

ASSOCIATION FOR GENERAL AND LIBERAL STUDIES

AGLS Exemplary General Education Program Award 2025 option #2: Co-Curricular General Education Learning

Award Information and Application

National and international education officials, accreditors, and faculty leaders increasingly associate “quality” education with student learning outcomes and continuous quality improvement processes. Moving away from the view of education as a simple act of passing a static body of knowledge from faculty to students, they value education practiced as a commitment to a set of collectively-practiced, ongoing activities: making ***institutional choices*** about the most important goals for student learning and defining the learning in terms of desired outcomes; developing a shared faculty commitment to ***actions*** such as high impact, active learning strategies and faculty development designed to increase student achievement; making informed ***judgments*** about student achievement and the impact of various general education program support processes; and ensuring continuous ***improvements*** in the educational program. Despite the commitment of academic leaders and accreditors to these processes, too few institutions have succeeded in applying systematic improvement processes to the general education program. As a result, discussions about higher education accountability and improvement conclude that higher education can benefit from models of innovative, effective, and systematic general education program improvements and assessments.

The Association for General and Liberal Studies is the national organization whose mission is singularly committed to quality general education programs and their vital role in the liberal education of students. The organization invites institutions to apply for the 2025 AGLS Exemplary General Education Program Award. The Award promotes institutional commitment to continuous quality improvement, recognizes faculty and institutions that practice quality behaviors, and provides much needed examples of effective general education improvement processes.

Applicants in 2025 will have two options. One will focus on institutions committed to systematically verifiable general education learning achieved through co-curricular activities. The second will focus on institutions that implement program revisions that lead to verifiable general education learning achievement through efforts to improve the program. Prompts in the application forms for both options are directly related to questions in *An AGLS Guide to Assessment & Program Review*.

AGLS will recognize no more than three institutions in 2025 that either connect general education program outcomes to innovative co-curricular experiences that reinforce or help achieve an institution’s general education goals or that have successfully and collegially implemented a significant program revision that is systematically producing evidence of general education learning.

The Awards will be presented during the 2025 Annual AGLS Conference, Oct 2-4, Louisville, KY. Recognized institutions will be required to provide information for a feature on our Gen Ed Spotlight page and will be encouraged to facilitate a virtual Live Chat session on their program improvement’s challenges and successes. Recipients will receive the following: a plaque recognizing their successes; a digital medallion for use on their website, recognition on the

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AGLS website and in a fall issue of our e-news; and a complimentary 2025-26 institutional membership.

Award Selection and Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by an Awards Committee comprised of AGLS Executive Council members, members of accrediting associations, and recognized leaders in general education. The application narrative questions are based on the Systems Analysis questions found in the AGLS publication, *Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review* (see www.agls.org for a free download).

Award evaluation will focus on the innovative and systematic qualities of the institution's reform efforts to reinforce or accomplish the goals of general education, how well the application describes the full 'loop' of the process, and on how well the institution's process can serve as a practical model for other institutions. In 2025, the evaluation for option #2 will be on the innovative and systematic qualities of the institution's efforts to use co-curricular activities to reinforce or accomplish the goals of general education (**Guide question A7**).

Previous recipient applications and the AGLS Guide can be found on the AGLS website: www.agls.org.

Application Format

To be considered for the award, the institution applying has successfully and effectively revised and/or improved their general education (aka liber education, core curriculum, etc.) program in the past three years (2022 to 2025).

In addition, an applicant on behalf of an institution should complete:

- Section #1: Contact information for individual submitting the application
- Section #2: Institutional endorsement by either the chief executive or academic officer
- Section #3: Application summary (one page or less)
- Section #4: Responses to prompts based on *Guide* question A7; limited to two pages per prompt

Examples of Evidence for Award Criteria

Evidence of merit requires answering the questions under each of the criterion listed in the application below. Evidence should focus on specific activities and processes that employ the continuous quality improvement principles discussed in the AGLS publication *Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review*. The application should clearly present the leadership and creative solutions used to address the issues,

