CAMPUSES ON THE MOVE

UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA — 1851

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

www.udc.edu   https://www.udc.edu/general-education/

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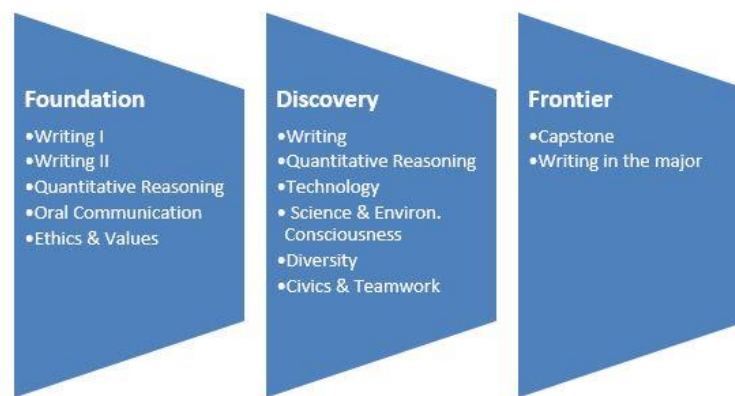Kim Crews, Assistant Director of General Education Program
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In the Fall of 2010, The University of the District of Columbia introduced a new model for undergraduate education. Chaired by April Massey, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the General Education Reform committee embraced the 14 core learning outcomes outlined in the Association of American Colleges and Universities' report *Liberal Education and America's Promise* (LEAP) [https://www.aacu.org/leap/essential-learning-outcomes]. These learning outcomes are bundled into nine strands of interdisciplinary learning outcomes that guide the development of classes, assessments and revisions to those classes [https://www.udc.edu/general-education/nine-strands/].

The program, which replaced the 30+ year-old distributive model, provides three levels of course work—Foundation, Discovery, and Frontier—introducing students to the pillars of the college learning experience, extending and generalizing knowledge and skills acquired in the Foundations courses, and exploring the opportunities for success in the major and beyond. By offering a broad array of interdisciplinary courses that emphasize independent inquiry, the General Education Program (GEP) helps students learn to ask relevant questions, find and evaluate answers to those questions, and use the answers to make informed intellectual, social, and ethical decisions about local, national, global, personal, and professional issues throughout their lives.

Design of UDCs General Education Program

Foundation
- Writing I
- Writing II
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Oral Communication
- Ethics & Values

Discovery
- Writing
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Technology
- Science & Environ. Consciousness
- Diversity
- Civics & Teamwork

Frontier
- Capstone
- Writing in the major

General Education Course Sequence

Semester	Course# General Education Courses	Credits
1st Semester	IGED 110: Foundation Writing I (Arts and Humanities)	3
	IGED 120: Foundation Quantitative Reasoning	3
	IGED 130: Foundation Oral Communication	3
2nd Semester	IGED 111: Foundation Writing II (Social & Natural Sciences)	3
	IGED 220: Discovery Quantitative Reasoning	3
3rd Semester	IGED 140: Foundation Ethics	3
	IGED 210: Discovery Writing	3
	IGED 250: Discovery Technology	3
4th Semester	IGED 260 Discovery Science & Lab	4
	IGED 270 Discovery Diversity	3
5th Semester	IGED 280: Discovery Civics	3
7th Semester	IGED 391: Frontier Capstone I	1.5
8th Semester	IGED 392: Frontier Capstone II	1.5

Renovation

In the Fall of 2017, Kimberly Crews and Wynn Yarbrough rebuilt the pedagogy of the Capstone Course, following the intended design of the program, to finally realize the vision of the integrative GEP. The Frontier Capstone course was designed for students to apply the knowledge and skills learned in Foundation courses and developed in Discovery courses in a real-world setting—in this case, towards a specific issue or problem in the District of Columbia, Maryland or Virginia (DMV). In our rebuilding of the Capstone Course, teams of students conducted research on a problem or issue in the DMV, developed a proposal to tackle this issue or problem, collaborated with their team in action steps towards completing the capstone project, and delivered a presentation for the community. This enhanced "capstone" concept engages our mission responsibility—that is tying the resources of the University to the community around the issues of access, equity, and social justice.

While newly redesigned, it is clear that that the Capstone course is successfully accomplishing mission-related goals. This year-long course brought together the various strands and interdisciplinary classes and experiences, including those classes and experiences in the major coursework. It also helps prepare students with the skills that employers value: "…91 percent of employers say that critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving abilities are more important than a potential employee's undergraduate major…" (AAC&U, 2015). Finally, it is igniting students' passion for civic engagement, an important mission of this land-grant, historically Black institution.

Sample projects included:

- developing a program to increase middle school students' passion for reading books (not e-text);
- exploring how the use of urban gardens, such as the East Capital Urban Farm, can help improve food security among residents of Wards 7 & 8 in Washington, D.C.; and
- creating a program to increase entrepreneurial skills of African-American children (ages 9-12) in Ward 8 in Washington, D.C.

