

Proposed Core Curriculum - Revised (PCC2)

Prepared by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Core Curriculum
March 6, 2026

Executive Summary

Changes from Initial Draft

Overview of Revisions

Major Revisions

- 3-credit Information Literacy & Critical Thinking Course in Launch
- Global Perspectives Requirement
- Clarifying Relationship Between Science Requirements
- Clarifying Science, Technology, and the Built Environment Requirement
- Making Engaged Citizenship & Democracy More Inclusive
- Clarifying Relationship between Requirements and Embedded Themes

Key Areas of Mixed Feedback and Committee Deliberation

- Power Skills
- Connection Requirement

The Revised Curriculum Structure (PCC2)

Launch (12 credits)

- Information Literacy & Critical Thinking (3 credits)
- Communication I (3 credits) and Communication II (3 credits)
- Well-Being (3 credits)

Core (19 credits)

- Creative Inquiry and Processes (3 credits)
- Humanistic and Interpretive Reasoning (3 credits)
- Social and Behavioral Inquiry (3 credits)
- Quantitative Reasoning (3 credits)
- Natural Science (3 credits) and Natural Science Lab (1 credit)
- Science, Technology, and the Built Environment (3 credits)

Engaged Citizenship & Democracy (6 credits)

- Foundations of Democracy (3 credits)
- Practices for the Public Good (3 credits)

Connection (1-credit)

Global Perspectives Overlay Requirement

Requirement Summary and Draft Objectives | Total credit hours: 38

Implementation and Governance Considerations

Revised Implementation Timeline

Embedded Themes

Governance and Course Approval

Naming the Curriculum and Its Components

General Education Requirements in Other Academic Programs

Alignment with the Strategic Plan

Next Steps: Endorsement Votes

Executive Summary

Following the release of the November 21, 2025, draft of the Proposed Core Curriculum (PCC), the Committee on the Core Curriculum (CCC) conducted a comprehensive review of survey data, written comments, and direct feedback from faculty, academic unit heads, associate and assistant deans, Academic Council, the Committee on Academic Programs, the General Education Council, JMU staff, and students. This document presents a revised proposal that incorporates that feedback and offers greater clarity where the initial draft prompted questions or concerns.

Feedback affirmed broad support for the curriculum’s central aims: strengthening intellectual coherence, broadening faculty participation, modernizing foundational skills, and preparing students for a rapidly evolving civic and professional landscape. Among full-time faculty respondents, net favorability ratings¹ were positive across every major component of the proposed curriculum. While some areas generated substantial neutral responses, no requirement produced a net negative evaluation, suggesting a generally constructive reception of the model even where questions remain.

The committee undertook targeted revision where concerns were especially pronounced: elements of Launch, the role and structure of Power Skills, the design of the Connection requirement, and questions surrounding the absence of a Global Perspectives requirement. In some cases, revisions clarify purpose and proposed implementation pathways; in others, the committee has adjusted structure, credit allocation, or framing in response to faculty input and committee deliberation. The revised curriculum maintains the essential architecture of the original draft while offering greater clarity, improved feasibility, and stronger coherence across requirements.

¹ Net favorability is calculated as the percentage of “agree/strongly agree” or “extremely likely/somewhat likely” responses minus the percentage of “disagree/strongly disagree” or “somewhat unlikely/extremely unlikely” responses among full-time faculty respondents.

This document stands on its own as a full articulation of the revised curriculum. If endorsed, governance structures to be established in Spring 2026 will guide implementation and support continued refinement through a combination of existing departmental and college curricular processes and revised general education review procedures. Ongoing evaluation and adjustment are expected features of responsible academic governance and will ensure that the curriculum remains responsive to evidence, faculty expertise, and evolving student needs.

Changes from Initial Draft

Overview of Revisions

The revised proposal retains the core architecture of the November 2025 draft (Launch, Core, Engaged Citizenship & Democracy, and Connection) while incorporating substantive modifications in response to faculty feedback. The committee's revisions fall into two broad categories: (1) structural revisions, including credit reallocation and the addition or modification of specific requirements; and (2) clarifications and refinements, particularly where the initial draft generated questions about scope, criteria, or implementation.

The revisions described below focus on areas where feedback was most concentrated. In each case, the committee sought to preserve the curriculum's coherence and overarching goals while responding directly to concerns raised during the feedback period.

On several issues, faculty feedback and committee preferences were mixed. Where consensus was not possible, voting members selected among viable alternatives to advance a coherent and actionable proposal. The framework presented here establishes a general structure for a renewed general education program. The CCC anticipates and welcomes continued refinement through governance and curriculum and instruction (C&I) processes as faculty assess the curriculum in practice and exercise their ongoing stewardship of the program.

Major Revisions

3-credit Information Literacy & Critical Thinking Course in Launch

The November 2025 draft proposed a 2-credit Information Literacy & Critical Thinking course in Launch paired with a separate 1-credit Power Skills course. Feedback during the review period indicated substantial skepticism about the feasibility of offering 1- and 2-credit courses at scale. Faculty and academic unit heads raised concerns about scheduling complexity, faculty teaching assignments, and the administrative demands associated with staffing multiple small-credit courses across departments.

In response, the committee has replaced the 2-credit Information Literacy & Critical Thinking course and the separate 1-credit Power Skills course with a single 3-credit Information Literacy & Critical Thinking requirement. This revision preserves the goal of establishing shared foundations in critical inquiry while aligning more closely with standard 3-credit course structures that departments are already equipped to staff and schedule. As in the initial proposal, the course will emphasize evaluating information, analyzing arguments, and examining how knowledge is created, interpreted, and circulated in contemporary information environments.