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concerns, and goals relevant to co-curricular general education learning and learning improvement processes. *Supporting material can be summarized as part of the application and narrative, but limit your explanations to two pages per prompt. Please do not use links to data and analysis reports; narrative summary of your key results and processes, within the application, is preferable to links that eventually become inoperable. AGLS offers model narratives as examples of successful processes and assumes that recognized institutions will share with interested parties additional data or program information.*

Award Timeline

May 28	Application materials available on AGLS website
June 30	Applications received in AGLS office via email
July 5	Materials distributed to award review panel
August 15	Applicants notified of 2025 award recipients
October 4	Award recognition ceremony

Suggested Reference Material

Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Learning can be found at: www.agls.org. Supporting literature (from regional and specialized accreditors and from AAC&U) is listed in the *Guide*.

Application Submission

Applications may be submitted as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat format, sent to the Executive Director at execdir@agls.org.

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Section #1: Please provide the following information of the person submitting application:

NAME	
TITLE	
INSTITUTION	
DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM	
STREET ADDRESS	
CITY, STATE ZIP CODE	
OFFICE PHONE	
EMAIL	
SIGNATURE	

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Section #2: Please provide the following information of the Chief Executive Officer or Chief Academic Officer for institutional endorsement

NAME	
TITLE	
INSTITUTION	
DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM	
STREET ADDRESS	
CITY, STATE ZIP CODE	
OFFICE PHONE	
EMAIL	
SIGNATURE	

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Section #3: Application Summary

Attach a summary of the award application. Please begin the narrative with a brief description of your institution and the time frame for the process. Briefly explain your process and why you think it equates with quality. The summary should not exceed one typed page.

Section #4: Award Prompts – responses should not exceed two typed pages for each prompt

Criterion 1: Supporting Co-Curricular General Education Experiences

An exemplary application should clearly describe a research-based process used to address student learning needs via co-curricular experiences. In addition, the application should describe why the program is important to stakeholders. The application should clearly detail the processes essential to engaging all key players in a commitment to co-curricular learning.

Provide a description of how your institution has dedicated itself to co-curricular activities that support and improve the quality of the general education program. Address the following issues:

- The student learning needs that drove the development of the institution's co-curricular program
- The research that informs the goals of the co-curricular program
- The individuals who defined and identified the expectations for co-curricular general education learning
- The alignment of your institutions co-curricular learning with institutional mission and general education program goals and outcomes
- The efforts to communicate to faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders the institution's commitment to improving general education learning through co-curricular activities

Criterion 2: Engaging Students in Co-Curricular Learning Experiences

An exemplary application clearly describes the co-curricular program activities, the individuals responsible for the program, and the institutional support for and commitment to the co-curricular program.

Describe how your institution has engaged students in co-curricular general education learning activities. Address the following issues:

- The co-curricular general education learning activities your institution offers to students
- The individuals who defined and structured these learning experiences, including the role staff, faculty, students, and administration played in developing the relevant activities
- The individuals who implemented the activities, including, where relevant, the collaborations with faculty inside or outside the classroom
- The resources (financial, human, physical, etc.) the institution has provided for co-curricular learning activities

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Criterion 3: Evaluating Student Co-Curricular General Education Learning

An exemplary application clearly details the processes and tools used to assess co-curricular activities, and ensure that results are systematically collected, analyzed, and communicated. It should also include a detailed description of the individuals charged with the assessment and the results collected.

Describe how your institution assesses the impact of the co-curricular activities on student general education learning. Address the following issues:

- Your institution's process for evaluating the impact of co-curricular activities on general education learning, including the tools used and activities assessed
- The processes used to gather and analyze the results
- The individuals who evaluate the results
- The results of the co-curricular activities and what the results reveal about the impact of co-curricular activities on general education learning
- The institution's process for communicating the results of its evaluation

Criterion 4: Improving Co-Curricular Learning Processes

An exemplary application clearly describes a program that produces evidence of learning and a process that is not a "one-time" implementation, but a program built with a continuous improvement process. An exemplary application should provide evidence from multiple years of assessment.

