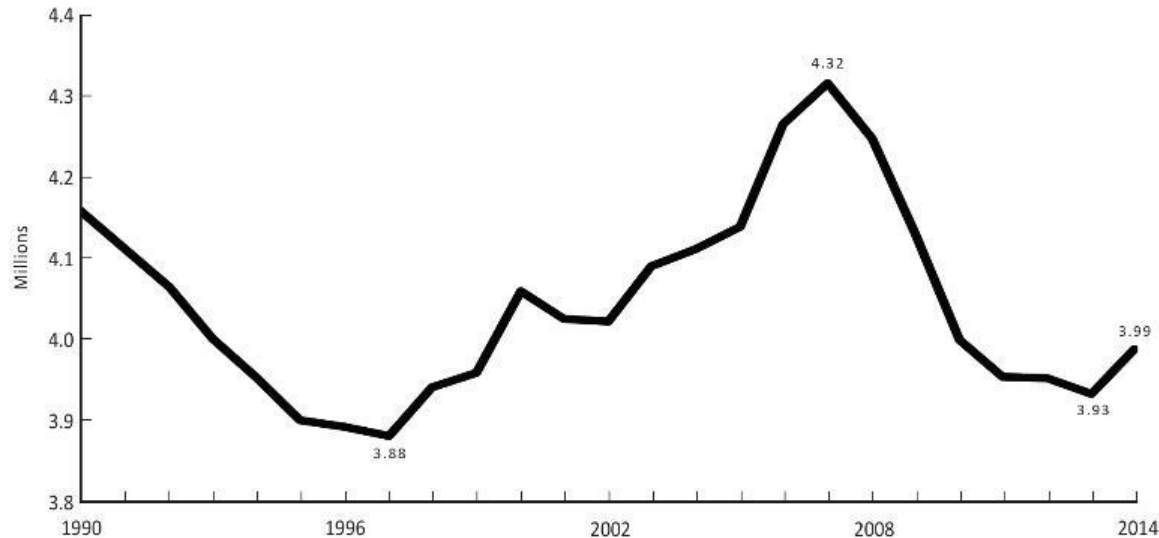


# **Why we are proposing changes to GE**

# Challenges Ahead: Demographics

Due to a declining U.S. birth rate, the number of students applying to college today is decreasing, with the bubble set to burst in 2026

Figure 4.1. Births in the U.S., 1990-2014



Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, VitalStats.

