

**CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE GENERAL EDUCATION DIVERSITY REQUIREMENT (SENATE DOCUMENT #20-21-10)****Committee Members**

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BACKGROUND

Following the racially-motivated and tragic murder of Lt. Richard Collins, III, an African-American Bowie State University student, as well as several hate-bias incidents that diminished the experience of many members of the campus community, there was a campus-wide call to action to respond to the impact of these incidents and concerns around racism. In response, President Loh and the Senate formed the Joint President/Senate Inclusion and Respect Task Force, composed of faculty, staff, and student representatives, to consider how best to nurture a campus climate that is respectful and inclusive, stands against hatred, and affirms the values of the University. Following extensive consultation, the Task Force made recommendations for a comprehensive diversity and inclusion initiative in nine areas: (I) Values of the University, (II) Prevention & Education, (III) Hate/Bias Incident Response, (IV) Centralization, (V) Communication, (VI) Evaluation & Assessment, (VII) Free Speech & Freedom of Expression, (VIII) Current Policies and Guidelines, and (IX) Resources & Implementation, as detailed in [Senate Document #17-18-02](#).

While the Inclusion & Respect Task Force focused its efforts on prevention and co-curricular educational efforts, the Provost convened the Diversity Education Task Force (DETF) in 2018 as a parallel effort to review how to address these concerns and incorporate these themes into the curriculum through the General Education diversity requirement and other educational initiatives. The DETF was also charged with considering provisions for civic education and civic engagement in existing educational efforts and making recommendations about their potential expansion.

The DETF made recommendations in four broad categories:

1. Enhanced introductory activities for students new to campus;
2. **Modifications to the General Education diversity requirement;**

3. Expansion and formalization of optional diversity and civic education credentials; and
4. Voluntary adoption of discipline-specific diversity learning outcome(s) as part of all major area requirements.

In November 2020, the Provost and the Dean for Undergraduate Studies submitted the DETF's recommendations related to modifying the General Education diversity requirement to the Senate for review because the Senate Educational Affairs Committee is charged with broad oversight of the General Education Program.

CHARGE

In December 2020, the Senate Educational Affairs Committee was charged with reviewing the DETF's recommendations related to the University's General Education Diversity requirement. Among other things, the Educational Affairs Committee was charged with the following:

1. Considering whether the revisions to the General Education diversity requirements and learning outcomes proposed by the DETF align with the University's principles and guiding documents; whether the proposed modifications align with the Diversity Education Task Force's stated principles on diversity education; and the best options for implementation of the proposed modifications to the General Education diversity requirements.
2. After receiving an amended charge, the committee was also asked to consider whether subsequent revisions to the learning outcomes and recommendations made by the DETF aligned with its stated principles on diversity education, and whether separately-proposed revisions to the learning outcomes to acknowledge that we are part of a multilingual society are appropriate.

COMMITTEE WORK & FINDINGS

The committee began considering the charge during the spring 2021 semester by reviewing the current structure and course requirements for the General Education diversity requirement, several University strategic plans related to diversity and inclusion, the November 2020 Diversity Education Task Force Report, and the additional modifications proposed by the DETF. The committee consulted with the Director of Diversity Training and Education in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the DETF co-chairs, the General Education Diversity Faculty Board, and many stakeholders and has engaged in ongoing consultation with the Associate Dean for General Education and a representative of the Office of Undergraduate Studies, who serve as ex-officio members of the Educational Affairs Committee.

The committee's discussions with those it consulted focused on whether the proposed focus on race and racism appropriately reflects principles of diversity and inclusion, as the learning outcomes and course category titles may exclude considering the experiences of other marginalized groups. The committee also discussed the preparedness of faculty and students to teach and discuss racism against Black and Latinx community members and whether there is a sufficient number of faculty who have the experience, insights, and comfort to facilitate students' learning about the impacts of race and racism.

The Educational Affairs Committee was advised that challenges in discussing race and racial issues are common in higher education. Campus community members are more reluctant to discuss race, racism, and anti-racism than other inequalities and experiences of other marginalized community members. Therefore, if there is not a focus on race and racism, there will not be substantial movement to increase student understanding of inequalities, oppression, and other impacts based on racial identities.

The DETF co-chairs also advised the committee that its recommendations are based on information collected through climate surveys and other longstanding expressions of concerns about racism in particular from campus community members. Additionally, faculty, staff, and students have expressed concerns that undergraduate students can complete the General Education diversity requirements without engaging in meaningful classroom discussions about race and racism. The DETF also considered the University's and the State of Maryland's history of excluding and segregating racial minorities. Based on these considerations, the DETF sought to bring the race and racism emphasis in context and dialogue with other forms of diversity, and structured its recommendations to establish a bridge between the current courses and the vision for new courses. The DETF expected this approach to allow intersectionality in a context that is historical and contemporary, and domestic and international, and inclusive of the experiences of other marginalized groups while continuing to center on race and racism.