The removal of the stand-alone 1-credit Power Skills course eliminates the most explicit curricular space in which students would have been introduced to the structure and purpose of the new general education program. To ensure that students understand the logic and aims of their general education experience, the committee recommends that the future general education governance body, in partnership with the Provost's Office, develop a structured orientation to the revised curriculum. This orientation might take the form of asynchronous online modules, as in the Orientation *One Book*; a structured component of Weeks of Welcome; or a separate, required, in-person program for new students. The goal would be to make the design and purpose of general education visible to students from the outset of their JMU academic experience.

Global Perspectives Requirement

The revised curriculum incorporates a Global Perspectives requirement and affirms that meaningful engagement with global contexts is essential to a contemporary general education. A Global Perspectives requirement ensures that students encounter societies, traditions, and systems that developed outside the United States and examine how culturally situated histories, languages, religious and philosophical traditions, and structures of power shape public life.

The purpose of this requirement is to foster analysis of how ideas, institutions, and social systems emerge from distinct historical and cultural contexts. Courses satisfying this requirement are expected to engage societies or traditions beyond the United States in sustained and substantive ways.

The curriculum implements this Global Perspectives requirement as a credit-neutral overlay requirement. Courses within existing categories may satisfy this designation when they meet learning outcomes (to be defined by a General Education governance body formed in Spring 2026). This structure preserves overall credit totals while ensuring that global engagement is a required component of the program. Integrating the requirement across multiple areas signals that global engagement functions as an intellectual lens that can shape learning in diverse contexts.

The revised curriculum also includes Global Perspectives as an embedded theme. Combining the overlay with a Global Perspectives embedded theme signals that global engagement is both a discrete requirement and a recurring intellectual lens throughout the program.

Alternative approaches also received meaningful support within the committee, including the creation of a new 3-credit Global Perspectives requirement in the Core and an alternative framing that would have emphasized perspectives beyond the United States and Western Europe or the North Atlantic (beyond the U.S., Canada, and Western Europe). The framing and structure of the requirement included in the proposed curriculum were ultimately recommended by a majority of the committee's voting members.

Clarifying Relationship Between Science Requirements

To offer clarity regarding the meaning of Natural Science and Physical Science, we defined Natural Science broadly to include the scientific study of the physical world. The definition thus excludes social sciences. We also removed the word "Physical" from the title of the second requirement (but retain it in some of the descriptions).

Clarifying Science, Technology, and the Built Environment Requirement

Feedback on this requirement revealed uncertainty about its scope and coherence. While many respondents supported expanding the ways students engage the physical world, some raised questions about what would qualify as a technology-focused or built-environment course, whether the requirement risked becoming overly diffuse or skills-based, and how the two science requirements would interact.

In response, the committee has expanded and clarified the language defining this requirement. The revised description makes explicit that options in each of three categories (physical systems in the natural sciences, the study of technological systems, and the analysis of the built environment) are unified by their focus on the systematic examination of the physical or material world. The requirement is intended to support sustained engagement with how scientific principles and material forces shape physical and technological systems and human-designed environments, and how those systems in turn shape human experience.

The revised language also provides examples of eligible course topics to clarify expectations and boundaries. Technology-focused courses are expected to examine how technologies function, are designed, and operate within broader material, social, or historical contexts. Courses that focus primarily on training students to use a particular tool or platform would not, on their own, satisfy this requirement. Similarly, courses centered on the built environment are expected to analyze infrastructure, architecture,

settlement patterns, and related systems through sustained engagement with evidence, design principles, and material constraints.

Making Engaged Citizenship & Democracy More Inclusive

Feedback affirmed strong support for civic learning but raised concerns about the framing of the second 3-credit Engaged Citizenship & Democracy requirement. Some respondents noted that the earlier “Practicing Democracy” and “Problem-Solving for the Public Good” language could be read as privileging policy-oriented approaches and did not clearly signal the role of interpretive, expressive, or humanities-based contributions to democratic life.

In response, the committee has reframed the second requirement as Practices for the Public Good. This revised framing clarifies that democratic participation includes multiple modes of inquiry and engagement across disciplines. Courses may emphasize either (1) Public Problem-Solving or (2) Public Expression and Engagement.

Public Problem-Solving courses will focus on analyzing complex social challenges and developing ethical, community-centered responses. Public Expression and Engagement courses will center on interpretation, dialogue, ethical reasoning, public debate, creative expression, and other forms of community or civic engagement.

This revision broadens disciplinary inclusion while preserving the core civic learning objectives of the Engaged Citizenship & Democracy component.

Clarifying Relationship between Requirements and Embedded Themes

The embedded themes are designed to strengthen coherence across the curriculum by reinforcing key capacities throughout Launch, Core, Engaged Citizenship & Democracy, and Connection. They provide a conceptual through-line that helps ensure that foundational skills and dispositions are revisited in multiple contexts rather than confined to a single course.

Feedback on the embedded themes was generally positive. Faculty agreed that the identified capacities are important and that it is appropriate to expect courses in the program to engage at least one theme. At the same time, some confusion emerged because several theme names overlap with the names or content of specific requirements (e.g., Information Literacy & Critical Thinking; Engaged Citizenship & Democracy). This overlap may blur the distinction between requirements that students must complete and the categories used for curriculum design and program oversight.

It is important to clarify that embedded themes are not additional requirements and need not function as student-facing categories for course selection. They primarily support program coherence and oversight. The structure of the curriculum would not materially change if the themes were removed.

That said, the committee sees potential to use the themes more intentionally to support student reflection. For example, courses could include brief syllabus language explaining how they engage a particular theme, making those connections visible to students. The committee also sees potential to use the themes more intentionally to support integrative reflection. For example, a visual summary of how often a student has engaged each theme could strengthen the Connection experience and help students recognize patterns in their learning across the curriculum.