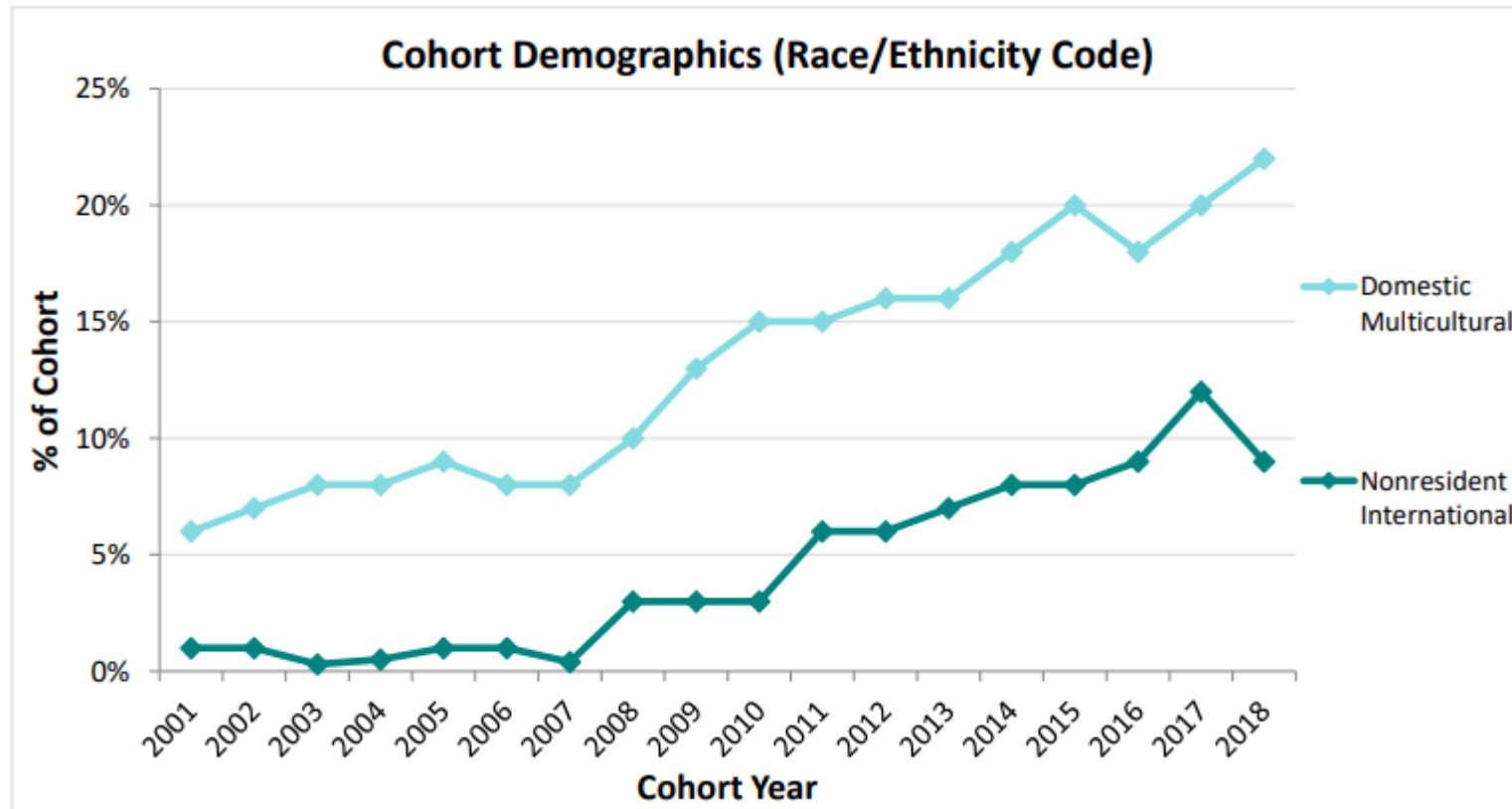
# Who are today's students?