The committee also discussed the DETF's recommendation to require students to take a course in each proposed diversity course category—Understanding Structures of Racism and Inequality (theory-oriented courses) and Navigating Diverse Social Environments (practice-oriented courses). Although the committee expressed concerns about the University being able to establish and maintain the high-level, specialized teaching expertise needed to support the number of course offerings that will be necessary to require students to take practice-oriented courses, the committee recognized that courses in that category create an opportunity to improve student comprehension of the concepts learned in a theory-oriented course.

Because the learning outcomes will need to be tested and refined during the implementation process, a significant portion of the committee's discussion addressed whether the proposed revisions are consistent with the University's values and principles of diversity and inclusion rather than the specific wording of the learning outcomes. Two perspectives were prevalent during the committee's discussions. There were concerns that the proposed course category labels and learning outcomes focus on race and racism is not consistent with the values of more widespread diversity and inclusion, and the proposed revisions should be expanded to include an intersectionality approach that recognizes the experiences of other marginalized groups in addition to race and racism. Another perspective among the committee members is that race and racism should be centered and prioritized in the course category labels and learning outcomes because if there is not a requirement to analyze race and racism, it will not be addressed.

Following concerns raised by faculty in several units in the humanities that the recommendations from the DETF did not acknowledge that we are part of a multilingual society as an important dimension of diversity and the submission of a formal proposal for consideration, the SEC charged the committee with considering whether the proposed revisions in the proposal and the request to engage a tenured faculty member from Classics, Linguistics, or the School of Languages, Literatures, & Cultures, on the group responsible for implementation of the General Education diversity requirement recommendations were appropriate. The committee met with the Director of the School of Languages, Literatures, & Cultures to discuss the proposal. In considering the proposal, the committee agreed, in principle, that languages and the unique facets of a multilingual society are an important aspect of diversity that should be acknowledged in the learning outcomes of the General Education diversity requirement. Additionally, the committee also agreed that it would be beneficial to engage a faculty member from Classics, Linguistics, or the School of Languages, Literatures, & Cultures, on the group responsible for implementation and any revisions to the learning outcomes associated with the General Education diversity requirement recommendations.

PRELIMINARY DIRECTIONS

Based on its consultations and deliberations and in response to the elements of its charge from the SEC, the Educational Affairs Committee has determined the following:

- The proposed modifications to the General Education diversity requirements from the DETF are appropriate for the University and align with the principles in the University's Strategic Plan, the Diversity Strategic Plan, and the Statement of University Values.
- The proposed recommendations for the General Education diversity requirement and the learning outcomes for the new diversity course categories align with the Diversity Education Task Force's principles on diversity education.

As a result, the committee has developed the following preliminary recommendations in order to solicit feedback from the Senate:

General Education Requirement

The General Education diversity requirement should retain the same basic two-course structure and a minimum of 4-6 credit hours, with the following modifications:

1. Revise the diversity category labels to signify that the content has shifted and modify the learning outcomes associated with each category, as follows:
 - a. The *Understanding Plural Societies* category would be relabeled *Understanding Structures of Racism and Inequality* and would include one required learning outcome focused on systemic racism.
 - b. The *Cultural Competence* category would be relabeled *Navigating Diverse Social Environments*, and instructors would have a larger set of required skills-oriented learning outcomes from which to select at least one.
 - c. Perspective-taking would be added as an optional learning outcome in both diversity categories.
2. Require students to take one course in each category (i.e., one theory and one practice course). [Currently, students may satisfy the diversity education requirement by taking one theory and one practice course or two theory courses.]
3. Allow (but do not require) courses to qualify under both categories. [Currently, a course may be approved for only one diversity course category.]

Learning Outcomes for the General Education Diversity Requirement

The proposed learning outcomes for the relabeled course categories are identified below. However, the Educational Affairs Committee notes that the final wording of the proposed learning outcomes for the new course categories will be refined in the implementation process, particularly as the General Education Diversity Faculty Board considers which courses to include in each of the revised categories.

Understanding Structures of Racism and Inequality Learning Outcomes (theory-oriented courses) - approved courses would need to meet 4 of 6 learning outcomes, and one of the learning outcomes must be the required learning outcome focused on race and racism (#1).

1. Analyze racism as a form of historical and systemic discrimination in the U.S. or internationally that may intersect with other forms of power and oppression. (required)

2. Reflect on and critically analyze one's own identity (such as race, ethnicity, cultural values, norms, and biases) and how these affect one's perceptions of individuals with different identities.
3. Identify and describe the experiences of individuals who hold different social identities.
4. Analyze social policies, ideologies, or institutions that give rise to structural inequalities and sustain power differences based on race/ethnicity and other social categories.
5. Analyze differences among forms and traditions of thought or expression in relation to cultural, historical, political, and social contexts, as for example, dance, foodways, literature, music, and philosophical and religious traditions.
6. Use a comparative or intersectional framework to examine the histories, experiences, and perspectives of two or more social groups (a) within a single society or historical timeframe or (b) across different societies or historical times.

