

## **Guiding Principles & OLE Core Curriculum (4-17-19 Working Draft)**

### **General Education Task Force**

**May 2, 2019**

At the October 4, 2018, Faculty Meeting, the St. Olaf faculty approved **Guiding Principles** stating that 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**

At the December 6, 2018, Faculty Meeting, the faculty voted to approve three **Open, Linked, and Enduring (OLE) Questions** that will provide the framework for any revised general education curriculum:

**Question 1.** In what ways can I understand the world and my role in it?

**Question 2.** What skills do I need to live a meaningful and purposeful life in community?

**Question 3.** How can I live responsibly and prepare for challenges in a dynamic, global society?

During the 2019 Interim, Ad Hoc Groups composed of faculty members, students, and staff developed a set of intended learning outcomes for each of the OLE Questions, and suggested pathways for achieving them. The current draft of the OLE Core, which we discuss below, represents the next step in the work to revise the general education curriculum. The faculty are engaged in a vigorous and creative discussion of the draft, and we expect to receive guidance from faculty, students, and staff members as we further revise an OLE Core.

### **How does the proposed OLE Core reflect the principles?**

The OLE Core aims to be **forward-looking** and to be **inclusive, accessible, and support equity**. All students will engage, independently and with each other, three OLE Questions, actively exploring 1) their understanding of the world and their role in it, 2) the skills they need to live a meaningful and purposeful life in community, and 3) how they can live responsibly and prepare for challenges in a dynamic, global society. The Task Force envisions this exploration beginning in a two-semester, First-Year Seminar or in one of St. Olaf's signature First-Year Conversations programs -- discussion-based learning communities that provide foundations in reading, writing, critical thinking, speaking-and-listening, and collaborating in a diverse group. The First-Year learning community and Experiential Learning in Context requirements are two high-impact practices (HIPs) that each student will participate in as they complete the revised general education curriculum. These proposed elements will ensure that all students begin their St. Olaf

education in a discussion-based learning community and have an opportunity to integrate academic and experiential learning as part of their exploration of meaningful vocation. As we discuss below, providing multiple, flexible pathways, and a smaller number of requirements overall, are other ways that the proposed OLE Core reflects our commitment to serve and support all students.

The OLE Core will be designed to inspire students to be thoughtful about how they fulfill the requirements and to provide them with experiences that enable them to articulate the purpose and value of general education. **Student agency** is a guiding principle, but this does not imply that students should have complete and total freedom. The OLE Core thus will have **breadth that complements depth in a major** to ensure that all students receive a broad liberal arts education. At present, the Task Force is modeling an OLE Core with 12 requirements, entailing a maximum of 16 courses to complete.

In contrast with the current general education curriculum, which consists of 17 requirements and a maximum of 26 courses, the Task Force is exploring a streamlined, **resource-sensitive** OLE Core to promote stewardship of faculty potential for teaching and mentoring in their areas of interest and expertise. The OLE Core presented here is also resource-sensitive in valuing all parts of the St. Olaf undergraduate experience. The OLE Core should recognize that students learn not only in the classroom, but also in residence halls, rehearsal rooms, practice fields, worship, student employment, and community organizations. The proposed Experiential Learning in Context requirement would allow students to include certain kinds of co-curricular activities in their OLE Core, such as participating in Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry, the Mayo Scholars Program, Social Entrepreneurship Scholars Program, or organizing, promoting, and performing a senior recital, theater production, or art exhibit. Students would also be able to use credit-bearing activities, such as off-campus study, Directed Undergraduate Research, Practica and field-work, and Academic Civic Engagement courses to meet the Experiential Learning in Context requirement. As departments and programs increasingly recognize the significance of an experiential, or applied, component to student learning and to preparation for the world of work, opportunities to fulfill the requirement within a student's course of studies will continue to expand. In addition, the Task Force proposes that, rather than complete required physical activity courses, students will learn about physical and mental health topics (e.g., nutrition, sleep, and stress management) through Wellness Center-sponsored events, using a swipes system like the one currently in place. Students' physical activity will continue to be supported through St. Olaf's 40 intramural options, 12 club sports, 27 varsity sports, and co-curricular dance groups, as well as elective courses and self-directed activities that make use of the college's playing fields, Natural Lands, and indoor facilities (e.g., dance studios, running/walking tracks, weight rooms, fitness equipment, indoor climbing wall, swimming pool, and brand new ice arena).

In order to have an OLE Core that is **owned and supported by the faculty**, we envision many of the GE requirements being taught by a wide range of faculty across the college, offering a variety of interdisciplinary paths for students to choose. For example, Quantitative Reasoning could be supported by faculty in areas as diverse as Biology, Economics, Environmental Studies, Exercise Science, History, Music, and Political Science. Critical Understanding of Faith and Values courses could draw on Art History, Classics, English, History, Music, Philosophy, Psychology, Social Work/Family Studies, and Sociology/Anthropology. We also propose a

deeper engagement with general education in the major, in which faculty in departments and programs give explicit attention to speaking-and-listening, writing, and ethics-in-context.

