Proposed Core Curriculum (PCC)[1]

Prepared by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Core Curriculum

Proposal Contents

Proposal Overview: Structure and Purpose

Naming the Curriculum and Making It Meaningful to Students

Principles That Inform the CCC Proposal

Embedded Themes

Information Literacy & Critical Thinking

Power Skills

Well-Being

Engaged Citizenship and Democracy

Program Components and Objectives

Launch (12 credits)

Core (19 credits)

Engaged Citizenship & Democracy (6 credits)

Connection (1 credit)

Requirement Summary

Recommendations for Program Implementation and Infrastructure

The Reform Process: Background and Context

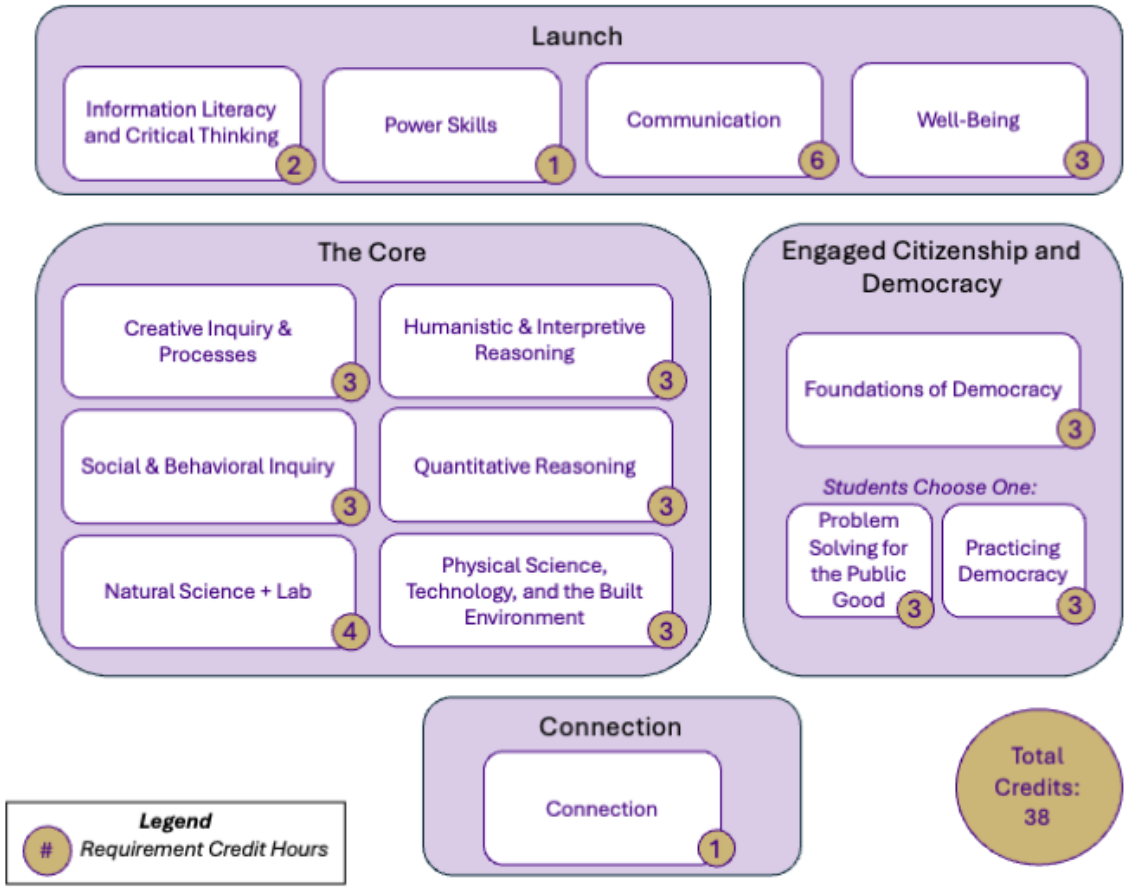
Sharing Feedback and Next Steps

Committee Membership

Appendix: Sketch of Proposal Graphic

[1] For the purposes of sharing this first draft, we are using "Proposed Core Curriculum (PCC)" as a placeholder for the future name of the new curriculum. Please see further below, Naming the Curriculum and Making It Meaningful to Students.