Key Areas of Mixed Feedback and Committee Deliberation

Power Skills

The original proposal identified Power Skills as one of four embedded themes: Information Literacy & Critical Thinking, Power Skills, Well-Being, and Engaged Citizenship & Democracy. While faculty broadly endorsed the underlying capacities associated with Power Skills, the terminology itself generated limited enthusiasm and some conceptual confusion. Respondents noted overlap between the proposed Power Skills theme and other themes and requirements, particularly critical thinking and communication. Because communication and critical thinking are both associated with discrete requirements and they are commonly cited as “power skills,” the relationships between the theme and the requirements were not always clear.

As the university’s strategic planning process has continued, a Vision Team focused on student outcomes has identified Communication, Collaboration, and Problem-Solving as “Promise Skills” to be recommended for inclusion in an employer-facing guarantee. The group has also identified a set of “JMU Distinctives,” including ethical reasoning, civic engagement, and well-being. These emerging categories overlap in part with existing requirements and embedded themes in the proposed curriculum. For example, ethical reasoning aligns closely with elements of Engaged Citizenship & Democracy; well-being already appears as both a requirement and a theme; and communication is a defined Launch requirement.

This convergence highlights the need for clearer boundaries and more precise terminology within the curriculum itself. The committee’s understanding of what matters most for JMU students has not changed. The proposed revision simply names these skills more explicitly and differentiates them more clearly across the curriculum rather than subsuming them within a single category.

The committee recommends a revised set of embedded themes that lists key skills explicitly rather than relying on the “Power Skills” label. The recommended list includes:

- Information Literacy & Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Collaboration & Problem-Solving
- Global Perspectives
- Well-Being
- Engaged Citizenship & Democracy

The parallel strategic planning and general education reform processes independently identified many of the same priorities; clarifying the language used to describe them strengthens coherence without shifting curricular authority away from faculty.

Connection Requirement

The structure of the Connection requirement remains unchanged from the November draft. Students may satisfy the requirement through a designated 1-credit Connection course or through an approved departmental experience (e.g., a departmental capstone) provided that the course incorporates the Connection learning outcomes.

The purpose of the Connection course is to provide a structured opportunity for students to reflect on and integrate their learning across the PCC, their major, and their co-curricular experiences. In this culminating experience, students will articulate and demonstrate how their critical thinking has developed, how they evaluate and use information, how they communicate across contexts, how they understand and cultivate well-being, and how their learning prepares them for engaged citizenship. Connection courses may take different forms. For example, interdisciplinary case-based seminars, place-based inquiry, work-based learning experiences, or thematic explorations grounded in faculty expertise, but all will require students to synthesize prior learning and make it visible to new audiences.

During the feedback period, faculty raised concerns that departments might be required to modify existing capstone experiences to satisfy the Connection requirement. Several departments emphasized that their capstones are carefully designed, fully scaffolded experiences aligned with disciplinary standards, and expressed reluctance to layer additional requirements onto those courses.

The committee affirms that departments should not be required to alter major requirements to accommodate the Connection requirement. Departments may choose to align existing capstones with the Connection outcomes, but such alignment is voluntary. If program faculty determine that modification is not appropriate for a major, a student in that major would complete the Connection requirement through a course created for this purpose within the revised general education program.

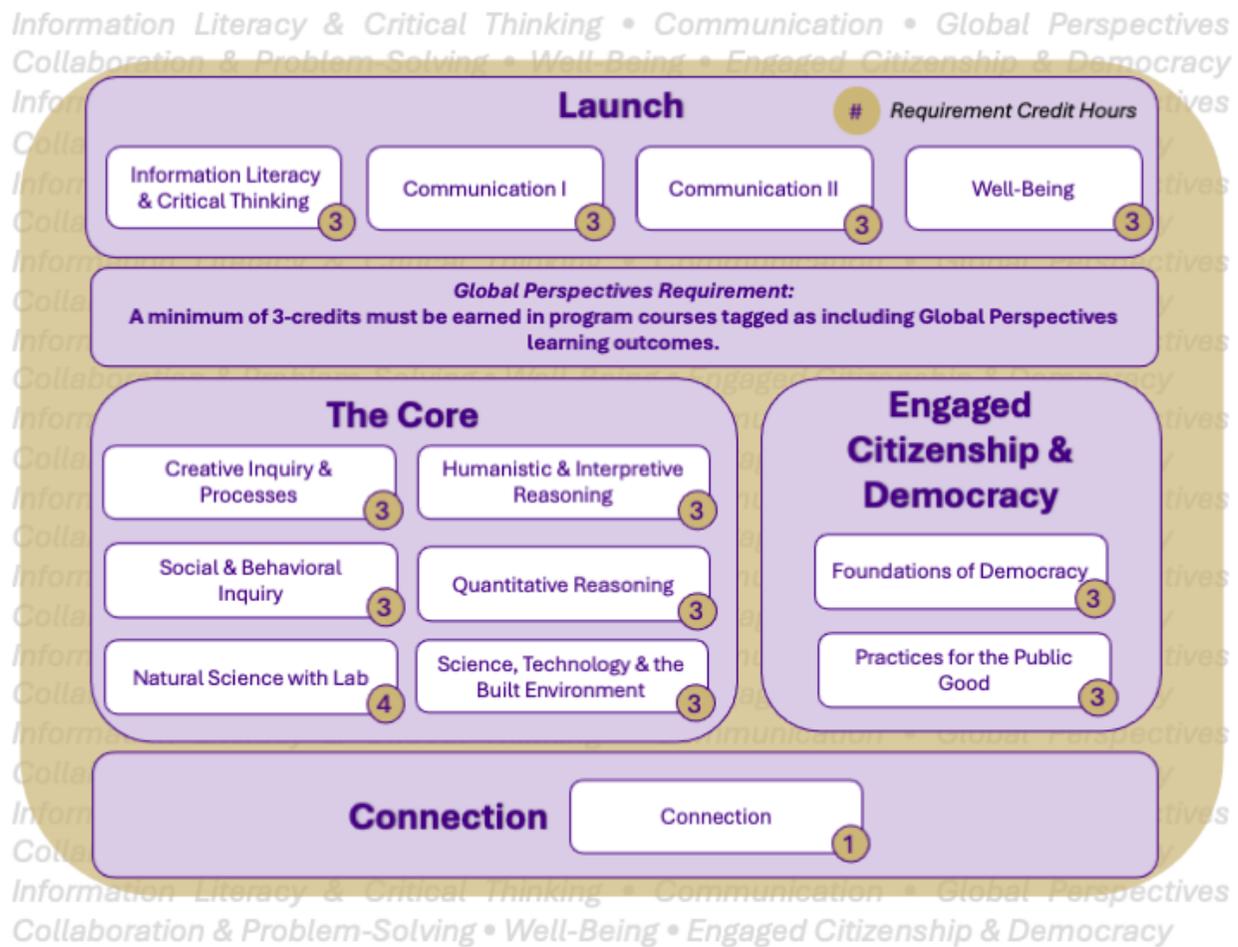
Faculty feedback also reflects concern about how a 1-credit requirement will be perceived, staffed, and sustained. The committee takes these concerns seriously. The effectiveness of the Connection requirement will depend not on its credit value alone, but on clear learning outcomes, thoughtful design, alignment with high-impact practices, and viable staffing structures. The 1-credit format is intended to create a focused, low-barrier space for synthesis and reflection without increasing overall credit load; its seriousness will be determined by expectations and implementation, not solely by seat time.

