A Letter from Dr. Rose

I am very pleased with the progress made thus far in the development of JMU’s new General Education program. I commend the hundreds of faculty members who have worked hard to develop the program and to create the many new courses that are now part of the curriculum. Around 300 full-time and part-time faculty are currently teaching the 650 General Education sections that are in place.

We are moving rapidly toward our goal of establishing an innovative General Education program that will intellectually stimulate our students and provide an academic challenge that is consistent with the superior quality of our student body and faculty. All JMU students must receive a broad range of knowledge for them to truly become educated individuals. While this information should be widely diversified in its content, it must be presented in an orderly fashion with a sequencing of information so that one component of the program relates to the next.

Our program is a bold and innovative approach to teaching General Education. As the University has done in so many other areas, we are again providing a model for the rest of higher education. Anything new, however, must be fine-tuned before perfection is reached. As we further develop the program, I urge you to share your suggestions and constructive criticism with the cluster coordinators or with Dean Halpern. The potential exists for JMU to have a world-class General Education program. By utilizing the massive intellectual capacity of our faculty and by working together, we can achieve this goal.

Linwood H. Rose
Acting President

Greetings from Dean Halpern

Welcome to the new format of the General Education Newsletter. From now on, we hope to publish this newsletter every two or three weeks as a source of information about developments in GenEd. I am very pleased with the ongoing development of JMU’s program. In particular, I believe that our freshmen are reaping positive benefits from their experiences in Cluster One. I had a visit last week from a group of students researching GenEd for their GCOM course, and I was very impressed by their understanding of complex issues in communication.

Even though we are to the point in the semester when most faculty and students are a little bleary-eyed and beginning to yearn for holidays, I also continue to hear a lot of excitement from faculty involved in building cross-disciplinary connections between their courses and those of their colleagues in other disciplines.

The General Education Council has been meeting every other week, and is working on some important issues. In particular, a subcommittee is drafting procedures for...
Joanne Charbonneau is the fifth of seven children born to a French-Canadian father and Polish mother. Her interest in multiculturalism and humanities came naturally. Hearing Polish and French at home was commonplace, and she didn’t know that when her classmates in first grade talked about eating French toast, it was what she ate as pain d’oré. Raised in a small town in New England, she read through the children’s library before she finished 4th grade and asked for an adult library card. To squelch the avid reading habits of this obnoxious kid, the head librarian granted her the card and filled her bookbag with six or seven heavy classics: *Ramona, Yearling, Emma, Jane Eyre*, and *Daughters of the Earth*. She was hooked for life.

Joanne chose the Great Books program at St. John’s College in Annapolis, but left after two years—a bit disillusioned, but certainly wiser than when she entered. She was fascinated by Greek and Latin texts and the medieval period and couldn’t understand why reading secondary materials was such a bad idea. Didn’t they place the primary reading in their historical and cultural context? Deciding to work to save enough money to go to Europe with a friend, she quickly realized that working at a factory (even if it was in the office) without a college degree was not an enviable life. Finishing two years of college in 1-1/2 semesters—not something she recommends for any undergraduate—she embarked on two new adventures: marriage and a move out West. After completing a master’s degree at the University of Montana, she went to Michigan State University for her doctorate. As a medievalist, Joanne is interested in genre study and the intermingling of the sacred and profane in medieval literature. She has been working on the genre of romance (medieval to modern) for the past twenty years.

Joanne’s first academic appointments were at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and at Butler University in Indianapolis. After a year in Baltimore, she moved to Butler, where she directed the freshman English program for three years and helped implement a new curriculum of critical reading, thinking, and writing. She taught Humanities core courses and introduced the new course “Myth, Legend, and Literature.” Joanne became head of the English Department at Fayetteville State University in North Carolina for one year before moving back to Montana to work in the Humanities Program there for six years. Because of the flexibility of the system, she developed courses on Toni Morrison, “Archetypal Patterns in Women’s Fiction,” and of course a range of courses in medieval literature and romance. Besides her main research interest in medieval romance (an annotated bibliography on Middle English romance, published in 1987, and the notes to “Franklin’s Tale” for the *Riverside Chaucer*), she has worked on women’s issues and has written on antifeminism, Prince Charming and spinster for *Magill’s Ready Reference: Women’s Issues*, 1997, and on two women scientists in the upcoming new edition of *American National Biography* by Oxford University Press. She has been working on some early women chemists in the U.S., especially Ellen Swallow Richards, and their journeys in the man’s world of science.

