Ad Hoc Committee on the Core Curriculum
Annual Report – AY 2025-2026

Membership

Chair(s): Bethany Blackstone, Shane McGary

Membership

Core Members: Sarah Brooks, Katie Dredger, Jennifer Lang-Rigal

Voting Advisory Members: Harold Butner, Sarah Carson Sackett, Katey Castellano, TJ Fitzgerald, Abe Goldberg, Rubén Graciani, Krisztina V. Jakobsen, Fletcher Linder, Scott Paulson, Diane Phoenix, Katie Quertermous, Alexa Quinn, Amanda Sanson, Cathy Snyder, Jeff Tang, Traci Zimmerman

Non-Voting Advisory Members: Elizabeth Brown, Rudy Molina, Elizabeth Oldmixon, Carolyn Schubert, Myles Surrett, Caden Cole Van Valkenburg

Charge

Working in the spirit of shared governance, the committee will review and disseminate proposals for the structure of the General Education curriculum, solicit feedback, and then develop a proposal informed by their review of the disseminated proposals and the feedback they receive. The committee will make regular and transparent updates to the university community.

In its deliberations, the committee will consider such factors as academic quality, accreditation requirements, student needs, state transfer policies, market trends, resource availability, faculty expertise, and alignment with the university's mission. *Committee members are not meant to represent the interests of their home colleges or academic units; they are meant to use their best judgment in support of the university's mission.*

Summary of Annual Activity

Summer Proposals Review and Feedback *(August – October 2025)*

- In August 2025, three proposals developed by summer faculty working groups were posted publicly: *Preparation for Unexpected Futures*, *Build Your Madison Experience*, and *Dukes Engage*. The CCC prepared and distributed a table comparing core proposal features.
- Between August 16 and September 14, academic unit heads, Academic Resources, and Student Academic Success conducted feasibility analyses of the three proposals. Their analyses were posted September 15.
- The CCC solicited feedback on the summer proposals from mid-September to mid-October. The CCC hosted four open forums, solicited feedback via an electronic survey, and held targeted stakeholder convenings, organized by college and role.

Draft Development and Release of Initial Proposal *(October – November 2025)*

- From mid-October through mid-November, the CCC reviewed and integrated the three proposals, based on campus feedback.

- On November 20, 2025, the CCC released the *Proposed Core Curriculum* (PCC) and an accompanying transparency document describing the committee's deliberative process and rationale for key decisions. These documents are included as Appendices 1 and 2.
- The PCC featured a 12-credit Launch sequence including a 2-credit Information Literacy & Critical Thinking course and a 1-credit Power Skills course, a 19-credit Core, a 6-credit Engaged Citizenship & Democracy sequence, and a 1-credit Connection requirement.

Second Feedback Period *(December 2025 – January 2026)*

- A second feedback period ran from December 1 through January 28, 2026. This period was extended beyond the original timeline to ensure broad participation. Activities included an online town hall (December 16), two additional open forums via Zoom (January 21 and 22, 2026), a second campus-wide electronic feedback form, and various stakeholder convenings coordinated by CCC members.
- The CCC received 217 survey responses, more than 85% from instructional faculty, along with qualitative feedback gathered in forums, departmental meetings, and various group convenings.

Proposal Revision *(February – March 2026)*

- In February and March 2026, the CCC worked to revise the proposal in response to feedback. In early March, the CCC released the *Proposed Core Curriculum – Revised* (PCC2) and a second transparency document describing the committee's engagement with faculty feedback and the committee's deliberative processes. These documents are included as Appendices 3 and 4.
- Major changes included: replacing the 1- and 2-credit courses in the Launch component of the program with a 3-credit Information Literacy & Critical Thinking requirement; adding a Global Perspectives overlay requirement; renaming and further elaborating the requirements in the Engaged Citizenship & Democracy and Connection portions of the program, and clarifying the relationship between the program's science requirements.
- The revised PCC was endorsed unanimously by the CCC's voting members.