If the curriculum is adopted, program administrators and academic deans will be responsible for ensuring full program capacity, including the provision of sufficient Connection-designated courses to meet student demand independent of major-based experiences.

In addition to the concerns highlighted above, faculty feedback recognized the potential benefit of a structured opportunity for students to integrate learning across their academic experience. JMU has previously experimented with integrative courses designed to foster this kind of synthesis, and those efforts provide both precedent and insight for future development. The committee recommends deliberate implementation and ongoing evaluation of this new requirement. If, after faculty development and experience with implementation, the requirement does not achieve its intended purposes or cannot be sustained with available resources, it can be revised or removed through regular curricular processes.

The discussion of the Connection requirement has been expanded to incorporate examples of assignments and pedagogies that could support the draft Connections learning objectives. The examples are intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive. The CCC recommends the general education governance body and program administrators prioritize the provision of professional development opportunities to support faculty revising or creating courses to satisfy the Connection requirement.

The Revised Curriculum Structure (PCC2)



The CCC proposes a 38-credit curriculum organized around a structured **Launch** experience, exploration across the **Core** disciplinary courses, and integrative learning in **Engaged Citizenship & Democracy** and a culminating **Connection** experience. Launch establishes shared foundations in communication, information literacy, critical thinking, and well-being. The upper-division Connection requirement invites students to synthesize learning across the curriculum and reflect on how their knowledge and skills align with their academic, personal, and professional goals.

The curriculum is designed to prepare students to thrive in their lives and careers and to strengthen their communities and democratic society. Students will connect ideas across disciplines as they create and apply knowledge in diverse and evolving contexts. Critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving are developed intentionally across the program.

The design balances flexibility and cohesion. Requirements are framed to invite participation from multiple disciplines and academic units, expanding the range of courses that may satisfy requirements and reducing the risk of bottlenecks. Learning Communities, Pathways in the Core, and the Connection requirement further support integrative learning across contexts. The curriculum also modernizes the emphasis of general education to reflect evolving technologies, information ecosystems, and civic challenges.

This proposal includes requirement-level objectives to establish the proposed structure of the program requirements. The committee anticipates that these objectives will be developed into more detailed student learning outcomes by faculty prior to the implementation of the program.

Launch (12 credits)

Launch serves as the shared foundation of the curriculum. It is designed to support students' transition into the university's academic community and to establish core capacities that will be developed and reinforced throughout the program. Launch emphasizes communication, information literacy, critical thinking, and well-being as foundational elements of academic and personal success.

The committee anticipates that most students will complete Launch requirements in their first year. However, sequencing constraints in certain majors, particularly those with tightly prescribed first-year course sequences or externally mandated accreditation requirements, may result in some students completing portions of Launch in their second year. Even in those cases, Launch is intended to function as a coherent introduction to the expectations of university-level learning and to the broader purposes of general education.

Information Literacy & Critical Thinking (3 credits)

Objective: Students will be able to locate, evaluate, and apply information with attention to credibility, context, and ethics, and use these skills to analyze evidence and arguments in academic, personal, and professional settings.

Through this requirement, students build a shared foundation in information literacy and critical thinking. Learners develop foundational awareness of multiple forms of literacy—including data, AI, media, and scientific literacies—and practice assessing the credibility of sources, understanding how information is shaped by digital systems, determining whether evidence supports a claim, and analyzing the logic and structure of arguments across contexts. Specific attention will be paid to applying these analyses to one's own reasoning and reflection on the function of the brain as a tool, the inevitability of bias in human reasoning, and important critical thinking dispositions to address these issues.

Communication I (3 credits) and Communication II (3 credits)

Objective I: Students will be able to communicate clearly and effectively in writing by applying understanding of audience, purpose, and context, and by using effective writing processes (including drafting, engaging with feedback, and revision) to strengthen the clarity and coherence of their work.

Objective II: Students will be able to communicate clearly and effectively by adapting to audience, purpose, and context, and by participating in the effective exchange of ideas in the communicative mode of the course.

Students will be able to clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, and perspectives across diverse contexts and audiences. Students may meet Communications requirements through courses that emphasize written, oral, digital, multimodal, or disciplinary communication. A minimum of three credits will come from writing-intensive courses.