The proposed OLE Core will have as its aim to welcome all students, foster belonging, and support their learning without presuming a particular student profile. In doing so, it **supports the college mission**, which states: “St. Olaf College challenges students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition.” The Task Force understands that some elements of the college mission are uniquely the responsibility of the faculty, and others are fulfilled in partnership with other parts of the college, including Residence Life, College Ministry, Academic Advising, the Piper Center, Athletics and Recreation. Briefly, we see the role of an OLE Core in upholding the college mission to be:

***Challenging students to excel in the liberal arts:*** All elements of the St. Olaf educational program, including the general education curriculum, majors and concentrations, and other curricular programs have this as their aim. The OLE Core contribution to this aim includes ensuring that students gain key skills and attain breadth in their studies and consider how a range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches can help them craft their own understanding of the OLE Questions.

***Examine faith and values:*** Two courses invite students to study religious life in the world, and explore Christian theology and how it exists in dialogue with other world religions. The other elements of the OLE Core also seek to help students identify values that will guide their roles as family members, neighbors, and citizens. The Task Force notes that courses fulfilling the current Biblical and Theological Studies requirements are not required to treat Lutheran practices, beliefs or theology.

***Explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally-engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition:*** While these aims cannot and should not be the sole responsibility of the curriculum at a residential college, the OLE Core should play an important part. The college’s strategic plan identified high impact practices as important for students’ education. As we have explored what such practices mean in the education that we offer, our understanding of such practices has deepened. The OLE Core requirement that students engage in—and understand the significance of—an applied or inquiry-based experience builds on the college’s significant investment in offering such experiences to students through the Piper Center, International and Off-campus Study, and CURI. Addressing the college’s mission to allow students to explore a globally-engaged community, the OLE Core includes intensive study of a foreign language and a course inviting students to grapple with key elements linked to how societies organize—and divide—themselves along elements such as power, race and ethnicity. The Task Force draws on the “Rooted and Open” statement of the colleges and universities of the ELCA and recognizes that fellow ELCA institutions have recognized their Lutheran heritage in different ways.

## Proposed OLE Core Curriculum

This is the 4-17-19 working draft of the proposed OLE Core curriculum. It will continue to evolve, in response to feedback.

<p><b>Proposed OLE Core:</b> (12 requirements, 16 courses max)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Key Features and Rationale</b> Students...</p> <p>(Note: Courses in the OLE Core explore one, two, or all three of the OLE Questions. Quoted text is derived from the <a href="#">current GE Curriculum</a>.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Departments and programs that <b>might</b> teach these courses</b></p> <p>(Includes responses by chairs and directors at the 4-18-19 Academic Leadership Meeting.)</p>
<p><b>FY Seminar</b> (2 semesters)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participate in a common entry experience designed to foster a sense of belonging and community.</li> <li>● Are introduced to the OLE Questions, guided reflection, and portfolio development.</li> <li>● Gain foundational academic, social, and interpersonal skills and knowledge for the liberal arts at St. Olaf College. FY Seminars are discussion-based learning communities that provide foundations in reading, writing, critical thinking, speaking-and-listening, learning about equity and inclusion, and collaborating in a diverse group.</li> </ul>	<p>All programs and departments</p>
<p><b>Critical Understanding of Faith and Values</b> (1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Critically interpret and understand religious life (texts, symbols, and actions) and its existence in a pluralist and secular world.</li> <li>● Consider how faith practices and communities shape knowledge of the world through a variety of humanist and social scientific skills.</li> <li>● Consider how Lutheran tradition honors religious and secular life by regarding questions of existence, meaning, and applied ethics and treats how these questions have been considered through religious practices, wisdom, and community as partners to other human pursuits.</li> </ul>	<p>Art/Art History, Classics, English, History, Music, Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, Social Work/Family Studies, Sociology/Anthropology, Languages, and others</p>
<p><b>Theologies in Dialogue</b> (1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore theological fluency focused on the engagement, cooperation, conflict, and solidarity occurring in the world.</li> <li>● Consider how Christianity and world religions, the secular, or non-religious phenomena and inquiry interact as claims and arguments. Gives equal footing to students who do not participate in a religious community and those who do, as well as provides choice to students who want to explore theology as articulated in Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religious traditions.</li> </ul>	<p>Many courses in Philosophy and Religion, also Classics</p>
<p><b>Power, Inequity, and Race</b> (1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gain deep, contextualized knowledge of how race and ethnicity manifest themselves in U.S. institutions and intersect with other forms of structural inequity such as gender, religion, sexual orientation, and social class.</li> <li>● Acquire familiarity with cultural differences and their contributions to a multicultural society; also, a clear understanding of how these differences have been shaped by power, privilege, and inequity.</li> <li>● Use concepts and tools of inquiry from at least one discipline to critically analyze race and ethnicity in the United States, but need not focus exclusively on the U.S.</li> <li>● Reflect critically on how race, ethnicity, power, privilege, and inequity shape students' own experiences and the experiences of others.</li> </ul>	<p>All programs and departments</p>