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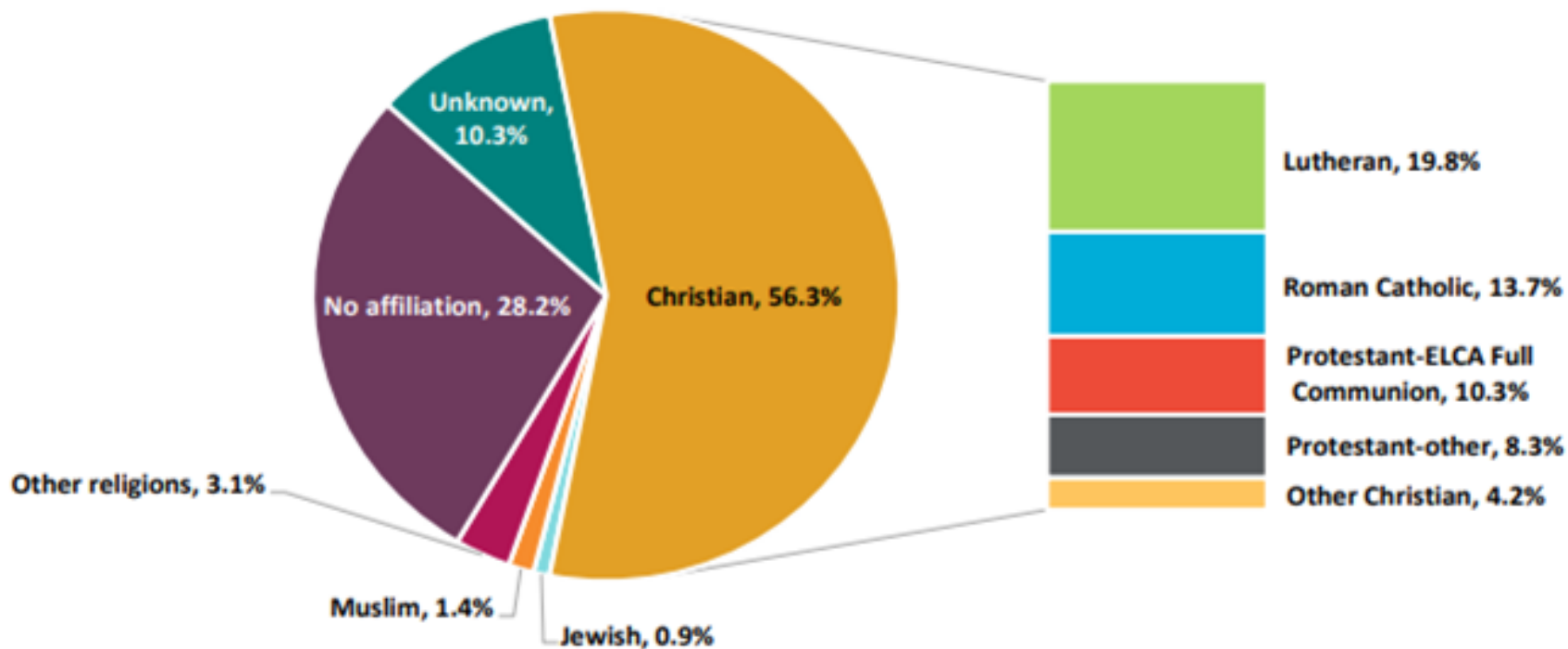
- ❖ Today, 45% of college applicants nationwide are domestic students of color. Latinx students are the fastest growing demographic.
- ❖ The vast majority of today's students come from large urban areas and return to them after graduation.

AAC&U Conference (Feb. 2019) *Creating a 21<sup>st</sup> Century General Education: Responding to Seismic Shifts*

# St. Olaf Student Demographics: 2001-2018



## Religious Affiliation, 2018 Entering Cohort







**The world that we are preparing our  
students for has changed and will  
continue to change**



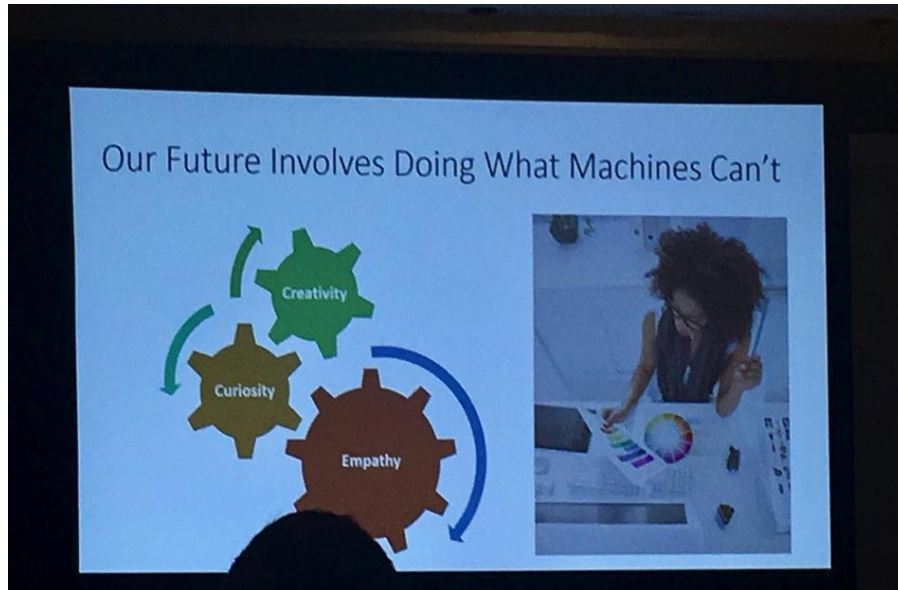
# AAC&U 2018 Employer Research Report

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**"The ability to apply knowledge/skills to the real world."**