Well-Being (3 credits)

Objective: Students will be able to recognize how multiple dimensions of well-being interact and apply strategies that enhance health, purpose, and flourishing for the self and community.

The CCC affirms JMU's campus-wide definition of well-being based on the university's adoption of the Okanagan Charter as the guiding framework for this requirement, including dimensions such as environment, health, relationships, security, purpose, and learning.

Core (19 credits)

The Core provides students with a broad exploration of knowledge and methods of discovery. Students engage with multiple ways of knowing and problem solving across disciplines, building the capacity to learn within and beyond different fields and approaches to understanding the world. Core courses could be organized around topics or questions. A Core course might explore *Mission to Mars* to examine scientific inquiry or *Empires* to investigate historical interpretation, using these concentrated entry points to help students understand how disciplines generate, evaluate, and apply knowledge. Adopting this approach will require some reworking of existing courses. Centering courses on compelling questions or problems strengthens engagement and clarifies disciplinary purpose, while still giving faculty the flexibility to determine appropriate content coverage and select the topics and materials that best illuminate how their fields create and use knowledge.

The Core is designed to broaden opportunities for departments to contribute to general education and to increase the range of courses available for students to satisfy requirements. Expanding options in this way will support program sustainability, reduce bottlenecks, and allow students to engage with diverse topics and approaches. At the same time, the Core is not intended as an “anything goes” space: courses will be approved through robust C&I processes that ensure alignment with the learning objectives for each Core area and preserve meaningful distinctions among them.

As the Core encourages exploration, it also invites students and faculty to create connections. Faculty can propose (1) Learning Communities and (2) Pathways that connect Core requirements around/through themes such as creativity, narrative and culture, sustainability, advocacy, income inequality, human migration, international conflict, powering the world, or global pandemics. These models are flexible and responsive to changing times and contexts. A semester-long Learning Community might enroll the same students in two thematically linked courses or connect separate sections through a collaborative project. A Pathway could involve three or more courses taken over time that examine a shared theme from multiple perspectives. These structures support interdisciplinary learning, spark collaboration, and help students make a deeper sense of their Core experience.

The proposed Core would satisfy requirements from JMU’s accrediting body, SACSCOC, for breadth of knowledge. SACSCOC requires students to take courses in: (1) humanities/fine arts, (2) social/behavioral sciences, and (3) natural science/mathematics. In the Proposed Core Curriculum, *Creative Inquiry and Processes* and *Humanistic and Interpretive Reasoning* will develop learning and practice in the humanities/fine arts. *Social and Behavioral Inquiry* will cultivate knowledge and experience in social/behavioral sciences. *Natural Science* and *Quantitative Reasoning* will develop expertise in natural science/mathematics.

Creative Inquiry and Processes (3 credits)

Objective: Students will engage with and analyze creative processes to explore ideas, express meaning, and interpret human experience through attention to design and the visual, literary, and performing arts.

Humanistic and Interpretive Reasoning (3 credits)

Objective: Students will explore the spectrum of human cultures and their materials through the study of languages, literatures, philosophies, religions, histories, and the arts.

Particular attention in these courses is given to close-reading and critical evaluation of current and historical materials, posing and addressing ethical problems, and understanding human experiences from multiple points of view.

Social and Behavioral Inquiry (3 credits)

Objective: Students will develop the ability to explain how individuals, groups, or institutions are influenced by contextual factors; demonstrate awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs; and use appropriate methods and resources to apply social and behavioral science concepts, terminology, principles, and theories in analysis of significant human issues, past or present.

Particular attention in these courses is given to human relationships and behavior as they are influenced by social, economic and political institutions, spatial and geographical factors, and the events and social and cultural forces at play in the contemporary world.

Quantitative Reasoning (3 credits)

Objective: Students will be able to identify quantitative elements and relationships, create and evaluate quantitative arguments via appropriate mathematical or statistical methods and reasoning, and apply quantitative analysis to real-world decisions. The appropriate reasoning in this context is one or more of the following: (1) reasoning with quantities and their relationships, (2) reasoning with uncertainty and data, (3) computational reasoning, (4) abstract reasoning through generalizing, specifying, and inference, and (5) model-based reasoning.²

Natural Science (3 credits) and Natural Science Lab (1 credit)

Objective: Students will be able to apply scientific methods of inquiry to explain natural and physical phenomena and to evaluate evidence that informs scientific understanding in the natural sciences (as contrasted with social sciences).

Students complete three credits in a natural science discipline and a one-credit laboratory experience. These courses engage students in empirical observation, hypothesis formation, experimentation, and the interpretation of data. The lab requirement provides hands-on experience with scientific inquiry and strengthens students' ability to evaluate evidence and scientific claims. The lab used to satisfy the Natural Science Lab requirement may be associated with any natural science course that the student completes to satisfy the Natural Science Requirement or the Science, Technology, and Built Environment requirement.

Science, Technology, and the Built Environment (3 credits)

Objective: Students will be able to analyze how scientific principles and practices, technological systems, or human-designed environments are formed in relation to the

² Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences. 2024. "CBMS Statement on the Need for a Grades 9-14 Mathematical and Statistical Sciences Framework." <https://cbmsweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/CBMS-9-14-Math-statement-final-1.pdf>

physical world and/or in relation to such broader material forces as society, culture and history.

The Science, Technology, and the Built Environment requirement expands the ways students may engage with the complexities of the physical world. These options are unified in their academic study of the physical or material world. The academic breadth offered in this area allows units across campus to contribute to a holistic understanding of the physical world.