<p><b>Global Histories and Societies (1)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interrogate the ways in which the past is known, constructed, deconstructed, curated and preserved by the present, without privileging any tradition, region or period; global in scope and intent.</li> <li>● Focus on analyzing and understanding textual, artistic and oral evidence within the broader historical and cultural contexts in which they were created. “Historical context” is an intentionally broad term, embracing a wide range of subjects and phenomena. This includes institutional contexts—the political, economic, social, religious and artistic—intellectual contexts—theology, philosophy, science, and political and economic theory—and creative contexts—art, literature, music, dance, theater, film, and digital media.</li> </ul>	<p>American Conversations, Africa and the African Diaspora, Art/Art History, Asian Studies, Asian Conversations, Classics, Dance, Economics, English, Environmental Studies, Great Conversation, History, Languages, Latin American Studies, Linguistic Studies, Music, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Race and Ethnic Studies, Religion, Sociology/Anthropology, Science Conversation, Theater, Women’s &amp; Gender Studies, and others</p>
<p><b>Scientific Exploration and Investigation (1)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gain “knowledge of scientific content and scientific principles in a disciplinary or interdisciplinary field within the natural sciences.”</li> <li>● Gain “proficiency in the application of the scientific method, including the appropriate collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, and effective communication of findings.”</li> <li>● “Acquire an ability to use scientific terminology appropriately in meaningful scientific dialogue.”</li> <li>● Develop an “understanding of the process of science as an intellectual pursuit and of the ways in which scientific ideas evolve and come to be accepted.”</li> </ul>	<p>Art/Art History, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Environmental Conversations, Environmental Studies, Exercise Science, Math, Neuroscience, Nursing, Physics, Psychology, Science Conversation, and others</p>
<p><b>Social Investigation and Analysis (1)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use social science approaches to better understand human complexity.</li> <li>● Analyze important social issues through theories and empirical evidence.</li> <li>● Develop the ability to evaluate social science research.</li> </ul>	<p>Economics, Education, History (Public History), Linguistic Studies, Nursing, Political Science, Psychology, Public Affairs Conversation, Science Conversation, Sociology/Anthropology, Social Work/Family Studies, Languages, and others</p>
<p><b>Writing in Context (1)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Develop the ability to write effectively in a form appropriate to a particular disciplinary or interdisciplinary course of study.”</li> <li>● “Develop the ability to write as a means for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating connected to a literacy or literacies, such as data or visual, appropriate to a writing situation.”</li> <li>● “Develop the ability to engage in writing as a systematic, iterative process, using flexible strategies for generating drafts, responding to feedback, revising, editing, and proofreading.”</li> <li>● A 200-level writing-intensive course taken after the First-Year Seminar and prior to senior year.</li> </ul>	<p>All programs and departments</p>
<p><b>Quantitative Reasoning (1)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gain knowledge of quantitative and computational methods.</li> <li>● Apply quantitative and computational knowledge in contexts of interest to the student. Examples of students’ applications of quantitative reasoning could be collected in portfolios and evaluated to determine whether they contain evidence that the QR intended learning outcomes have been satisfied.</li> </ul>	<p>Many courses in Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science, and applied across the curriculum in Biology, Economics, Environmental Studies, Exercise Science, History, Music, Political Science, Psychology, and others</p>

<p><b>World Languages and Cultures</b> (up to 3 or 4 courses)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Acquire “proficiency in reading and writing (all languages) as well as in listening and speaking (modern languages only) commensurate with the amount of study completed.”</li> <li>● Develop “the ability to understand, through a target language, that language's culture(s) and one's own culture.”</li> <li>● Gain “awareness of language as a system, and of the ways in which language organizes thought processes and information and reflects culture.”</li> </ul>	<p>Most courses in Chinese, French, German, Greek, Japanese, Latin, Norwegian, Russian Language and Area Studies, and Spanish, as well as Asian Conversations, Asian Studies, German Studies, Latin American Studies, Linguistic Studies, Middle East Studies, Nordic Studies, and others</p>
<p><b>Creativity and Creative Expression</b> (1)</p>	<p>Context: Develop the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● identify, analyze, and evaluate the formal properties of creative works (text, art, music, visual media, embodied movement) in aesthetic, cultural or intellectual context(s).</li> </ul> <p>Practice: Develop the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● create iterative processes that integrate failure and build resilience,</li> <li>● recognize and design an individual creative process and applied solutions for a communal good,</li> <li>● respond to constraints and improvise.</li> </ul> <p>Courses must give attention to both context and practice.</p>	<p>American Conversations, Art/Art History, Asian Studies, Classics, Dance, Economics, English, Film Studies, Great Conversation, Languages, Math, Media Studies, Music, Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, Theater, and others</p>
<p><b>Experiential Learning in Context</b> (1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Integrate academic and experiential learning by applying classroom theories and ideas in a practical setting.</li> <li>● Draw upon experiential learning to advance understanding in an academic setting.</li> </ul> <p>Fosters equity of participation, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to benefit from the mentoring, guided inquiry, and reflection that characterize experiential learning.</p>	<p>All programs and departments: Academic Civic Engagement courses, Directed Undergraduate Research, internships, off-campus courses, and other approved experiential learning, including approved non-credit activities (e.g., CURI or other summer research, as well as employment or leadership positions).</p>