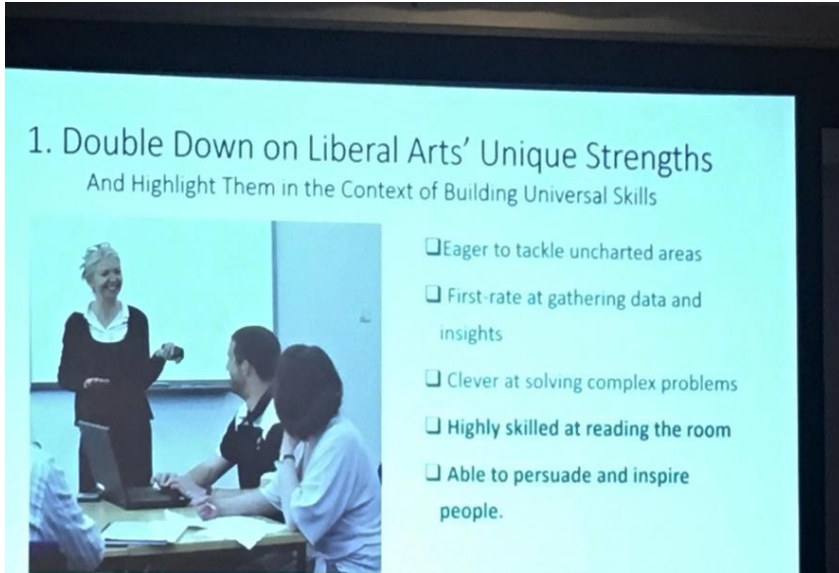
- **87%** of hiring managers think that this is a very important quality, but only
- **39%** of hiring managers think that recent college grads are well prepared to do this

# Our students' futures involve doing what machines cannot



- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Empathy

# How can the liberal arts uniquely prepare students?



- Eager to tackle uncharted areas
- First rate at gathering data and insights
- Clever at solving complex problems
- Highly skilled at reading the room
- Able to persuade and inspire people

# What do our alumni say?

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## ❖ Experiences at St. Olaf:

- high levels of good teaching & high-quality faculty interaction (76%)
- high levels of interaction with diversity (16% )

## ❖ Strong preparation at St. Olaf for:

- graduate/professional school (47%)
- continued learning on own (32%)
- current career (28%)
- social and civic involvement (24%)
- interpersonal relationships and family living (20%)
- responsibilities of post-undergraduate life (8%)

Reports from 5-year alumni:

2018 Higher Education Data Sharing  
(HEDS) Survey

# Colleges & universities are revising GE

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A 2009 AAC&U survey of member institutions found that:

- **89%** of colleges and universities were engaged in GE revision.
- More than **two-thirds** combine choice and integrative components such as learning communities.
- Institutions are placing greater emphasis on HIPs:
  - off-campus study (**71%**), internships (**62%**), first year experiences (**73%**), and undergraduate research (**78%**).

# Our ACM peers have responded

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Revised GE curricula emphasize

- ❖ creative problem-solving
- ❖ integrative components (e.g., a capstone requirement)
- ❖ interdisciplinary study
- ❖ high-impact practices (HIPs)
- ❖ experiential learning