Students choose one of the following three options:

1. A natural science course that focuses on physical systems. Example courses include various topics in physics and chemistry. This course must focus on a different scientific discipline than the course the student uses to satisfy the Natural Science requirement.
2. A technology-focused course examining how scientific principles and/or other material forces, e.g., social and historical forces, articulate with technological design and function. This option is an in-depth look at how a technology works or is designed; it is not intended as a skills course about learning how to use a technology. Examples of course topics in this area include mapping technologies, surveillance technologies, sustainable technologies, artificial intelligence technologies, telecommunications and the internet, technologies of war and humanitarianism, energy production, technologies of sound, and transportation technologies.
3. A course centered on the physical built environment in the present or past. Again, the goal is to examine how scientific principles and other material forces, e.g., social and historical forces, can interact with the design and function of the built environment. Examples of course topics in this area include architecture, healthcare infrastructure, entertainment infrastructure, transportation modalities and infrastructure, energy infrastructure, waste systems, urban design, the sustainability of built environments, and human settlement patterns and persistence.

Engaged Citizenship & Democracy (6 credits)

The Engaged Citizenship & Democracy curriculum prepares students to understand and strengthen democratic life through informed, ethical, and collaborative action.

Foundations of Democracy (3 credits)

Objective: Students will be able to explain the core principles, institutions, and historical developments that shape democratic systems in the world; analyze how power, representation, and civic life function in diverse contexts; and evaluate the conditions that support or threaten democratic participation and accountability.

Each student begins with a 3-credit Foundations of Democracy course. Options could include courses that use different lenses through which to make sense of the American political system; for example, *The Development of American Democracy* (historical, sociological), *Constitutions and Self-Governance* (institutional), or *Democracy Around the World* (comparative). These courses should build a shared understanding of democratic principles, systems, and challenges and prepare students to evaluate the conditions that support and threaten democratic participation and accountability.

Practices for the Public Good (3 credits)

Objective: Students will be able to apply democratic principles and disciplinary methods to interpret public issues, engage diverse perspectives, and contribute thoughtfully and ethically to the public good through problem-solving, dialogue, creative expression, or community engagement.

Students complete an additional 3 credits in Practices for the Public Good. This requirement recognizes that self-governance is sustained not only through institutional knowledge but through forms of inquiry, collaboration, interpretation, and action that support thoughtful participation in public life.

Courses satisfying this requirement may be oriented around one of two primary approaches.

1. Public Problem-Solving

In these courses, students will examine complex social challenges and contextualize contemporary problems using disciplinary or interdisciplinary methods. Students apply democratic principles and collaborative approaches to assess evidence and needs of involved parties and to develop feasible, ethical, and community-centered responses. Such work should acknowledge the diversity of human experiences while advancing the public good.

2. Public Expression and Engagement

These courses will center forms of inquiry and participation that sustain democratic life, including arts and literature for the public good, public history, ethical reasoning, deliberative dialogue, public debate, and community or civic engagement. These courses invite students to interpret public issues using disciplinary or interdisciplinary methods, examine cultural and historical narratives,

engage communities responsibly, and develop habits of dialogue, reflection, and ethical judgment.

Courses may be offered as 1-, 2-, or 3-credit experiences. Students may complete a single 3-credit course or combine approved experiences to satisfy the 3-credit requirement. Initially, 1 and 2 credit courses should be offered in tandem, to make sure that students can complete the requirement via that route. Once a population of courses has been built up, then individual 1 or 2 credit courses can be developed.

Together, Foundations of Democracy and Practices for the Public Good will cultivate the shared knowledge, empathy, and habits that support informed, ethical, and collaborative participation in our communities and that sustain democracy in our communities and across the globe.

Connection (1-credit)

Objective: Students will be able to reflect on, synthesize, and apply their learning across courses and experiences, connecting knowledge, skills, and perspectives from their PCC, major, and degree coursework, as well as their co-curricular experiences. As they consider the greater arc of their development, they will inventory how the skills and knowledge gained impact their long-term goals beyond their undergraduate experiences at JMU.

This final program requirement empowers students to reflect deeply and to integrate their expansive learning across the PCC with their broader JMU experience. Through Connection, every student will articulate for themselves and demonstrate for new audiences the many ways in which their critical thinking skills have advanced, how they have learned to more effectively use information and communicate persuasively, how they understand and cultivate well-being, and the ways in which they can synthesize their core learning. Students will reflect on how their skills and practices in engaged citizenship contribute to their own well-being as they positively shape the world around them.

Connection courses may take many forms. For example, a faculty member developing a new 1-credit course for majors from across campus could choose, based on their own expertise, place-based learning as their class focus, with our own campus, our local community, or a global community as the course centerpiece. Students would bring their own experiences and expertise to deeply analyze this case study. They would work collaboratively to locate and utilize information on the course theme, discuss their processes of critical thinking, and share their findings based on their own lenses of analysis. For example, students who have the broad learning of their new PCC experience and are majors in Business, Design, Education, Health Sciences, Geology, Psychology, Creative Writing, Dance, and Sociology, working together, could focus on Harrisonburg,

the Shenandoah Valley, the state of Virginia, or an international site such as Greenland, the territory of Gaza, or the island of Taiwan. The ability to think in new ways about unfamiliar topics, practiced in the new PCC, combined with growing disciplinary expertise developed through each major, allows each student in the course to contribute and communicate their unique perspective.

As a second example, “Ethical Dilemmas” offers a rich lens through which a faculty member could develop a Connection course. Based on the faculty member’s own area of expertise, the course could center on a single case study, for example, built around intellectual or cultural property. The ownership of ancient marble sculptures from the Athenian Acropolis contested between Britain (the British Museum) and Greece (the Acropolis Museum) is a more precise example. Students would come to the course with their own unique experience of our broad liberal arts and sciences education, as well as their experience in majors as diverse as History, Physics, Art History, Engineering, Political Science, English, Kinesiology, Integrated Science and Technology, and Music. These students together would analyze and then present their proposed arguments on the topic.