Proposal Overview: Structure and Purpose



The CCC proposes a 38-credit curriculum that features a structured introductory experience that foregrounds purpose and skills for success, and an upper-division requirement in which students reflect on their development, synthesize their learning across the curriculum, and inventory the skills and knowledge they have gained that align with their goals and potential employer expectations.

The structure is designed to advance the CCC's understanding of the purpose of a general education curriculum: to prepare students to thrive in their lives and careers and to strengthen their communities, society, and democracy through curiosity, resiliency, and adaptability. 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 core skills developed across the program.

Primary themes that align with the proposed program's purse and build on JMU's distinctive strengths are embedded across the program. They include:

- Information Literacy & Critical Thinking: how we create and interpret knowledge and analyze arguments and evidence;
- Power Skills: the competencies that support personal, academic and professional success;
- Well-Being: the habits and practices that support health, purpose, and flourishing throughout students' lives; and
- Engaged Citizenship and Democracy: how we strengthen our communities and the world.

In developing this model, the committee has worked to balance ambition with feasibility. The group has attempted to respond to the priorities and concerns identified in the 2021-2022 General Education Program Academic Program Review and shared throughout the subsequent reform processes, up to and including the Fall 2025 feedback period.

The CCC anticipates that the proposed curriculum will **increase flexibility for students** by expanding the range of courses and credit structures that can satisfy requirements and reducing bottlenecks and allowing students to shape a more intentional path through the curriculum. The proposed curriculum aims to **broaden faculty and unit participation** by creating new opportunities for departments to contribute courses. At the same time, we have prioritized **greater cohesion across the curriculum** by establishing embedded themes and features that help students connect their learning across contexts, including Learning Communities and Pathways in the Core and a culminating Connections requirement. Finally, the committee has intentionally **updated and modernized the skills and knowledge emphasized** in the curriculum so that the program prepares students for a world shaped by emerging technologies, shifting communication and information ecosystems, and complex civic and social challenges.

Naming the Curriculum and Making It Meaningful to Students

"Proposed Core Curriculum/PCC" is a placeholder for the future name/title of the new curriculum.

The committee has explored several possible names for the re-imagined curriculum, including options that highlight breadth of learning, cross-disciplinary perspectives, and the program's emphasis on essential skills. While these discussions have been productive, the committee has not reached consensus on a name. The name of the program will play an important role in how students and their families understand its value and how faculty describe their contributions to it. Because naming must resonate across these groups, we will invite faculty, staff, and students

to provide feedback on proposed program names and to suggest additional names for consideration during the campuswide feedback period.

Recognizing that students engage most deeply when they understand the "why" behind requirements, the committee has drafted a student-oriented statement of purpose to accompany future naming discussions. This language aims to communicate the program's goals in ways that are accessible, motivating, and aligned with how students make sense of their educational journey. As with all elements of the proposal, this student-facing framing will be open to feedback and refinement during the campuswide feedback period.

> **Meet the greatest challenges of our times.**
> **Build skills, knowledge, and resiliency.**
> **The world is changing. How will you change? How will you change the world?**

Principles That Inform the CCC Proposal

The principles below highlight how the committee approached some key trade-offs inherent in program design, why some features are precisely defined while others remain flexible, and what kinds of decisions are intentionally deferred to future stages of the reform process.

Learning Outcome Development Will Be an Ongoing and Iterative Process

The CCC believes that clear learning outcomes are essential for the success of the program. The proposal defines requirement-level outcomes to establish the purpose and structure of the program. Focusing on high-level outcomes now ensures coherence across the curriculum without preempting the work of the faculty and academic units who will ultimately design and propose courses for inclusion.

We anticipate that more detailed outcomes will be developed by faculty as the structure of the program is further clarified. In many instances, learning outcomes from the current General Education program informed the development of the requirement-level outcomes presented here, and the CCC expects that they will continue to serve as helpful reference points in the next stages of development.

Broaden Unit Participation While Avoiding Structural Bottlenecks

The CCC has framed all requirements around learning outcomes rather than around specific disciplines or academic units. This approach is intended to create opportunities for a wider range of departments to contribute courses, promote sustainability by avoiding single-department bottlenecks, and increase flexibility for students. No requirement in the PCC is written in a way that necessitates a single department will be the sole provider of eligible courses.