Describe your institution's plans to use its data to mature its co-curricular learning processes. Address the following issues:

- The data-driven co-curricular improvement projects your institution selected in order to improve learning or assessment of the learning
- The individuals who collaborated to identify and plan the improvements
- The individuals responsible for acting on the improvement projects and, if provided, the professional development that was offered to support the improvements
- The level of institutional support offered for the improvement projects
- The plans to follow up on improvement projects and how those plans reflect a regular improvement process
- The results collected as a follow-up on improvement efforts (if they have been collected during a second or later cycle of review)
- The lessons learned from the improvement process

Evaluation Rubric

AGLS Exemplary General Education Program Award

2025 Option: Program Improvement--Revision or Enhancement of Core Program

Introduction: As indicated in the application, the AGLS Awards for Improving General Education are intended to recognize institutions committed to the principles and practices described in the AGLS *Guide*. The general evaluation descriptions below reflect the assumption that the Awards are intended to serve as models of how to achieve innovative reform, enhanced learning, strong leadership, and institutional commitment to on-going, evidence-based improvement. *Preference will be given to programs that are fully developed and implemented with an improvement cycle; these are programs that develop and provide co-curricular activities, check the impact, and consider improvements.*

Criterion #1: Supporting Co-Curricular General Education Experiences

Excellent Model (5): Overall, a useful description of how an institution and its leadership can demonstrate that it places a high value on co-curricular learning and using co-curricular outcomes to achieve program goals. The application clearly describes the institution's successful efforts to communicate to faculty, staff, and students how it values using co-curricular learning to increase student engagement and to achieve its mission and gen. ed. goals. A practical example of broad collaboration and a systematic approach for determining the expectations for co-curricular learning; app. offers meaningful and practical suggestions on how key individuals and communications present student expectations, including consideration of how to integrate student work and co-curricular activities into the learning goals. The app. details practical, easy-to-envison, insightful suggestions on how faculty and staff can collaborate to complete co-curricular learning activities. The institution sends a strong, clear message to students and other stakeholders that co-curricular activities are essential for the student engagement and learning.

Acceptable Model (3): Overall, the app. presents a mission/goals-related context for valuing co-curricular learning with some insights for others, but the narrative gives limited discussion of the breadth of the commitment or the quality of the communication of the commitment. There might be questions about institutional support simply because the co-curricular effort is new and in early stages of development or because the app. fails to fully describe the support. App. identifies who makes decisions regarding co-curricular expectations, including how student work and co-curricular activities are integrated with gen. ed. learning, but these processes might not be collaborative faculty and staff efforts or the app. leaves questions about the effectiveness of the plans for the collaboration needed to successfully complete student activities. The institution communicates how it values co-curricular experiences to students and stakeholders, but the message might be stronger or more effective.

Developing Model (1): Overall, the application describes a limited institutional commitment to co-curricular learning and limited insight into co-curricular programs. The program is dependent on a few co-curricular "heroes," or it fails to clearly show faculty and staff an institutional commitment to co-curricular learning processes. The processes for determining expectations for students might not reflect full consideration of students' needs or co-curricular activities, or expectations for faculty/staff collaboration to complete activities are either poorly described or lack a systematic structure, and thus may not reflect a sustainable process. The message to students and stakeholders regarding the importance of co-curricular learning is either not described or the message is potentially ineffective.

Criterion #2: Engaging Students in Co-Curricular Learning Experiences

Excellent Model (5): Overall, the application offers fresh insights into a process for using co-curricular learning to accomplish general education program goals. App. clearly describes a creative, effective,

systematic process for co-curricular programming that can be used by other institutions. Collaborative, ground-up processes, including faculty, staff, and students, are used to define expectations and how co-curricular activities are integrated with general education. App. details a creative and “easy-to-duplicate” model of implementing and managing. The app. provides good evidence that sufficient resources exist to sustain the program in order to achieve its goals for developing general education learning.

Acceptable Model (3): Overall, the app. addresses all the questions and offers some insights into putting in place a co-curricular program, but questions exist about how effective some processes are or how applicable they will be for others, maybe because the program is relatively new. App. describes how staff, faculty, and/or students, determine expectations and integrate the expectations into the general education program, but it may be unclear how much collaboration exists or how well the processes align with general education program goals, or how successful the process will be in achieving its goals for engaging students and improving general education learning. The institution offers some human, financial, and/or physical resources to sustain its ownership efforts, but it might be unclear as to whether the resources are sufficient to broadly implement the program or sustain well enough to produce the desired results.