**Luther College (2007)**

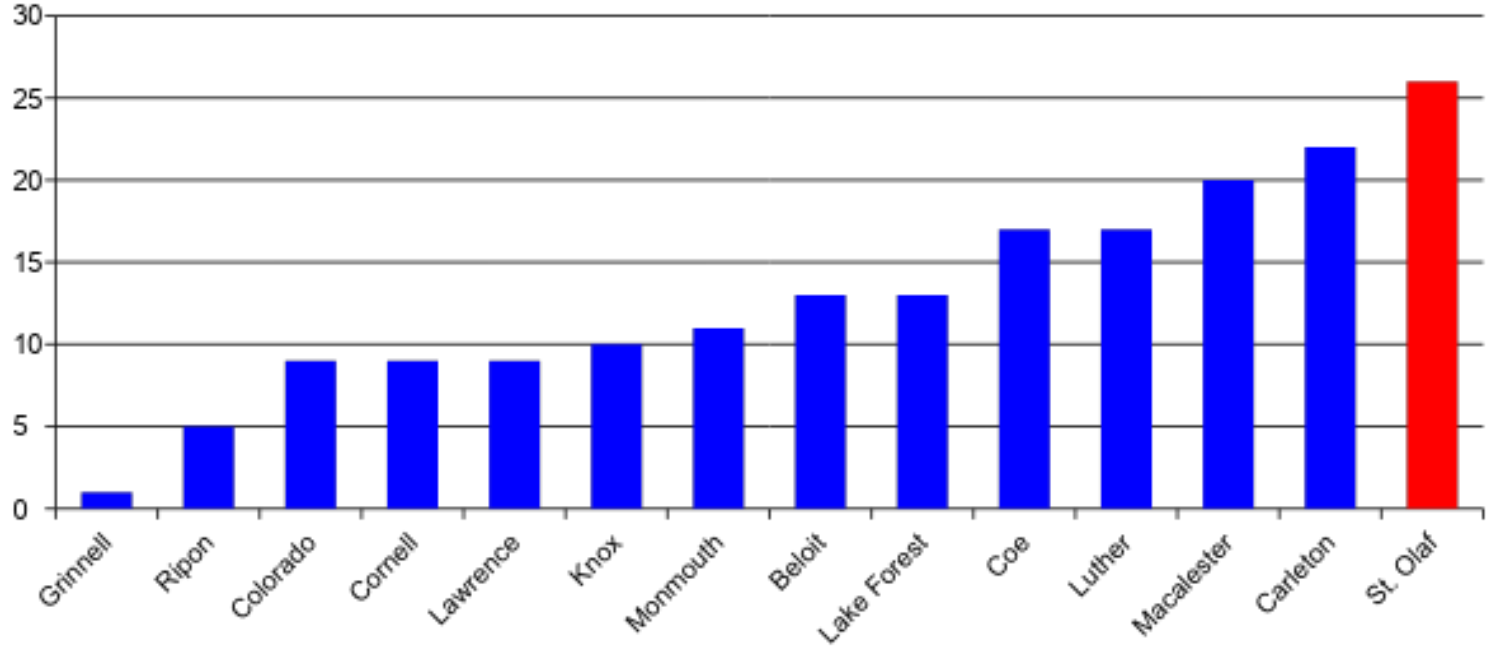
**Colorado College (2017)**

**Ripon College (2017)**

**Lake Forest (2018)**



# ACM: St. Olaf has the most GE course requirements

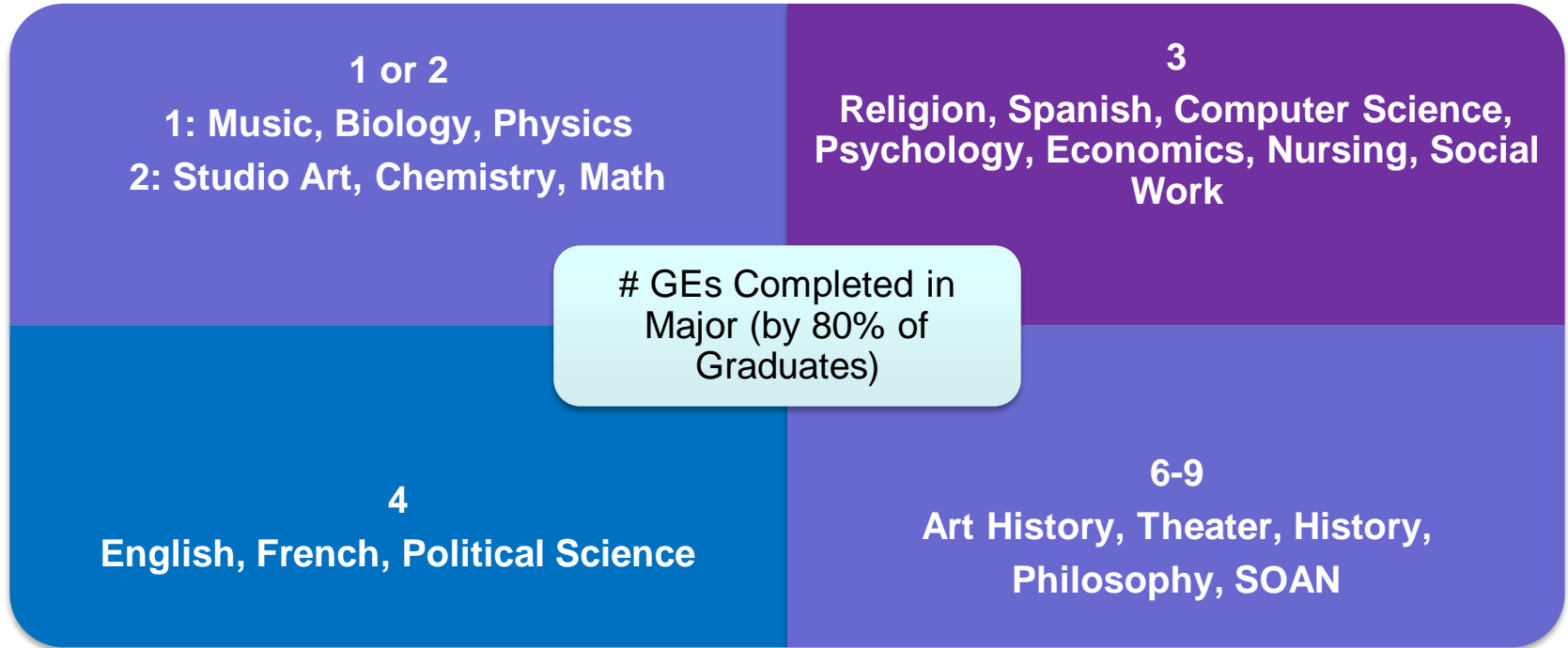


# Variability in Length of GE Path

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- ❖ The length of a student's GE path and the options available depend on a variety of factors:
  - AP/IB Credit
  - College Knowledge
    - Courses that carry multiple GEs vs. those that carry one GE
    - Some decisions made before stepping foot on campus impact length of GE path
  - Major and Timing of the Choice of Major
    - A disincentive for exploring
  - Transfer Students/Transfer Credit

# Length of GE Path by Major



McKelvey (Math), Binder (Economics & Environmental Studies), Casson (Political Science & Great Conversation), Maki (IR&E) & McWilliams (Music) (2016): *Unofficial report of Boston AAC&U Group to GE Task Force*

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- ❖ 17 GE attributes with 58 ILOs
  - too complex, hard to assess, impossible to explain to students, new faculty, staff, other stakeholders
- ❖ No room for meaningful reflection