Learning Outcomes Will Guide Course Inclusion Decisions

Each of the requirements in the proposed core curriculum (PCC) will have an associated set of learning outcomes. In general, PCC learning outcomes will prioritize skills and dispositions over prescriptive content coverage.

Provide Flexibility While Preserving Cross-Disciplinary Learning

The CCC affirms that students should be able to count some PCC courses toward degree, major, and minor requirements when aligned with program needs. At the same time, the curriculum's value rests in part on students' sustained engagement with peers from different academic backgrounds. To support both goals, the committee is working to identify an appropriate upper limit on the number of major requirements that may be double counted to preserve student flexibility while ensuring that students continue to benefit from cross-disciplinary learning environments.

Varied Course and Scheduling Structures Promote Flexibility for Students and Faculty

The CCC anticipates combinations of one, two, and three credit courses to meet some PCC requirements. One- and two-credit courses may be especially well-suited to instruction during the 7-week blocks during regular semesters and summer and winter sessions.

Prioritize Support for Transfer Students

Transfer credits should apply readily to PCC requirements, and the curriculum will be further refined for clear alignment with statewide transfer frameworks such as the VCCS Passport and the Uniform Certificate of General Studies. During the upcoming feedback period, the CCC will work with partners in Student Academic Success to review and refine this alignment, ensuring that the structure of the PCC minimizes impediments to program completion and supports seamless transition for transfer students.

The CCC Proposal

The proposal is oriented around a set of components that support student learning from entry to graduation: **Launch**, **the Core**, **Engaged Citizenship and Democracy,** and **Connection**. Across all components, the program is shaped by **embedded themes** that promote ongoing development of critical thinking skills and align with the purpose of general education and JMU's unique institutional identity and strengths. These themes will promote cohesion across courses and ensure that students encounter recurring ideas and practices from multiple disciplinary perspectives.

- **Launch** supports the transition to JMU by establishing shared foundations in information literacy and critical thinking; power skills; communication; well-being, and academic engagement.
- **The Core** provides breadth across disciplinary traditions and methods of inquiry, ensuring that all students gain fluency in multiple ways of generating, evaluating, and applying knowledge.
- **Engaged Citizenship and Democracy** extends students' learning into civic and community contexts, emphasizing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential for ethical and democratic participation.
- **Connection** offers students flexible ways to reflect on and reinforce their learning across the curriculum.

Across all components of the curriculum, the CCC encourages courses organized around meaningful questions, problems, or themes. Broad "survey of" and "introduction to" courses are often engaging and inquiry-driven; however, their titles do not always signal this relevance to students. In the renewed program, the CCC encourages making a course's guiding questions, problems, or themes clear to students by incorporating them into course design, names, and descriptions, where appropriate. This shared principle supports inquiry-driven learning, helps students see how disciplinary methods illuminate substantive questions, and fosters deeper engagement.

Embedded Themes

The embedded themes—Information Literacy & Critical Thinking, Power Skills, Well-Being, and Engaged Citizenship & Democracy—advance the program's purpose by emphasizing the capacities students need to thrive in their lives and careers and to strengthen their communities and democracy. They provide a framework through which students practice curiosity, resilience, and adaptability as they connect ideas across disciplines. These themes also reflect areas of institutional strength and identity and align with priorities emerging in the university's strategic planning process. The university joined the U.S. Health Promoting

Campuses Network in 2022[2] and a Vision Team is being charged to consider how the development of power skills; information, AI, and financial literacies; and civic learning will be incorporated into the university's strategic plan.[3]

Mastery of these outcomes cannot be achieved in a single course or semester; they require cultivation through repeated engagement in varied contexts. While not every course will address every theme, every course in the renewed program should engage meaningfully with at least one of the embedded themes. Through revised C&I processes, faculty will articulate the learning activities and assessments through which each proposed course reinforces its selected theme(s), ensuring that students encounter and deepen these foundational capacities throughout their PCC experience.

Information Literacy & Critical Thinking

All students will complete a Launch course that develops the ability to find, evaluate, and use information effectively and ethically, and the ability to analyze arguments for validity. Students will examine how information is created, how credibility is established, and how context shapes research and communication. The course provides a shared foundation in critical thinking and research skills for academic, professional, and civic life. Critical thinking and information literacy skills are reinforced and strengthened as the student completes the program's remaining requirements.