Endorsement Votes and Approval *(March – April 2026)*

- In late March, the Provost's Office facilitated endorsement votes by instructional faculty, academic unit heads, Academic Council, and the Committee on Academic Programs.
- On April 6, Interim Provost Kolvoord reported the results of the endorsement votes and announced his intention to recommend that President Schmidt approve the framework. He wrote:

  > "A strong plurality of instructional faculty made a positive recommendation on adoption of the proposed curricular framework, as did majorities of AUHs and AC members. CAP members split their vote. The recommendations follow the unanimous vote by members of the CCC to advance the framework to the division for our consideration, and the unanimous adoption of a resolution in support of the framework by the Student Government Association.

Based on this feedback and my own analysis, I will recommend to President Schmidt that he approve the framework."

- President Schmidt approved the framework on April 16, 2026.
- Drs. Blackstone and McGary presented the approved framework to the Board of Visitors Academic Excellence Committee on April 23, 2026.

Future Work Planned

None. The committee's work is complete.

Appendices

Table of Appendices

Number	Brief Description
Appendix 1	Proposed Core Curriculum – Initial Draft (November 20, 2025)
Appendix 2	Transparency Document 1 (November 20, 2025)
Appendix 3	Proposed Core Curriculum – Revised (March 6, 2026)
Appendix 4	Transparency Document 2 (March 9, 2026)

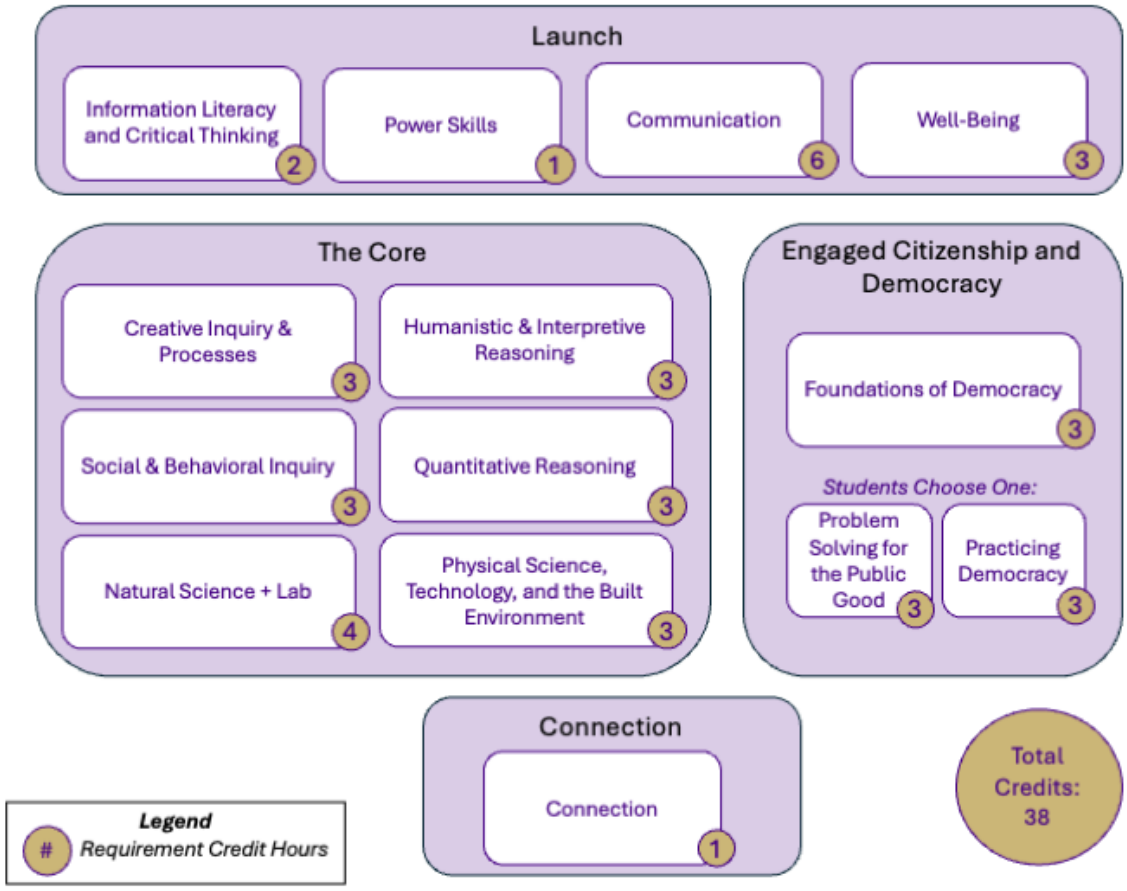
Proposed Core Curriculum (PCC)[1]