  - students cannot articulate for themselves the benefits of and reasons for the current curriculum
- ❖ Loss of a sense of faculty ownership of the curriculum
  - the current structure (approved in April 1991) was not formally approved by the vast majority of today's faculty

# GE Task Force Report (May 2018)

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- "Too many students do not see the value or meaning of their learning in GE."
- "Faculty are not universally committed to the aims of our GE."
- "Among students and faculty alike we find notable disengagement from the goals of GE."
- "*Students don't understand it; they check the boxes, they sometimes resent it.*"



# **What we are proposing: the OLE Core**



# A 21<sup>st</sup> Century OLE Core Curriculum

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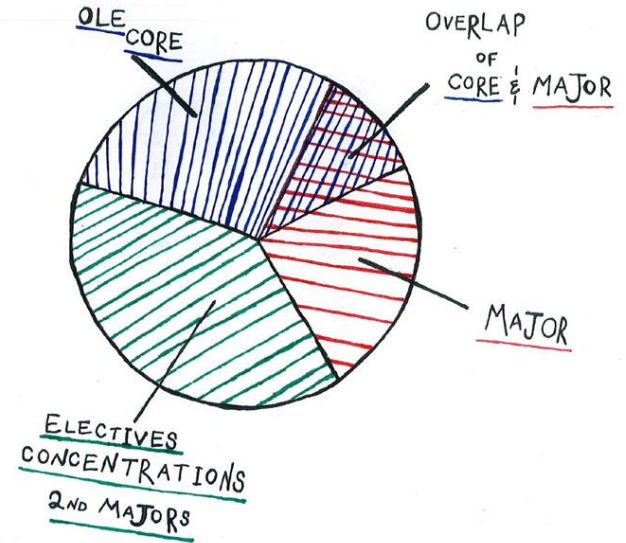
- ❖ Welcomes all students, fosters belonging, and supports learning without presuming a particular student profile
- ❖ Features collaboration, integration, and creative problem-solving
- ❖ Is smaller, more flexible, and opens up space for enhanced student exploration, action, reflection, and interaction with faculty