Power Skills

Power skills refer to the interpersonal and self-management abilities that enable students to communicate effectively, collaborate productively, and navigate complexity. Employers consistently identify these human-centered skills as essential complements to domain-specific knowledge and skills.[4,5] The term may be new, but these abilities reflect long-standing strengths of JMU graduates and power skills are highlighted in the strategic plan pillars shared by President Schmidt and endorsed by the Board of Visitors in November 2025. The 2040 Draft

[2] JMU Health and Well-being. (n.d.) *U.S. Health Promoting Campuses Network.* *https://www.jmu.edu/wellbeing/initiatives/ushpcn-jmu.shtml*

[3] JMU Planning, Analytics, and Institutional Research. (n.d.). *Vision Teams*. https://www.jmu.edu/pair/strategic-planning/vision-teams.shtml#undefined

[4] Finley, Ashley P. 2023. "The Career-Ready Graduate: What Employers Say About the Difference College Makes." *AAC&U*. https://www.aacu.org/research/the-career-ready-graduate-what-employers-say-about-the-difference-college-makes

[5] National Association of Colleges and Employers. (n.d.) "What is Career Readiness?" https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/#competencies

Vision states that JMU will guarantee "our graduates have the power skills needed to succeed in society."[6]

While the new program will need to define the specific power skills to be emphasized, commonly cited examples include "communication, social and emotional intelligence, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, professional attitude, work ethic, career management, and intercultural fluency."[7] As with Information Literacy and Critical Thinking, these concepts are introduced in the program's Launch phase and strengthened as the student completes the program's remaining requirements.

Well-Being

In our ever-changing world, purpose, health, and flourishing contribute to JMU students' success throughout a lifetime. The multiple dimensions of well-being in person, place, and planet introduced in the program's Launch will build across the curriculum, grow resiliency in every student, and strengthen the University's broader commitment as a U.S. Health Promoting Campus. JMU is distinguished as the only Virginia university to sign the *Okanagan Charter for Health Promoting Universities*, which calls on colleges to embed health into all aspects of campus culture; and to lead health promotion action and collaboration, locally and globally. In this, JMU draws upon its over one-hundred-year history of embedding holistic well-being in the college curriculum, having offered its first such class in 1910.

Engaged Citizenship and Democracy

Coursework in Engaged Citizenship and Democracy develops the knowledge and skills needed to participate thoughtfully and effectively in civic life. Students explore democratic principles, systems, and challenges while practicing the habits of engagement: listening, deliberating, advocating, and working across differences to address shared concerns. Through hands-on experiences and reflection, students prepare for informed, ethical, and collaborative participation to strengthen democracy and address public issues in a diverse and interconnected world.

Program Components and Objectives

Launch (12 credits)

Launch serves as the foundation of the PCC by helping students transition into JMU's academic community and develop essential capacities in communication, information literacy, critical thinking, academic inquiry, and well-being. These shared experiences build confidence,

[6] JMU Planning, Analytics, and Institutional Research. (n.d.). *Strategic Plan Pillars*. https://www.jmu.edu/pair/strategic-planning/pillars.shtml

[7] Runyon, N. (2022, February 18). *Why "power skills" is the new term for soft skills in the hybrid work world."* Thomson Reuters. https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/legal/power-skills-rebranding/

belonging, and the skills students will draw on throughout the curriculum. Ideally, students will complete Launch requirements in their first year. At the same time, the structure of some major curricula and the need to align section offerings with student demand may make this infeasible. The CCC anticipates that first-year enrollment will be the norm, even if it is not universal.

Because Launch is a common entry point for all students, this part of the program will require intentional design and coordination to ensure coherence across courses and consistent engagement with these foundational outcomes. If this proposed structure is approved, a governance body would guide faculty in developing the detailed design of Launch. This process would include defining shared campus approaches to information literacy and power skills. This work could begin in late Spring 2026 in anticipation of course development and review in the 2026-2027 year.