Prepared by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Core Curriculum

Proposal Contents

[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

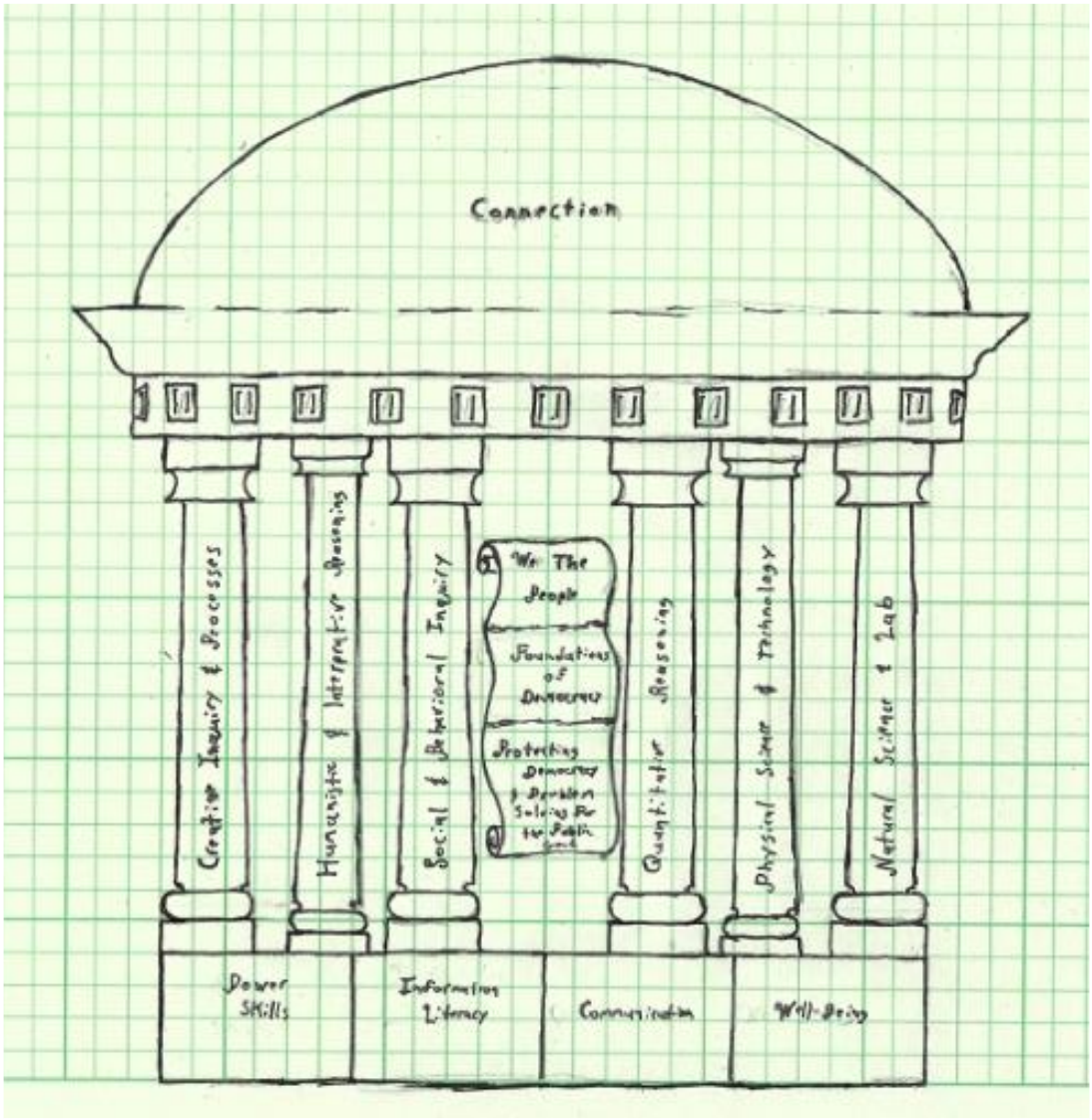
Harold Butner, Professor, Physics and Astronomy
Sarah Carson Sackett, Professor, Kinesiology
Katey Castellano, Professor, English
Schuyler Cole Van Velkenburg, Student Government Association
TJ Fitzgerald, Associate Professor, History
Abe Goldberg, Professor, Political Science
Rubén Graciani, Professor 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.