# Opportunities for Students

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- Learning communities for all students
- Experiential learning
- Creative problem-solving
- More flexibility and pathways
- Integrative learning
- 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies – e.g., digital, visual, data
- Reflection on OLE questions

# Sketching a Student's Four-Year Plan



36 units total  
16 OLE CORE units  
10 MAJOR units  
10 ELECTIVES  
CONCENTRATIONS  
2ND MAJORS

# SGA endorsements

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- ❖ Current (2018-2019) Senate members endorsed the process, the OLE Core proposal of the GE Task Force. (April 16, 2019)
- ❖ Elected executive members of SGA (2019-2020) endorsed the OLE Core proposal and the process of the GE Task Force. (April 19, 2019)



# **Where we are in the design process**

# Guiding Principles

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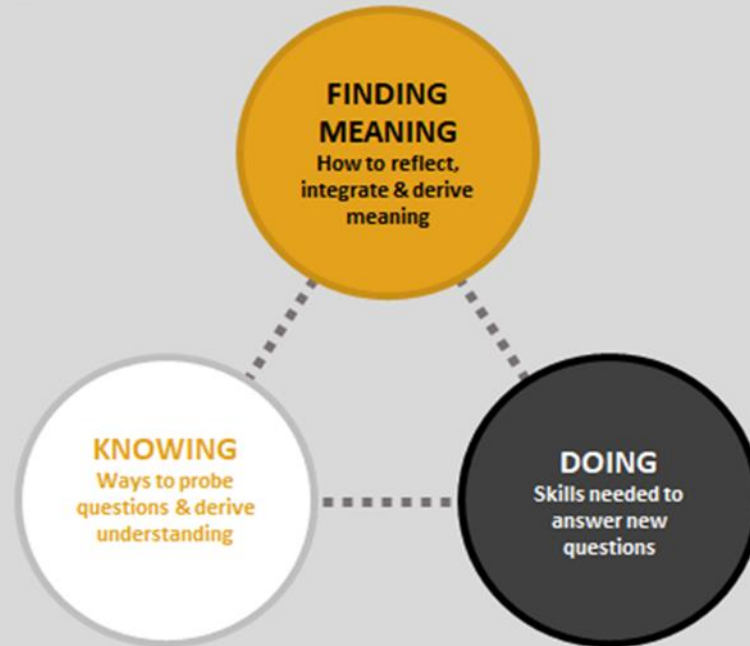
An acceptable revised general education curriculum...

- Has **breadth** that complements depth in a major
- Supports the **college mission**
- Is owned and supported by the **faculty**
- Is **forward-looking**
- Is **inclusive, accessible**, and supports **equity**
- Is **resource-sensitive**
- Promotes **student agency**