Launch courses should reflect the program's emphasis on inquiry-driven learning by engaging students through focused topics, questions, or debates. Courses organized around debate may engage questions like, "Should cell phones be banned in schools?" or "Should humans colonize space?" Alternatively, courses may be structured as a sequence of modules that introduce core skills in accessible ways. For example: *TikTok Taught Me* (evaluating credibility in short-form media), *The Algorithm's Hand* (how digital systems shape information), *Receipts, Please* (when and how evidence supports a claim), and *That's a Bold Claim…* (analyzing the logic and structure of arguments). These examples are not intended as required or preferred topics; they are intended only to demonstrate ways a Launch course might frame foundational academic practices while fostering curiosity and engagement among new students.

Information Literacy & Critical Thinking: Evaluating Information and Arguments (2 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.

Power Skills (1 credit)

Objective: Students will be able to recognize key skills that contribute to effective learning, collaboration, and leadership; explain their relevance to academic, professional, and personal success; and develop an initial plan for strengthening these skills during their time at JMU.

Communication (6 credits)

***Objective*:** 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 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 the changing times. 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 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. *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. *Quantitative Reasoning* and *The Physical World* will develop expertise in natural science/mathematics.

Creative Inquiry and Processes (3 credits)

Objective: Students will be able to engage with critical analysis and creative processes to explore ideas, express meaning, and interpret human experience through the arts and design.

Humanistic and Interpretive Reasoning (3 credits)

Objective: Students will be able to apply interpretive and analytical approaches from the humanities to examine texts, ideas, and cultural expressions and to reflect critically on how humans create and represent meaning and values.

Social and Behavioral Inquiry (3 credits)

Objective: Students will be able to apply systematic methods of inquiry to examine human behavior, social structures, and cultural processes, using evidence to explain patterns and interactions in individual and collective life.

Quantitative Reasoning (3 credits)

Objective: Students will be able to identify quantitative elements and relationships in real-world problems, create and evaluate quantitative arguments via appropriate mathematical and statistical methods, and apply quantitative analysis to real-world decisions.

The Physical World (7 credits)

Natural Science + Lab (4 credits)

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.

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.

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

Objective: Students will be able to analyze how scientific principles, technological systems, or human-designed environments shape and are shaped by natural and physical processes and use evidence-based and quantitative reasoning to evaluate claims related to these systems.

The Physical Science, Technology, and the Built Environment requirement expands the ways students may engage with the physical world. Students may choose to complete additional coursework in a natural science that focuses on physical systems, a technology-focused course examining how scientific principles enable technological design or function, or a course centered on the physical built environment (e.g., architecture, infrastructure, transportation, or energy systems). This flexibility allows units across campus to contribute in meaningful ways, and it encourages the development of innovative courses like "How Things Work," technology-in-society courses, or interdisciplinary explorations of infrastructure, sustainability, and physical systems.

Engaged Citizenship & Democracy (6 credits)

Objective: Students will be able to apply civic knowledge and skills to strengthen democratic life through informed, ethical, and collaborative action.

The Engaged Citizenship & Democracy curriculum prepares students to understand and strengthen democratic life through knowledge and practice. 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.

Students will have a variety of options for earning the remaining 3 credits in Engaged Citizenship & Democracy. Students may choose to complete a 3-credit Problem-Solving for the Public Good course, which departments will orient around a wide range of complex social problems (e.g., climate change, poverty, substance abuse, student mental health). Students will apply democratic principles and collaborative methods to understand public problems, assess evidence and stakeholder needs, and propose feasible, ethical, and community-centered solutions that advance the public good. Alternatively, students may complete a combination of

1-, 2-, or 3- credit experiences that provide opportunities to develop and practice civic skills such as ethical reasoning, deliberative dialogue, and teamwork.

Together, these experiences will cultivate the habits of informed, ethical, and collaborative participation that sustain democracy in our communities and across the globe.

Connection (1 credit)

Objective: Students will be able to reflect on and synthesize 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 the skills and knowledge gained that align with employer expectations.

The Connection requirement may be completed through new 1-credit courses in the PCC or approved departmental experiences that adopt common PCC outcomes for integrative learning and reflection. For example, in a program that requires a 3-credit capstone, that capstone can satisfy the Connection requirement if the academic program incorporates the Connection learning outcomes.