Shared Governance and the Ad Hoc Core Curriculum Committee's Work

As we share out a new survey for feedback on the Proposed Core Curriculum (PCC; November 21, 2025), this document is intended to provide transparency into the deliberations of, and choices made by, the ad hoc Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) during the PCC's development.

Context of the CCC's Work

CCC Membership

Membership on the CCC was established by the interim provost, in consultation with campus stakeholders including the General Education Council, Faculty Senate, and Academic Council. It includes 21 voting members: six instructional faculty appointed by the Faculty Senate; six faculty administrators appointed by the provost (five deans and one AUH); one joint provost-Faculty Senate appointee who is an instructional faculty member; and eight representatives coming from the colleges with instructional faculty. These eight voting members self-nominated and were appointed by their college dean at the recommendation of the advisory committee of each college: eight instructional faculty including one associate dean representing University Studies and the Libraries combined.

Additionally, seven non-voting advisory members to the CCC include: the instructional faculty member chairing the General Education Council/GEC; the Vice Provost for Student Academic Success; the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum; the Associate Dean for Academic Engagement of the Libraries; an Associate Vice President for Student Affairs; and two student representatives.

CCC Charge

The CCC was charged with reviewing and disseminating the proposals developed by the three summer working groups, collecting feedback on those proposals (we expanded this to include the current program and opened the discussion to topics that did not appear in any of these places), and then developing a single draft curriculum "informed by the review of the disseminated summer proposals and the feedback they received."

We were also directed by the interim provost to consider academic quality, accreditation requirements, student needs, state transfer policies, market trends, resource availability, faculty expertise, and alignment with the university's mission. We met with the interim provost as we began our work in September 2025; in November President Jim spoke to the

committee; and the interim provost spoke to the committee a second time, following the president's visit.

Academic Program Review 2022 and Resulting Reform Process

The reform process was first initiated following a 2022 Academic Program Review (APR), in which the external consultants acknowledged the many strengths of JMU's current general education program (clear mission, strong alignment with institutional identity, etc.), and identified several challenges (rigid program structure, implementation issues with bottlenecks, lack of flexibility, etc.).

The APR results recommended the development of a campus process that would invite broad campus participation in reform of the General Education program and re-examine faculty governance and administrative structures to ensure that they are sustainable and appropriate.

Following the APR process's conclusion, in Fall 2022 the former provost established the Core Curriculum Appraisal Task Force/CCATF to "lead the division through a process of consultation, discernment and innovation." The CCATF's responsibilities included forming and overseeing the 2025 summer working groups. This taskforce's work concluded in summer 2025, and leadership of renewal was passed onto the ad hoc Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) to propose the new program's curricular structure.

The CCC's Engagement with Faculty Feedback

The development of the draft proposal under review now (the PCC, drafted November 21, 2025) was shaped by campus feedback on the three summer proposals in "Survey 1." We will examine some of those results and the role they played in the committee's deliberative process.

We will start with the feedback from the Survey 1 questionnaire (204 responses, c. 80% from instructional faculty), and then expand into feedback gathered from other settings, such as forums, that are not sufficiently addressed in the survey.

Credit Hours

The faculty/respondents showed a clear preference for keeping the number of credit hours in the program relatively high, with 42% preferring 38-42 credit hours vs. 19.4% preferring 34-37; and 16.8% for 30-33 credit hours. 20.9% responded with no preference. Our proposal comes in at the low end of the 38-42 (38 credit hours) category.

Literacies & Critical Thinking

The question about digital, information, and AI literacies showed 64% of respondents answering very or extremely important. We have included in the proposal a two-credit launch course that will focus on introduction to literacies and critical thinking. The proposal provides guidance throughout the curriculum to revisit and develop the themes of literacies and critical thinking.

