

Dukes Engage: A Revised Vision for General Education at JMU

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Executive Summary

The revised general education (Gen Ed) program structure supports the university's mission and existing learning outcomes of the Gen Ed program while moving away from a checklist approach, thereby promoting student engagement, integrative learning, and community-building. It follows a book-ended model beginning with Madison Foundations, developing through thematic Madison Pillars, and concluding with a Culminating Learning Experience. The program comprises 14 courses (42 credit hours) with opportunities for increased double counting.

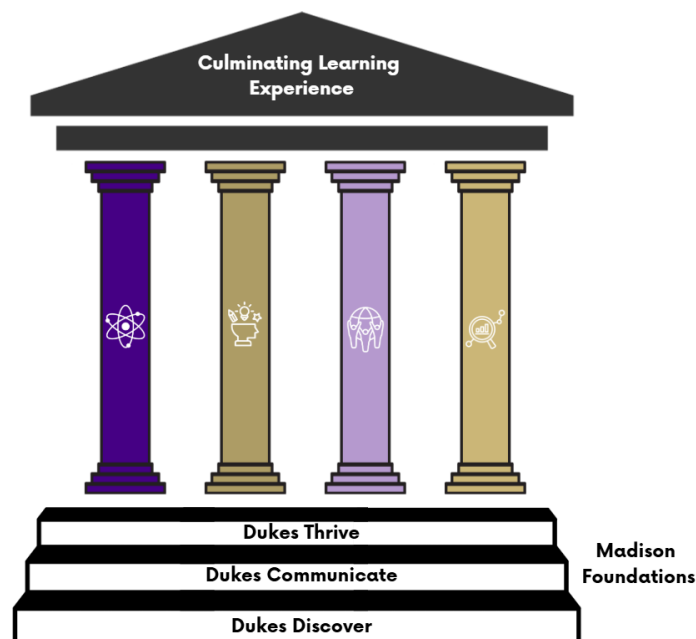


Figure 1 Visual Overview of the Revised Gen Ed Curriculum.

Distinctive Areas of the Proposal

There are two distinctive areas in this revised program. The first is Madison Foundations, a set of four requirements (12 credits) students complete in their first year of attending JMU (the exception being the Dukes Thrive requirement, which students may delay until their second year). These courses give students the foundation from which they will continue their path through thematic pillars, ending with the culminating experience.

The first requirement is **Dukes Discover** (3 credits), a first-year course designed to spark critical inquiry, foster belonging, and support college readiness. For this requirement, small, interactive, discussion-based classes are paired with online modules focused on academic skills and student success.

The following two requirements are **Dukes Communicate** (6 credits), two first-year courses students complete within three communication modes: written, oral, and mediated. These courses share core outcomes (e.g., engaging audiences using multiple communication modes) and emphasize the ethical and effective use of communication tools, including AI.

The final requirement of Madison Foundations is **Dukes Thrive** (3 credits), a first- or second-year course encapsulating a wellness domain (e.g., social, emotional, spiritual, environmental, and financial). Students also complete campus based Thrive activities (comparable to the existing Wellness Passport) in four of eight dimensions of wellness, encouraging holistic development and campus engagement.

The second distinctive area is the **Culminating Learning Experience** in which students take one course (3 credits) to fulfill this requirement as the conclusion of their academic program. The experience requires students to apply knowledge gained throughout their studies to complex issues, encouraging deep thinking and reflection about how much they have grown during their time at JMU and what they want to contribute to the world after graduation. Courses that will fulfill the requirement will focus on real-world, project-based learning across disciplines and will be communication intensive with shared learning outcomes. Double counting with majors/minors is encouraged in this requirement, as it may be fulfilled by major/minor capstone courses, UNST 400 integrative courses, research projects or an honors thesis, study abroad, internships (with faculty involvement), portfolios, artistic performances, or design exhibits.

Summary of Deliverable Guidelines

- **Purpose of the Program:** To provide students meaningful and transformative learning experiences that prepare them to engage with and affect a rapidly changing world.
- **Distinctiveness:** The revised program provides a cohesive structure, bounded by Madison Foundations and a Culminating Learning Experience. Thematic Madison Pillars are supported by foundational courses and lead to the culminating experience. The program is distinct in its connection to the JMU mission statement and its ease of marketing and communication. Where possible, pillar courses shift away from survey of or introduction to classes to focus on topics (e.g., Responding to Natural Disasters). This approach allows for flexibility, which is a key consideration, particularly in recognition of transfer policies. The program is designed to accommodate the variations while preserving the curriculum's overall integrity and intent.
- **What is Different and What Remains the Same:** The revised program strategically changes some elements of the existing program but remains a learning outcomes-based approach. Details are provided later in this proposal.