Connection learning outcomes may also be incorporated into existing culminating academic experiences. The CCC recommends the faculty charged with further elaborating the Connection requirement consider adopting or adapting the “signature work” guidelines articulated by Peden³ to facilitate alignment of existing departmental experiences with the Connection learning outcomes. Peden identifies three core criteria for signature work:

1. Students must have some agency in identifying the nature of their project;
2. Projects must be integrative, drawing on multiple components of the student’s education; and
3. Student projects must address “big problems”—students should apply their learning to real-world issues that matter to society and to the student;

Where existing experiences require students to (1) synthesize and integrate cumulative knowledge, (2) apply learning and create new knowledge, (3) work independently, (4) present the results of their work to an audience, (5) meet rigorous professional and disciplinary standards, and (6) reflect on their own development, they would be well-suited to the incorporation of the Connection learning outcomes.⁴

³ Wilson Peden. 2015. “Signature Work: A Survey of Current Practices.” *Liberal Education* 101(2): 22-29.

⁴ These are criteria used by Nebraska Wesleyan University to align capstone expectations with signature work guidelines, as recounted in Mike Egan, Kristi Kneas, and Michael Reder. 2018. “Defining and Framing Signature Work for Your Campus,” *Peer Review: Emerging Trends and Key Debates in Undergraduate Education* 20(2): 8-11.

Global Perspectives Overlay Requirement

Objective: Students will be able to examine societies and traditions that developed outside the United States and evaluate how culturally situated histories, languages, religious and philosophical traditions, colonial or postcolonial dynamics, and social traditions shape systems of meaning and public life. Emphasis is placed on global interdependencies and interconnections.

The Global Perspectives requirement ensures that students engage substantively with societies, traditions, and systems shaped by historical trajectories distinct from those of the United States. Through sustained analysis of cultural, intellectual, political, and social contexts, students will deepen their understanding of how systems of meaning and public life emerge from specific historical and cultural conditions.

This requirement is implemented as a credit-neutral overlay. Courses in Launch, Core, or Engaged Citizenship & Democracy may satisfy the Global Perspectives designation when they meet learning outcomes (to be defined by a General Education governance body formed in Spring 2026). By integrating global engagement across multiple areas of the curriculum, the requirement reinforces contextual understanding, comparative analysis, and thoughtful engagement in a globally interconnected world, as well as global interconnections and interdependencies.

Requirement Summary and Draft Objectives | Total credit hours: 38

Requirement Description (credits)	Draft Objective
Launch 1: Information Literacy & Critical Thinking (3)	Students will be able to locate, evaluate, and apply information with attention to credibility, context, and ethics, and use these skills to analyze evidence and arguments in academic, personal, and professional settings.
Launch 2: Communication I (Writing Intensive) (3)	Students will be able to communicate clearly and effectively in writing by applying understanding of audience, purpose, and context, and by using effective writing processes (including drafting, engaging with feedback, and revision) to strengthen the clarity and coherence of their work.
Launch 3: Communication II (3)	Students will be able to communicate clearly and effectively by adapting to audience, purpose, and context, and by participating in the effective exchange of ideas in the communicative mode of the course.
Launch 4: Well-Being (3)	Students will be able to recognize how multiple dimensions of well-being interact and apply strategies that enhance health, purpose, and flourishing for the self and community.
Core 1: Creative Inquiry and Processes (3)	Students will engage with and analyze creative processes to explore ideas, express meaning, and interpret human experience through attention to design and the visual, literary, and performing arts.
Core 2: Humanistic and Interpretive Reasoning (3)	Students will explore the spectrum of human cultures and their materials through the study of languages, literatures, philosophies, religions, histories, and the arts.
Core 3: Social and Behavioral Inquiry (3)	Students will develop the ability to explain how individuals, groups, or institutions are influenced by contextual factors; demonstrate awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs; and use appropriate methods and resources to apply social and behavioral science concepts, terminology, principles, and theories in analysis of significant human issues, past or present.
Core 4: Quantitative Reasoning (3)	Students will be able to identify quantitative elements and relationships, create and evaluate quantitative arguments via appropriate mathematical or statistical methods and reasoning, and apply quantitative analysis to real-world decisions. The appropriate reasoning in this context is one or more of the following: (1) reasoning with quantities and their relationships, (2) reasoning with uncertainty and data, (3) computational reasoning, (4) abstract reasoning through generalizing, specifying, and inference, and (5) model-based reasoning.

Core 5: Natural Science (3) Core 6: Natural Science Lab (1)	Students will be able to apply scientific methods of inquiry to explain natural and physical phenomena and to evaluate evidence that informs scientific understanding in the natural sciences (as contrasted with social sciences).
Core 7: Science, Technology, and the Built Environment (3)	Students will be able to analyze how scientific principles and practices, technological systems, or human-designed environments are formed in relation to the physical world and/or in relation to such broader material forces as society, culture, and history.
Democracy 1: Foundations of Democracy (3)	Students will be able to explain the core principles, institutions, and historical developments that shape democratic systems; analyze how power, representation, and civic life function in diverse contexts; and evaluate the conditions that support or threaten democratic participation and accountability.
Democracy 2: Practices for the Public Good (3)	Students will be able to apply democratic principles and disciplinary methods to interpret public issues, engage diverse perspectives, and contribute thoughtfully and ethically to the public good through problem-solving, dialogue, creative expression, or community engagement.
Connect 1: Connection (1)	Students will be able to reflect on, synthesize, and apply their learning across courses and experiences, connecting knowledge, skills, and perspectives from their PCC, major, and degree coursework, as well as their co-curricular experiences. As they consider the greater arc of their development, they will inventory how the skills and knowledge gained impact their long-term goals beyond their undergraduate experiences at JMU.
Global Perspectives 1: Global (+0)	Students will be able to examine societies and traditions that developed outside the United States and evaluate how culturally situated histories, languages, religious and philosophical traditions, colonial or postcolonial dynamics, and social traditions shape systems of meaning and public life. Emphasis is placed on global interdependencies and interconnections.