Joanne comes to James Madison University excited about an integrated, cross-disciplinary approach to General Education and lured by the natural beauty of the Valley, the mountains, and bluegrass music. Joanne’s office is located in Moody Hall, Room 107A2. She may be reached by e-mail at charboja@jmu.edu or by phone at 540/568-2846.

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The JMU Community is invited to…

More Conversations on General Education

This is an opportunity for discussion of ideas, concerns and general information on each Cluster of the new program

- November 7th – Critical Thinking with Don Fawkes
- November 14th – Cluster One Revisited: The Cluster One Packages with Rex Fuller
- December 5th – A Holiday Conversation with Linda Cabe Halpern

Moody Lounge 2:30 – 4:00 PM
Refreshments provided
New Cluster 3 Coordinator

Richard Rice comes to JMU from the University of Montana, where he taught chemistry, science studies, history of science, and an honors physics/chemistry course from a historical perspective. With a colleague in Geology, he was preparing to pilot a new course that attempted to integrate the four natural sciences within the overall theme of evolution, but that project was scrapped when he decided to leave the Bitterroot Mountains for the Blue Ridge.

Dick’s scientific training is in chemistry (B.S., UNH; M.S., Michigan; and Ph.D. in physical chemistry, Michigan State), though it was interrupted by stints as a bench chemist in a hospital lab for five years and then as a creative writing student at the University of Montana (M.F.A.) for two years. While a grad student at Michigan State, he spent a year on an IREX exchange at the Institute of Colloid and Water Chemistry of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kiev and a summer as an AAAS Mass Media Fellow at the short-lived TV series “Omni: The New Frontier.” He also began his teaching of nontraditional courses at Michigan State, where he helped develop and teach an experimental writing program for science students.

After a year as a postdoc at the U.S. Army Research & Development Center at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, he became Research Scientist in the Water Science Program at the Holcomb Research Institute (HRI), located at Butler University in Indianapolis. The Institute passed out of existence after several years, and Dick took a temporary teaching assignment in chemistry at Indiana University Northwest, the regional IU campus in Gary.

While at Gary, he received an NSF Professional Development Award in Science, Technology, and Society for his proposal “Osmosis: 20th-Century Commotion Over a 19th-Century Notion.” Thus pursuing his interests in the history and philosophy of science, he spent one year with a philosopher of science in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at IU in Bloomington and a second year with a historian of science at Duke. Meanwhile, he began teaching science studies at North Carolina State, but after two years went to the University of Montana for the opportunity of teaching both chemistry and science studies there.

Dick’s research in chemistry involved the theoretical modeling of ion transport across membranes, and at HRI he extended his mathematical work to the migration of pollutants in the subsurface and the equilibrium chemistry of natural waters. His research interests now focus on the history of chemistry, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He is working on various aspects of the lives and careers of William Harkins, Ellen Richards, Charles Munroe, and Henry Armstrong, along with Dmitrii Mendeleev and several other Russian chemists.

Some of Dick’s nonacademic interests include hiking, camping, and snowshoeing. He is also a covered bridge fan—having traveled to every one of them in New England with his parents when he was a teenager—so he has already been to the Old Humpback Bridge in Alleghany County and plans to visit other covered bridges in the area. Family genealogy has been another ongoing hobby for many years, but it’s time-consuming and frustrating, and he usually follows up big successes with several years of inactivity. Reading remains one of his favorite pastimes, and even though he doesn’t find much time (or need) for writing fiction anymore, he has been working for quite a while on a short story about Kekulé’s dream of the snake biting its own tail.

In the classroom, Dick still likes to teach chemistry, both introductory and physical, but his main interest for the past 7-8 years is science education for those students who won’t major in science, but definitely need some understanding of its role in the world they inhabit. “When I saw the GenEd ad for JMU, it seemed to me that Cluster Three embodies the direction that science education is moving in this country, as well as my own philosophy about science,” says Dick. Luckily, he likes challenges!

Everyone, including bounty hunters, may find Dick in his office in Moody Hall, Room 107A1. He may be reached by e-mail at ricere@jmu.edu or by phone at 540/568-2847.