First-year Curricular Experience

Survey 1 respondents also showed a preference for some kind of first-year curricular experience, with 52.1% recording "extremely" or "very" important vs. 24.7% giving "slightly" or "not at all" important. Digging deeper into the responses, many of those pushing against the first- year experience had concerns about students fitting the credit hours into busy first years in many programs. We have responded with Launch, which is designed to be a flexible introductory experience that is intended to be completed within three semesters.

Upper-Division Requirement

The upper-division requirement was a little more difficult to sort. 28.4% stated that it was extremely/very important, 22.1% gave moderately important, and 49.5% answered that it is not at all or slightly important. Digging into the data showed that while many people liked the general idea, there were concerns about feasibility and implementation along with conflicts with existing capstones. In our proposal, we attempt to preserve the upside (something that ties general education experiences together at the end) while mitigating the perceived challenges. Our solution was to offer a one-credit requirement that could be completed flexibly – including that it can be easily incorporated into existing capstone projects by meeting learning objectives that consider the impact of students' cumulative general education experiences.

Wellness

Finally, Wellness and Holistic development was seen in a generally positive light, with 44.2% rating it extremely or very important, 25.8% moderately important, and 30% not at all or slightly important. The objections were focused on seeing this as trendy, and there were comments warning about ableism. Our response was to include three credits for these topics – the voiced objections from Survey 1 should be considered when developing learning outcomes.

Major Themes Across Survey 1 Feedback on the Summer Proposals

There were several clear themes embedded in the feedback for the three summer proposals as well, including:

1. calls for more flexibility for the program structure (also a take home message from the APR)
2. frustration with the removal of Science and Communication credits (loss of scientific identity was the #1 complaint of faculty across the board)
3. a call to update the program to the 21st century (digital literacies and holistic wellness) countered by concerns about jargon, branding, and trendiness
4. concerns about the practicality and implementation of the proposed capstone experiences
5. concerns about faculty workload and feasibility

We opted to make flexibility one of our key guiding principles. Our vision for this is outlined in the proposal itself, but the key idea is that required courses are defined by learning objectives and are not controlled by individual departments. It is our intention that this gives opportunities to faculty and departments to teach more gen ed courses, and that it will also help alleviate some of the backlog endemic to the current program. It should also make the program structure more adaptable as courses come in and out of the program.

We have provided only first order "learning outcomes" for the courses in the program, feeling that the specific learning objectives would be best developed by the experts in the various areas. This would occur in the next part of the process. More details are included in the proposal.

The inclusion of 1- and 2- credit block courses is also designed to allow for more flexibility for both students and faculty – for students in scheduling (especially during that first year) and for faculty to allow more innovation for some of the material.

The responses to Survey 1 questions asking for "off the menu" topics and final comments covered some of the same ground (AI, wellness, science and communication credits) but also brought in several additional ideas and concerns.

1. Career skills and preparation, practical skills
2. Civic engagement and global focus
3. Skepticism to integrated and interdisciplinary requirements
4. Faculty support and workload

We have attempted to address the career skills and preparation with the beginning of "Launch" – a one credit "Power Skills" course and a two credit "literacies and critical thinking" course. Both of these courses are intended to be introductory with explicit expansion of skills, literacies, and critical thinking reinforced throughout the other components of the PCC curriculum. Our expectation is that C&I processes established for implementation of this proposal would ensure that all PCC courses engage one or more of the program's embedded themes.

The Civic Engagement piece became a cornerstone of our proposal with the six credit Engaged Citizenship and Democracy piece. The motivation behind this is outlined in the proposal. This is something that provides identity for our general education program, directly connecting back to the Constitution and its primary author.

Our proposal neither mandates nor discourages integrated and interdisciplinary endeavors.

One topic that did not come out clearly in Survey 1 results, but was well represented in the forums, is that consideration of the ease of transfer credits is important. We have given as a principle that transfer credits should be applied liberally to PCC requirements and aligned with statewide transfer frameworks. We will continue to work towards refining this alignment and ensuring seamless transition for transfer students.

We also discussed the idea of double-counting – e.g. how much should be allowed and decided to solicit more feedback on this point – a question targeting this is included in the new survey (survey 2).