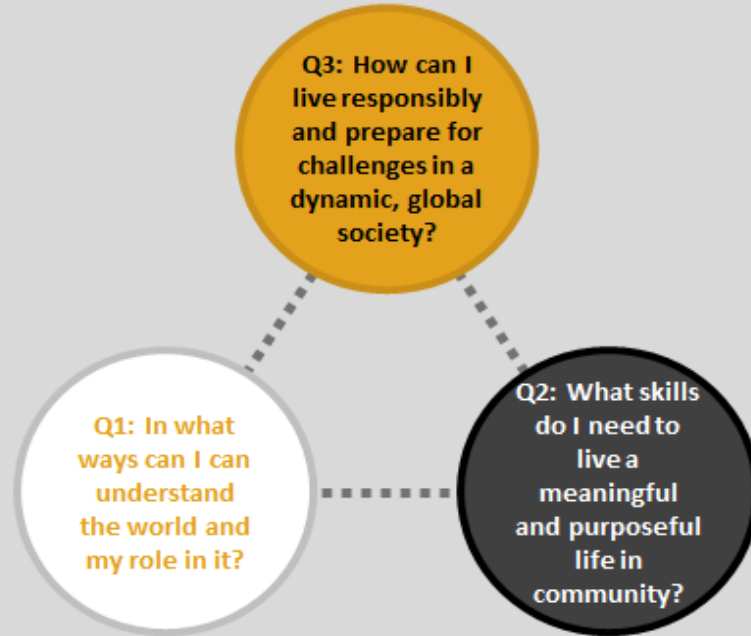
# Knowing, Doing, and Reflecting

WAYS OF...



# OLE Questions

## OLE QUESTIONS



# Supports the Mission of the College

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## ❖ **Challenges students to excel in the liberal arts**

- ❖ gain knowledge, skills, and breadth of learning through disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches

## ❖ **Examine faith and values**

- ❖ study religious life in the world
- ❖ explore Christian theology and how it exists in dialogue with other world religions

# Supports the Mission of the College

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## ❖ Explore meaningful vocation

- ❖ engage in—and understand the significance of—an applied or inquiry-based experience

## ❖ In an inclusive, globally engaged community

- ❖ intensive study of a world language
- ❖ study how societies organize—and divide—themselves along elements such as power, race and ethnicity

## ❖ Nourished by Lutheran tradition

- ❖ neither sectarian nor secular (ELCA “Rooted and Open” report)

# OLE Core: First Year Seminar

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## **First-Year Seminar (2 semesters, same cohort, different faculty)**

- ❖ Common entry experience to foster a sense of belonging and community
- ❖ Discussion-based learning communities
- ❖ Foundations in reading, writing, critical thinking, speaking-and-listening, and collaborating in a diverse group
- ❖ Introduction to the OLE Questions and “college knowledge”
  - ❖ Knowledge about this college -- St. Olaf

# OLE Core

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- ❖ First-Year Seminar (2)
- ❖ Critical Understanding of Faith and Values (1)
- ❖ Theologies in Dialogue (1)
- ❖ Power, Inequity, and Race (1)
- ❖ Global Histories and Societies (1)
- ❖ Scientific Exploration and Investigation (1)
- ❖ Social Investigation and Analysis (1)
- ❖ Quantitative Reasoning (1)
- ❖ World Languages and Cultures (up to 4)
- ❖ Creativity and Creative Expression (1)
- ❖ Writing in Context (1)
- ❖ Experiential Learning in Context (1)

# Areas of ongoing discussion and debate

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## Size of the proposed OLE Core

- ❖ Faculty straw polls support a smaller GE
- ❖ Faculty vote May 9 on the maximum size for GE

## Deeper engagement with the core in the major

- ❖ a major-specific writing course?
- ❖ a major-specific ethics course or component?
- ❖ a capstone experience that integrates the core curriculum for all students in the major?

# Areas of faculty engagement

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## Learning across the curriculum, integrative and interdisciplinary approaches:

- ❖ First-Year Seminars
  - ❖ OLE Questions
  - ❖ Themes (such as “Grand Challenges”) to be infused throughout the OLE Core
- ❖ Quantitative Reasoning
  - ❖ Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science proposal
- ❖ Integrated Societal Engagement: Interdisciplinary Team-Teaching
  - ❖ Ethical and Empirical Perspectives
  - ❖ Experiential Learning in Context (such as “Social Innovation”)



# What's next?

- ❖ Faculty Meeting, May 9
  - ❖ Vote on maximum size of the OLE Core
  - ❖ Vote to continue the work of the Task Force
- ❖ Summer: Gathering and considering ideas
- ❖ 2019-20: Moving toward implementation
  - ❖ More sustained faculty meeting time, resolutions, amendments, voting





**Questions?**