Requirement Summary

15 requirements | 38 credits

	Description (credits)	Draft Outcomes
Launch 1	Information Literacy and Critical Thinking (2)	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	Power Skills (1)	Students will be able to recognize key skills that contribute to effective learning, collaboration, and leadership; explain their relevance to academic, professional, and personal success; and develop an initial plan for strengthening these skills during their time at JMU.
Launch 3	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 4	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 5	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 be able to engage with critical analysis and creative processes to explore ideas, express meaning, and interpret human experience through the arts and design.
Core 2	Humanistic and Interpretive Reasoning (3)	Students will be able to apply interpretive and analytical approaches from the humanities to examine texts, ideas, and cultural expressions and to reflect critically on how humans create and represent meaning and values.
Core 3	Social and Behavioral Inquiry (3)	Students will be able to apply systematic methods of inquiry to examine human behavior, social structures, and cultural processes, using evidence to explain patterns and interactions in individual and collective life.
Core 4	Quantitative Reasoning (3)	Students will be able to identify quantitative elements and relationships in real-world problems, create and evaluate quantitative arguments via appropriate mathematical and statistical methods, and apply quantitative analysis to real-world decisions.
Core 5 Core 6	Natural Science (3) + 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.
Core 7	Physical Science, Technology, and the Built Environment (3)	Students will be able to analyze how scientific principles, technological systems, or human-designed environments shape and are shaped by natural and physical processes and use evidence-based reasoning to evaluate claims related to these systems.
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 (Option A)	Practicing Democracy (3)	Students will strengthen their capacity for democratic engagement by practicing ethical reasoning, constructive dialogue, and other adaptable civic skills that support thoughtful participation in public life.
Democracy 2 (Option B)	Problem-Solving for the Public Good (3)	Students will be able to apply democratic principles and collaborative methods to identify public problems, assess evidence and stakeholder needs, and propose feasible, ethical, and community-centered solutions that advance the public good.
Connect 1	Connection	Students will be able to reflect on and synthesize their learning across courses and experiences, connecting knowledge, skills, and perspectives from their PCC and major coursework.

Recommendations for Program Implementation and Infrastructure

While the CCC is not tasked with establishing governance bodies or administrative policy, we acknowledge that the viability of the proposed curriculum is closely tied to how it is implemented and supported. Accordingly, we identify structural and procedural elements that will support the program's effectiveness, sustainability, and long-term integrity.

- **Course solicitation and review:** The CCC recommends creating course-solicitation and review processes that rely on multi-member committees, including subject matter experts and faculty from other disciplines. Proposed PCC courses will continue to move through existing departmental and college C&I processes before advancing to PCC review, ensuring that academic units retain appropriate oversight of courses taught by their faculty. This structure supports both disciplinary agency and cross-disciplinary evaluation, helping to encourage broad faculty participation and shared ownership of the renewed curriculum.
- **Program governance:** The CCC anticipates that governance of the renewed program will be led by a faculty committee, in partnership with program directors and administrators, consistent with current practice. The CCC recommends that consideration be given to how governance structures and procedures can support implementation fidelity and guard against program drift over time.
- **Interdisciplinary collaboration and faculty development:** The CCC recommends developing decision criteria and procedures that promote interdisciplinary collaboration and ongoing faculty development.
- **Assessment and continuous improvement:** The CCC recommends maintaining the university's existing program-level assessment framework, implemented in partnership with CARS, and updating learning outcomes and assessment instruments as needed to align with the renewed program.

Additional Implementation Considerations Include:

- **Class size and pedagogical alignment**: The CCC affirms the value of small classes while recognizing that course enrollment will necessarily vary across the program. Program administrators should prioritize smaller sections where they are pedagogically essential and seek ways to support high-quality instruction and learning in larger enrollment courses.
- **Undergraduate Teaching Assistants**: The CCC recommends establishing and resourcing a robust Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program to support PCC program instruction, especially in high-enrollment courses. UTAs can provide substantial support to instructors while they develop leadership, communication, and other power skills.
- **Instructional staffing and adjunct reliance**: The CCC recommends that the Provost, deans, and program administrators identify ways to incentivize and recognize unit contributions to the program, placing high value on the assignment of full-time instructional faculty to program delivery. Program renewal should provide opportunities to identify ongoing needs, align instructional resources, and create pathways to sustainable, full-time instructional roles for outstanding part-time instructors.

- **Administrative practices to support transfer students**: Transfer student success depends on consistent and student-centered administrative practices. Program administrators should adopt policies and processes that support timely evaluation of transfer credits, clear communication with advisors, and students, and transparent pathways for students transferring into and out of JMU.