Proposed Core Curriculum - Revised (PCC2)

Prepared by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Core Curriculum

March 6, 2026

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 ratings[1] 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.

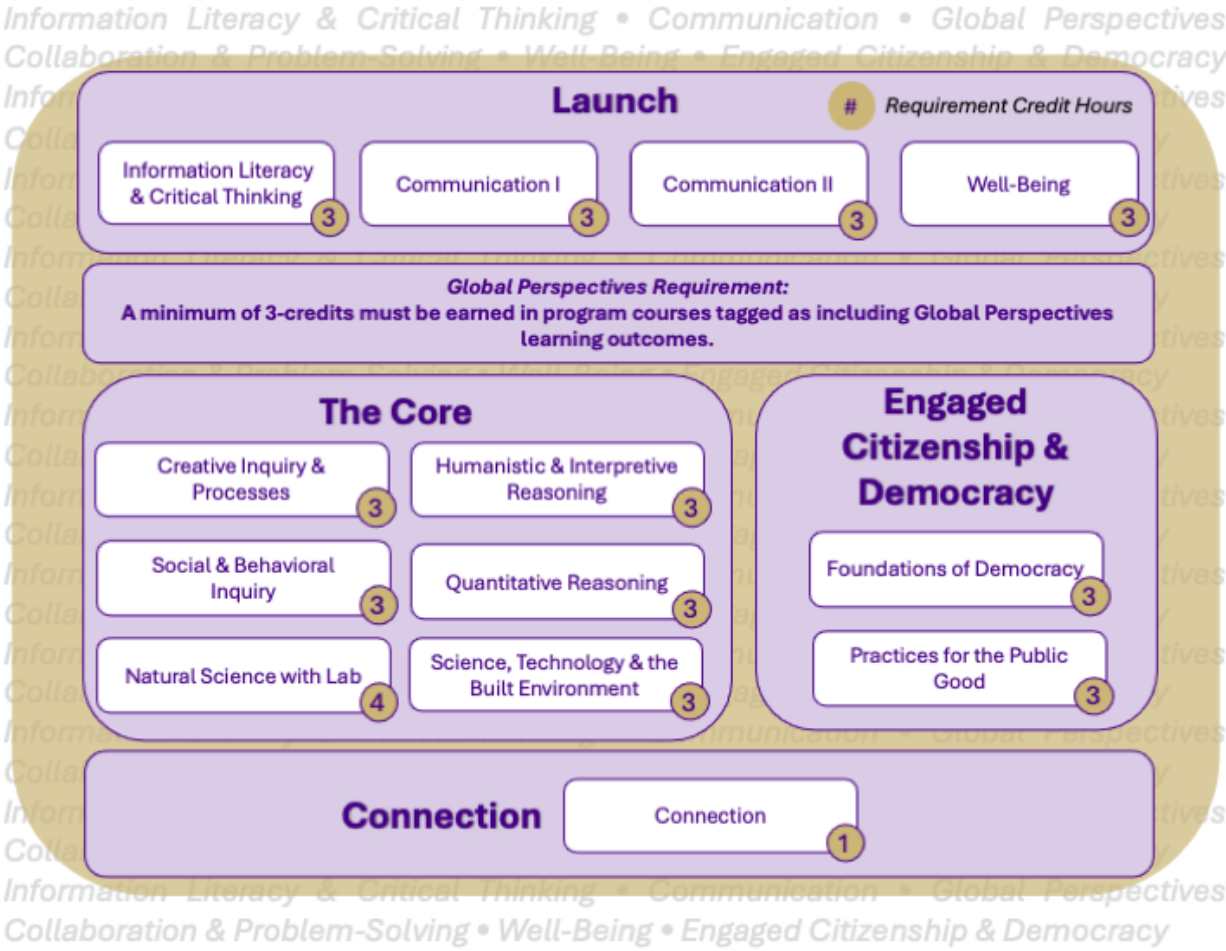
Faculty feedback also reflects concern about how a 1-credit requirement will be perceived, staffed, and sustained. The committee takes these concerns seriously. The effectiveness of the Connection requirement will depend not on its credit value alone, but on clear learning outcomes, thoughtful design, 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 Peden[3] 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]

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[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.