Implementation and Governance Considerations

The following implementation and governance considerations would take effect if the proposed curriculum is endorsed and adopted.

Revised Implementation Timeline

In response to concerns raised during the feedback period, the provost has adopted a phased implementation timeline, with full launch of the revised general education program in fall 2028, rather than fall 2027. This adjustment reflects a fuller assessment of the program's implementation needs and creates the time necessary for coordinated, faculty-driven implementation.

The revised timeline preserves current momentum while creating conditions for effective execution. Specifically, it provides:

- More time for faculty to collaborate in developing and refining the full set of program learning outcomes and shared program elements;
- Dedicated time during the academic year for departments to revise existing courses and propose new courses through established curriculum and instruction processes;
- Time for departments to collaborate to ensure that existing required courses serving students from multiple majors can still fit within the Gen Ed requirements as needed;
- More lead time to integrate new requirements into advising materials, catalog systems, and student information systems;
- Opportunity to model anticipated seat needs during the transitional period in which the current and revised programs will operate concurrently and to pilot new administrative models for coordinating seat allocation/delivery;
- Additional time to develop administrative policies for supporting transfer students within the program; and
- The ability to pilot new courses during 2027–2028 prior to full implementation.

This phased approach reduces implementation risk, broadens faculty participation, and allows for iterative refinement before the program serves a full entering cohort. It ensures that governance, infrastructure, assessment planning, and course development are fully aligned for a smooth launch in fall 2028.

Embedded Themes

Embedded themes provide coherence across the revised curriculum by ensuring that essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions are reinforced throughout Launch, Core,

Engaged Citizenship & Democracy, and Connection. They function as cross-cutting areas of emphasis that should guide course design and support program oversight. Embedded themes do not constitute additional requirements; rather, they ensure that foundational learning is revisited across multiple disciplinary contexts.

Each course included in the curriculum will engage at least one embedded theme. This structure reinforces shared priorities without increasing credit hours or creating additional categories for student course selection. The general education governance body may establish expectations that courses make their engagement with embedded themes visible (for example, by included standard syllabus language) so that students can recognize recurring elements of their learning across the curriculum.

The proposed embedded themes are:

- Information Literacy & Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Collaboration & Problem-Solving
- Global Perspectives
- Well-Being
- Engaged Citizenship & Democracy

Governance bodies established during implementation will refine theme definitions, clarify expectations for course alignment, and ensure consistent application across the program.

Governance and Course Approval

The reform timeline has consistently anticipated that the provost would consult with key groups among the faculty and Academic Affairs administration during spring 2026 and announce the structure of the new general education governance body. Following that announcement, an essential component of implementation will be the establishment of appropriate procedures and operating practices to enable that body to carry out its work effectively. While these processes remain to be finalized, the program will be governed by a faculty body, and courses proposed for inclusion in general education will continue to move through established departmental and college curriculum and instruction (C&I) processes before being considered for inclusion in the general education program.

Naming the Curriculum and Its Components

The committee has determined not to focus at this stage on naming the curriculum or renaming its component parts. Naming is important, and the language used to describe the program should communicate its purpose clearly and resonate with students.

A working title has been used to describe the overall curriculum, and the current component names reflect the substantive purposes of each requirement. The committee recommends that the new general education governance body design a participatory process to engage students and faculty in refining the name of the curriculum in ways that enhance clarity, coherence, and student understanding.

General Education Requirements in Other Academic Programs

A central goal of the general education reform effort is to ensure that general education courses remain broadly accessible and open to students across majors. General education is intended to expose students to a range of disciplines, perspectives, and modes of inquiry and to create learning environments in which students from different academic programs engage one another. For that reason, courses included in the general education program should have minimal prerequisites and should not be restricted primarily to students within a single major.

At the same time, the revised curriculum is designed with flexibility to allow some courses to satisfy both general education and major or minor requirements. This flexibility is particularly important for students in high-credit or highly structured majors, for whom thoughtful overlap can create space for exploration.

To balance these priorities, the committee recommends limiting the number of credits within a student's academic plan (identified by the same course prefix as the major or minor) that may count toward general education requirements to no more than 10 credit hours (excluding the Connection requirement). This approach preserves opportunities for curricular efficiency while preventing the creation of bespoke general education pathways that separate students within an academic program from the broader undergraduate community.

This limitation would not affect cognate requirements. Departments may continue to require their students to complete particular general education courses offered and staffed by other academic units.

Alignment with the Strategic Plan

The general education reform process and the university's strategic planning process have proceeded in parallel, and both have surfaced similar priorities regarding the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that characterize a JMU education. Both processes emphasize communication, collaboration, problem-solving, civic engagement, and well-being as central elements of student development and institutional distinctiveness, as noted in the [discussion of Power Skills](#) above.

A Vision Team convened as part of Strategic Planning has been charged with considering the development of a multi-credit, problem-based, community-connected course for first-year students. The inclusion of such a course was not within the charge of the CCC. However, the curriculum as proposed is structurally flexible and could accommodate this type of experience by packaging or sequencing existing requirements. Many factors will inform assessments of the feasibility of such a course, including staffing, scheduling, and resource considerations; the structure of the general education curriculum itself would not be the constraining issue.

Next Steps: Endorsement Votes

The proposal will be presented for endorsement votes by instructional faculty, academic unit heads, Academic Council, and the Committee on Academic Programs. These votes will serve as recommendations to the provost regarding adoption of the revised general education curriculum.

The provost has indicated that the university will not move forward with implementation without sufficient faculty support. If the proposal is adopted, the phased timeline described above will guide the transition to the new program, including announcement of the general education governance structure and the transition to faculty-led oversight. If sufficient support is not achieved, Academic Affairs leadership and faculty governance bodies will determine appropriate next steps.