The Reform Process: Background and Context

Fall 2021 - Spring 2022: General Education Program Academic Program Review

The university's work to renew the General Education curriculum began with the Academic Program Review conducted in 2021-2022, which called for the development of a campus process for consideration of revisions to the General Education Program with particular emphasis on (1) increasing flexibility for students and academic units, (2) making participation in the General Education program by a wider range of academic programs possible, (3) promoting cohesion across the General Education curriculum, and (4) re-evaluating the skills and knowledge the program should emphasize to prepare the next generation of students.

Fall 2022 – Summer 2025: Engaging the Campus in the Renewal Process

The Core Curriculum Appraisal Task Force (CCATF) was established in Fall 2022 to engage faculty in the renewal process. The task force worked with the General Education Council to host a speaker series featuring internal and external experts to build a shared understanding of general education's aims, its potential, and the common challenges of reform. The group also surveyed faculty, facilitated discussions across campus, and solicited ideas for how the program might evolve. The feedback and ideas gathered by the CCATF formed the basis for charging three faculty working groups to draft curricular proposals that reflected the aspirations and concerns expressed by JMU faculty in Summer 2025.

Fall 2025 – Spring 2026: Planned Development and Adoption of the Revised Curriculum

In Fall 2025, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Core Curriculum (CCC) was charged to work in the spirit of shared governance to develop a single, revised proposal for a renewed General Education curriculum. The charge directed the committee to review the reform proposals created by Summer 2025 faculty groups, to gather and consider faculty feedback, and to deliberate with attention to academic quality, accreditation and transfer considerations, student needs, resource availability, and mission alignment. The CCC's work was also guided by the goals articulated at the outset of the campus's General Education reform efforts.

Sharing Feedback and Next Steps

This document presents the CCC's initial draft of a single, integrated proposal. Between late-November and mid-January, campus constituents will provide feedback on the proposal. The CCC will use this feedback to revise the initial draft and will release a final version in February.

The final, February version of the proposal will be voted on by instructional faculty, academic unit heads, Academic Council, and the Committee on Academic Programs. Details on the reform process and how to provide feedback are available on the CCC website (link).

The Provost will make decisions related to program governance and administration during the Spring 2026 semester.