GenEd Council Membership 97-98
Chair:
Linda Cabe Halpern, Dean of GenEd
Cluster Coordinators:
Cluster 1: Rex Fuller, Speech Comm
Cluster 2: Joanne Charbonneau, GenEd
Cluster 3: Richard Rice, GenEd
Cluster 4: Glenn Hastedt, Political Science
Cluster 5: Herb Amato, Health Science
Cluster Committee Representatives:
Cluster 1: Don Fawkes, GenEd
Cluster 2: Kay Arthur, Art & Art History
Cluster 3: Cindy Klevickis, ISAT
Cluster 4: Raymond Hyser, History
Cluster 5: Deborah Sutton, Health Science
College Representatives:
CAL: Beth Eck, Sociology & Anthropology
CEP: Challace McMillin, Kinesiology
CISAT: Princewill Anyalebechi, ISAT
COB: Reg Foucar-Szocki, HTM
CSM: Tom DeVore, Chemistry
University Representatives:
Dary Erwin, Student Assessment
Margie Greenfield, Freshman Advising
Al Menard, Student Affairs
Sharon Pitt, Center for Multi Media
Student Representatives:
April Roberts, SGA
Jessica Aman, SGA
A Look at GSC 101A

Physics, Chemistry and the Human Experience

The GSCI 101A course and faculty truly represent the spirit of the General Education Program. Tom Devore (Chemistry) and Bill Ingham (Physics) originally developed the course about four years ago to help meet the needs of Virginia’s teachers in physical science. This course, along with the follow-up courses GSCI 102A and GSCI 103A, became the core of the General Science Package in Cluster Three. GSCI 101A has been tested through several pilot offerings. Dorn Peterson (Physics) joined the team last spring, and seven other faculty members from Chemistry, Geology and Physics sat in on Tom’s and Dorn’s sections, so they could join the team this year for the first large-scale offering of the course. This team of committed faculty met weekly with members of the Biology and Geology departments to discuss curriculum, course content, teaching philosophy, and methodology for Cluster Three and for the General Science Package in particular. We all agree that these meetings were extremely valuable as we attempted to integrate the physics and chemistry components of the course and to make them relevant to our students. Perhaps the most important things we did during these meetings was to agree on as much commonality as possible across all sections of the course, such as a common core syllabus. This ensures a common body of knowledge for our students and the GenEd spirit in the course.

In August 1997 the GSCI 101A faculty met for a three-day workshop, which was sponsored by the Office of the Dean of General Education and organized by Frank Palocsay (Chemistry) and Lance Kearns (Geology). The workshop provided a forum for intensive discussion and decision making on common course content, problems, teaching methods, and philosophy. Lance presented several classroom demonstrations, and Debbie Warnaar led a discussion on small-group and active learning. The faculty, representing three science departments and GenEd, worked well together. Different assumptions and viewpoints have enriched our discussions, and we believe that these differences have also enriched our sections of the course. Following up on the workshop, the GSCI faculty continue to meet on a weekly basis to share discoveries and support each other as new challenges are encountered and overcome.

The most difficult challenge we face is a genuine attempt to break from old teaching styles and to allow for self learning, classroom discussion, small-group interaction and problem solving. For those classes engaged in this style of presentation, there has been an increased amount of student interest and participation. It’s too early to evaluate all the benefits, but, even with class size of more than a hundred students, the classes are certainly more lively when working in small groups tackling new problems.

The faculty teaching GSCI 101A are very excited and positive about the course. We urge others engaged in the GenEd program to collaborate on something new and exciting.

“The advancement and diffusion of knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty.”

- - James Madison

package approval in GenEd that make clear that the responsibility for course approval belongs to the colleges of the university and the responsibility for package approval is within the general education program.

As I write this, we are in the middle of preregistration for next semester. Freshmen in the new general education program are being preregistered into Cluster One courses for second semester based on their preferences. This is a new process for the Office of the Registrar as well as for Freshman Advisors, and we have all been learning as we go, but I believe things are going very well.

Included in this letter are profiles of our two new Cluster Coordinators, Joanne Charbonneau and Richard Rice. Both Joanne and Richard came to JMU from the University of Montana. Since the search committees for Clusters Two and Three were different groups, and since Joanne and Richard have different last names, we discovered with great interest when we reviewed the formal interviews that they are married to each other. They began their formal duties as Cluster Coordinators in August, but were able to accompany the other Coordinators, Joanne Charbonneau and Richard Rice, to the Asheville Institute on General Education in June. In fact, their devotion to General Education is so great that they spent their 25th wedding anniversary in Asheville with us!

Best wishes to all of you for the end of the semester.

Sincerely,
Linda Cabe Halpern