Extended Summary

Firebird Flight- Revising the Interdisciplinary General Education Capstone Course

In the summer of 2017, the General Education Program sought to revise the Capstone course, the final course in the IGED sequence of classes. This course was previously taught as a seminar with group projects and presentations. Common course elements, assignments, and assessments weren't solidified and didn't give a common experience for the culmination of the General Education sequence of courses. There was also little oversight or feedback on the course objectives as linked to course assignments and assessments, and no observation of data on the

course to have a continuous cycle of improvement. This was largely due to not having a dedicated Director of General Education who would be responsible for this administration of both the program and the Capstone course. To this end, Dr. Kimberly Crews and Dr. Wynn Yarbrough were hired to oversee the General Education team.

To those ends, Dr. Crews and Dr. Yarbrough; Assistant to the Provost, Carl Moore; Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. April Massey; as well as Geography Professor, Dr. Amanda Huron attended the Summer **2017 Institute on Integrative Learning and Signature Work organized by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) at Loyola University in Chicago.** The conference organizers espoused, "Today, college graduates must be able to apply the knowledge and skills they are learning in real-world contexts as they collaborate with diverse groups to develop solutions to complex and urgent problems encountered in globalized workplaces and civic life" (https://www.aacu.org/summerinstitutes/ilsw/2017). This institute allowed for collaborative dialogues about and demonstrations of Capstone Courses, serving as a launching point for the revisions that Dr. Crews and Dr. Yarbrough undertook with the Capstone Course.

The course had been run similarly to a seminar class centered around a particular professor's expertise, with some group work and with a presentation on the research done during the course of the class. The course had not been adhering to the Student Learning Outcomes of the class. In our General Education revision, we constructed a class where teams (not groups) worked on researching an issue in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV), proposing a solution and attempting to carry out that solution in the community affected. Using a model from Worcester Polytechnic Institute which has successfully delivered its Capstone course for over thirty years, Dr. Crews and Dr. Yarbrough designed a Capstone course that basically incorporated intentional work of team building, proposal writing, reflection writing, and presentations centering on problem based learning.

In the team-building portion of the class, students took a Myers Brigg personality test. After the Myers Brigg test, students introduced themselves to the class, answering questions about their major course of study, hobbies and interests, family, living situations, work situations, etc. that helped the General Education team construct teams. We sought balance through the "chemistry" of these various forces. Students then brain-stormed with their teams and constructed a list of project ideas.
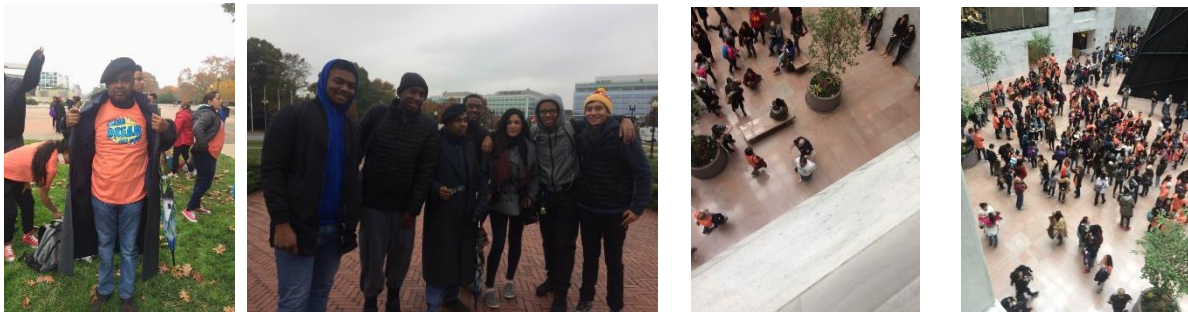
Students consulted with the professors of the course and then proceeded in working on their DMV issue. Tackling a proposal was difficult for many teams: how to divide out the work, how to construct a budget, how to navigate research that included interviews and DC City council transcripts as well as more traditional database research. Students also wrote individual reflections on team building and their project, as well as personal change over the course of the

class, and finally on building the presentation. Both the proposal and presentation allowed for numerous revisions as we tried to move students from novice to mastery [1].

Students researched and proposed presentations on financial literacy for underserved middle school students; bringing daycare to UDC; running an art therapy session (1x week) for post-partum depression; and researching food deserts in various wards of the District of Columbia. These teams were able to produce white papers (food deserts, art therapy) to actually running the project (bring CPR trained personnel to campus).

In the next iteration of the Capstone course, UDC will realize the year-long Capstone courses where the teams use a year to bring these projects to fruition. The changes from running a semester long course to a year-long course will bring some challenges, but also a greater opportunity for students to take the work they do into the communities of the DMV. Challenges with partner coordination will be minimized due to this longer time frame, as well as presenting the university with an opportunity to engage with the same outside partners (District agencies; local, national, and international non-profit organizations; and private partners) on a recurring basis. Many of these organizations and partners have a host of issues that need "collaboration with diverse teams" to better "move the needle" on these issues that affect our local, regional, national and international societies.

Scenes from Capstone Projects

Scenes from the Campus Compact

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[1] Though we didn't use this exact model, we gave students multiple opportunities with feedback to move across this range of understanding- https://oakland.edu/Assets/upload/docs/AIS/Boix-Mansilla-Rubric.pdf