Navigating Diverse Social Environments (practice-oriented courses) - approved courses would need to meet 3 of 6 learning outcomes, and one learning outcome must be one of the three required learning outcomes pertaining to practice.

1. Reflect on critical similarities and differences between one's own and others' identities and social positions due to racism and/or other systems of oppression.
2. Identify, reflect on, and demonstrate the language and behaviors used to convey respect for people of similar and different social backgrounds.
3. Identify and describe the experiences of individuals who hold different social identities.

At least one of the following is required:

4. Communicate and collaborate effectively (i.e., listen and adapt one's own persuasive arguments) with others from different social backgrounds to establish and build coalitions.
5. Demonstrate skills to work collaboratively within and across social groups to achieve mutual goals.
6. Use skills to identify and reach consensus on resolutions for shared problems in conflicts across social groups.

The current requirements for the General Education diversity requirement and the learning outcomes for the current course categories are attached as Appendix 1.

Implementation

The charge to the Educational Affairs Committee also directs the committee to consider strategies for implementing the recommended revisions to the General Education diversity requirement. The committee has developed two preliminary recommendations associated with implementation but will continue to address this element of its charge at its next meeting.

- The University should acknowledge that we are part of a multilingual society as an important component of diversity in the learning outcomes for the General Education diversity course categories.
- The Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities should recommend a faculty member from Classics, Linguistics, or the School of Languages, Literatures, & Cultures to be a part of the group that will be charged with implementation of the revisions to the General Education diversity requirement.

NEXT STEPS

The Senate is invited to share feedback with the Senate Educational Affairs Committee on its preliminary directions, as well as any additional considerations related to the proposed revisions to the General Education diversity requirement.

The Educational Affairs Committee will consider all feedback as it works to refine and finalize its recommendations, complete its charge, and submit its report by February 4, 2022.

CURRENT GENERAL EDUCATION DIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS

Diversity

4 to 6 credits / 2 courses

2 Understanding Plural Societies courses

or 1 Understanding Plural Societies course AND 1 Cultural Competence course

Note: Diversity courses may also fulfill a Distributive Studies category.

Rather than affirm or celebrate difference, courses in the Diversity requirement investigate the complexities of human difference and commonality. The Diversity requirement emphasizes the promises and problems of plural societies and the challenges that must be addressed to achieve just, equitable, and productive societies. Courses in the Diversity requirement explore the gritty struggles through which plural societies are established and maintained.

Two categories of courses comprise the Diversity requirement: Understanding Plural Societies and Cultural Competence:



– Understanding Plural Societies (DVUP) - 3 to 6 credits

Understanding Plural Societies courses recognize that life in a globally competitive society of the 21st century requires an ability to comprehend both theoretical and practical dimensions of human difference. From that perspective, Understanding Plural Societies is the centerpiece of the University's Diversity requirement. Courses in this category speak to both the foundations—cultural, material, psychological, historical, social, and biological—of human difference and the operation or function of plural societies.

– Cultural Competence (DVCC) - 0 to 3 credits

Cultural Competence provides opportunities to gain an increased understanding of cultures and cultural practices, while learning to communicate effectively across cultural differences in a diverse society and world. This diversity category reflects a developmental, on-going process through which students learn about the lived experiences of individuals as members of socio-cultural groups and the complex interactions between groups. Cultural Competence courses emphasize acquisition of new knowledge, thoughtful consideration of issues of equity and justice, critical thinking, self-reflection, empathy, engaged global citizenship, and the development of skills necessary to work effectively with individuals, groups, and teams from diverse identities and perspectives.

Current General Education Diversity Course Categories Learning Outcomes

Current Understanding Plural Societies (Theory-Oriented Courses) Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate understanding of the basis of human diversity and socially-driven constructions of difference: biological, cultural, historical, social, economic, or ideological.
2. Demonstrate understanding of fundamental concepts and methods that produce knowledge about plural societies and systems of classification.
3. Explicate the policies, social structures, ideologies or institutional structures that do or do not create inequalities based on notions of human difference.
4. Interrogate, critique, or question traditional hierarchies, especially as the result of unequal power across social categories
5. Analyze forms and traditions of thought or expression in relation to cultural, historical, political, and social contexts, as for example, dance, foodways, literature, music, and philosophical and religious traditions.
6. Use a comparative, intersectional, or relational framework to examine the experiences, cultures, or histories of two or more social groups or constituencies within a single society or across societies, or within a single historical timeframe or across historical time.

Current Cultural Competence (Practice-Oriented Courses) Learning Outcomes

1. Understand and articulate a multiplicity of meanings of the concept of culture.
2. Reflect in depth about critical similarities, differences, and intersections between their own and others' cultures or sub-cultures so as to demonstrate a deepening or transformation of original perspectives.
3. Explain how cultural beliefs influence behaviors and practices at the individual, organizational, or societal levels.
4. Compare and contrast similarities, differences, and intersections among two or more cultures.
5. Use skills to negotiate cross-cultural situations or conflicts in interactions inside or outside the classroom. (Required for all Cultural Competence courses)