Committee Membership

Core Group Members

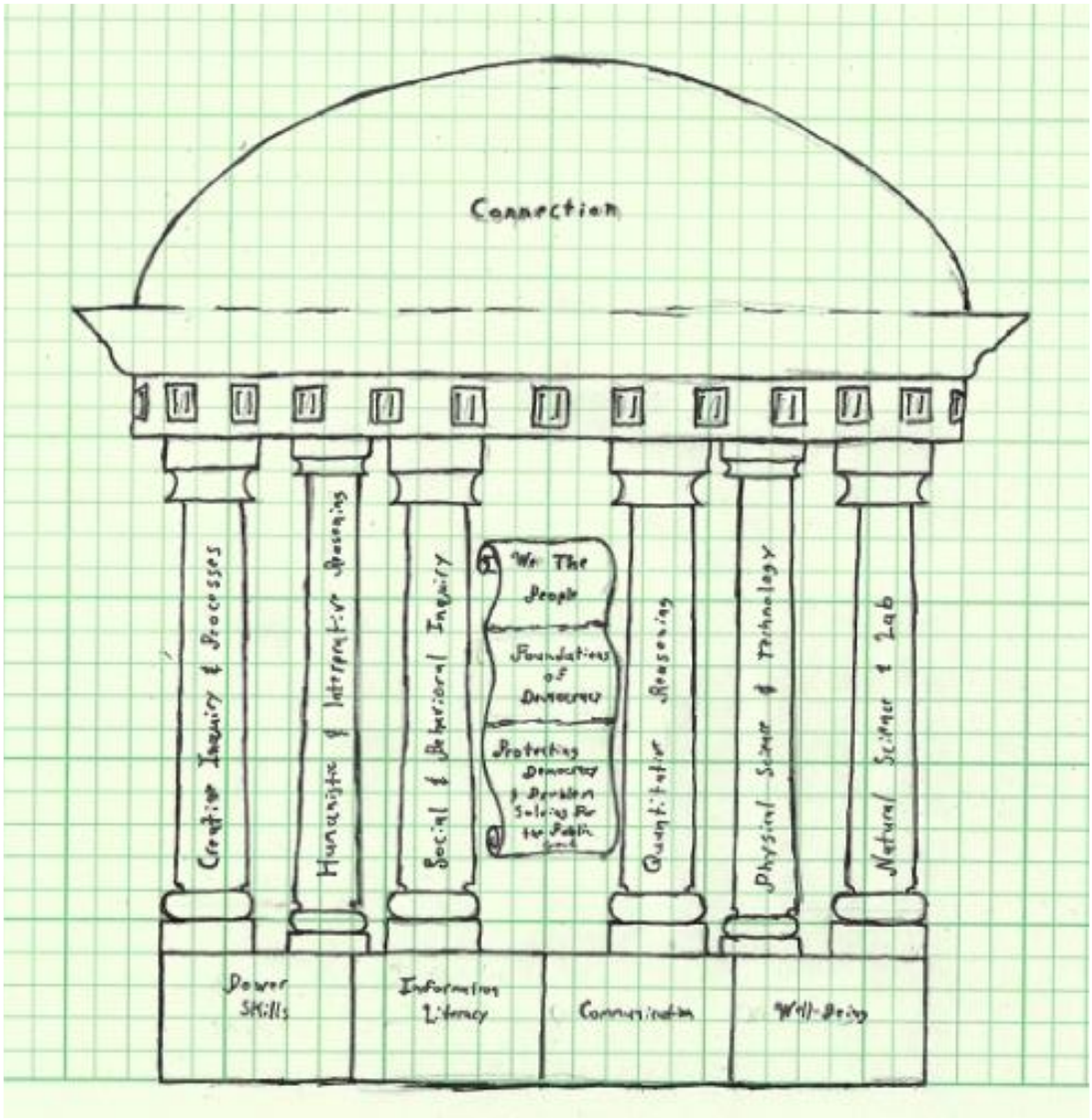
Bethany Blackstone (Co-Chair), Professor and Dean, Honors College
Shane McGary (Co-Chair), Associate Professor, Geology and Environmental Science
Sarah Brooks, Professor, Art, Design and Art History
Katie Dredger, Professor and Unit Head, Middle, Secondary, and Mathematics Education
Jennifer Lang-Rigal, Associate Professor, World Languages and Cultures

Voting Advisory Members

Harold Butner, Professor, Physics and Astronomy
Sarah Carson Sackett, Professor, Kinesiology
Katey Castellano, Professor, English
Schuyler Cole Van Velkenburg, Student Government Association
TJ Fitzgerald, Associate Professor, History
Abe Goldberg, Professor, Political Science
Rubén Graciani, Professor and Dean, College of Visual and Performing Arts
Krisztina V. Jakobsen, Professor, Psychology
Fletcher Linder, Professor and Dean, University Studies
Scott Paulson, Professor and Associate Dean, University Studies
Diane Phoenix, Associate Professor, Music
Katie Quertermous, Associate Professor, Mathematics and Statistics
Alexa Quinn, Assistant Professor, Early, Elementary and Reading Education
Amanda Sanson, Professor, Integrated Science and Technology
Bella Schrecengost, Student Government Association
Cathy Snyder, Senior Lecturer, Marketing
Jeff Tang, Professor and Interim Dean, College of Integrated Science and Engineering
Traci Zimmerman, Professor and Dean, College of Arts and Letters

Non-Voting Advisory Members

Elizabeth Brown, Professor and General Education Council Chair
Rudy Molina, Assistant Professor and Vice Provost, Student Academic Success
Elizabeth Oldmixon, Professor and Vice Provost, Faculty Affairs and Curriculum
Carolyn Schubert, Professor and Associate Dean, Libraries
Myles Surrett, Associate Vice President, Student Affairs

Appendix: Sketch of Proposal Graphic

The sketch below may serve as the basis for a visual representation of the proposed curriculum's structure and requirements. It is modeled after James Madison's Montpelier Gazebo. The foundation depicts the embedded themes that will be introduced in the Launch component of the program; the pillars characterize the core requirements; the scroll in the center captures the elements of the engaged citizenship and democracy curriculum; and the dome captures the connection requirement.