Developing Model (1): Overall, the app. fails to clearly describe its processes for co-curricular learning, or the process description offer limited insight into how to accomplish the goal of implementing a co-curricular program, or the program does not connect with and enhance general education. Collaboration is limited or too little information is given to clearly see how the program can be effectively implemented, or the co-curricular program is not tied to the general education program and goals. The institution offers limited resources to support the co-curricular activities and might be expecting too much for its limited investment.

Criterion #3: Evaluating Student Co-Curricular General Education Learning

Excellent Model (5): Overall, the evaluation methods and tools are simple but effective, and they can and should be considered by others. The processes used to collect and evaluate evidence of the impact of co-curricular learning activities are clear, replicable, and effective for identifying the importance and value of adding co-curricular programming in order to enhance general education learning. Individuals taking responsibility for the collection and evaluation process and the methods used are clear and appear to be effective for gathering the information that can be used to establish the effectiveness of co-curricular activities and for identify improvements that might be needed. The evaluation results give strong evidence of the effectiveness of the co-curricular programming, and show positive gains in student learning. The results are shared with all key stakeholders, including those who will use them to strengthen the program and make improvement decisions.

Acceptable Model (3): Overall, the app. describes co-curricular activities that are producing some evidence of improved general education learning. The processes used to collect and evaluate the impact of co-curricular activities are identified, but more detail is needed to clarify the process, or the tools and methods seems overly complicated for the results produced, or the results might raise questions about goals achievement. Responsible individuals and all other participants are described. The evaluation results give evidence of the benefits of co-curricular activities and potential for improvement, although some evidence of the impact of the activities on student general education learning is limited or questionable. The evidence is shared with key stakeholders, but the plan for collaborative discussion and use of the results is limited.

Developing Model (1): The processes used to collect and evaluate the impact of co-curricular activities are unclear, or they leave questions about their effectiveness in terms of producing meaningful and useful data about the impact of the co-curricular activities, or they do not clearly connect to the goals of the general education program. The details about the actual collection, sharing, and evaluation processes, including who takes responsibility for the process, suggest the process is unsystematic or underdeveloped. The results suggest limited impact on general education learning, or they do not lend themselves to specific improvement plans, or the results, while positive, reflect a questionable or small sample of

activities. Results are shared but not broadly or there appears to be no focus on using them to identify improvements to the co-curricular program.

Criterion #4: Improving Co-Curricular Learning Processes

Excellent Model (5): Overall, the app. details improvements that will help other institutions more quickly and effectively establish co-curricular programs and show other institutions what is meant by a full-loop of assessment. The app. describes plans for goals and/or improvement projects that sensibly follow from the results collected. The improvement plans fit with the current plan and should strengthen the co-curricular program or general education learning. The plans should be effective because of the broad support in developing the new plans, including institutional support. Plans for checking improvements are clear and measureable, and plans are in place or in use for who will check what improvements and when they will be checked. An excellent summary of lessons learned that will help and encourage others to start similar programs.

Acceptable Model (3): Overall, the app. shows an institution moving towards a process of using data to improve its co-curricular general education program. The app. describes the plans for improving goals or activities, though some improvements might not clearly follow from the data collected or the plans might not lead to gains in student engagement or student learning that the institution is hoping to achieve. The plans for making improvements might have good potential, but might reflect limited collaboration or limited institutional support. While the app describes an improvement process that has merit, it has not reached a stage where improvements are being checked, or the plans might not address full ownership needs. However, plans for checking future improvements are in place; there might be some questions about specific details, like who will collect or when. The summary of lessons learned is complete with some important considerations for others.

Developing Model (1): The app. describes improvement goals or projects, but the plans are of questionable merit. How the projects will be accomplished is not well-detailed, or the level of support, of any kind, is unclear. Questions about methods and/or outcomes should have been asked, but weren't. The plans for follow-up checks on the improvements are unclear. Lessons learned are of limited value to others. Overall, the application either fails to describe the closing of the loop, or closes the loop, but leaves too many unanswered questions throughout the full process.