Shared Governance and the Ad Hoc Core Curriculum Committee's Work (2nd Round)

This document is intended to provide transparency into the deliberations of, and choices made by, the ad hoc Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) during the CCC's revisions of the draft proposal (11/21/2025), culminating in a revised proposal disseminated on 3/9/2026.

Context of the CCC's Work

CCC Membership

Membership on the CCC was established by the interim provost, in consultation with campus constituencies, including the General Education Council, Faculty Senate, and Academic Council. It includes 21 voting members: six instructional faculty appointed by the Faculty Senate; six faculty administrators appointed by the provost (five deans and one AUH); one joint provost-Faculty Senate appointee who is an instructional faculty member; and eight representatives coming from the colleges with instructional faculty. These eight voting members self-nominated and were appointed by their college dean at the recommendation of the advisory committee of each college: eight instructional faculty including one associate dean representing University Studies and the Libraries combined.

Additionally, seven non-voting advisory members to the CCC include: the instructional faculty member chairing the General Education Council/GEC; the Vice Provost for Student Academic Success; the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum; the Associate Dean for Academic Engagement of the Libraries; an Associate Vice President for Student Affairs; and two student representatives.

CCC Charge

The CCC was charged with reviewing and disseminating the proposals developed by the three summer working groups, collecting feedback on those proposals (we also solicited feedback relating to the current program and opened the discussion to topics that did not appear in any of these places), and then developing a single draft curriculum "informed by the review of the disseminated summer proposals and the feedback they received."

In addition to the feedback, the interim provost asked the CCC to consider academic quality, accreditation requirements, student needs, state transfer policies, market trends, resource availability, faculty expertise, and alignment with the university's mission. We met with the interim provost as we began our work in September 2025; in November President Jim spoke to the committee; and the interim provost spoke to the committee a second time, following the president's visit.

Academic Program Review 2022 and Resulting Reform Process

The reform process was first initiated following a 2022 Academic Program Review (APR), in which the external consultants acknowledged the many strengths of JMU's current general education program (clear mission, strong alignment with institutional identity, etc.), and identified several challenges (rigid program structure, implementation issues with bottlenecks, lack of flexibility, etc.).

The APR results recommended the development of a process that would invite broad campus participation in reform of the General Education program and re-examine faculty governance and administrative structures to ensure that they are sustainable and appropriate.

Following the APR process's conclusion, in Fall 2022 the former provost established the Core Curriculum Appraisal Task Force/CCATF to "lead the division through a process of consultation, discernment and innovation." The CCATF's responsibilities included forming and overseeing the 2025 summer working groups. This taskforce's work concluded in summer 2025, and leadership of renewal was passed onto the ad hoc Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) to propose the new program's curricular structure.

The CCC's Engagement with Faculty Feedback

The development of the revised version of the Proposed Core Curriculum (PCC2) was driven by campus feedback on the original Proposed Core Curriculum (PCC), released on November 21, 2025. We collected feedback in multiple ways, including open forums, department and other group meetings, and a campus wide survey. We will frame the feedback in terms of the Survey 2 questionnaire (217 responses, more than 85% of whom are instructional faculty), expanding as necessary to include feedback gathered in the other settings where they expand upon or clarify survey results, or are otherwise not sufficiently addressed in the survey.

Overall Evaluation of the Program

Respondents to the second survey felt that the proposal was likely to help students see the value and relevance of General Education, with 58% stating that this was extremely or somewhat likely vs. 20% answering either extremely or somewhat unlikely. 45% of respondents felt that the proposal would strengthen faculty commitment to Gen Ed (again, combining extremely and somewhat likely), with 25% responding somewhat or extremely unlikely. These results were similar across groups, including non-faculty, faculty who teach Gen Ed, and faculty who do not teach Gen Ed.

The strengths of the model include:

1. An emphasis on broad student development, with a focus on skills and dispositions rather than over-reliance on disciplinary content overall.
2. Flexibility in course contributions and the interdisciplinary structure this engenders.
3. The focus on democracy and the public good, with several respondents suggesting that this piece provides a defining vision for the program
4. Inclusion of key areas of learning, which protect the liberal arts foundation of the program

The primary concerns include:

1. The 2-credit/1-credit launch sequence, which was seen as potentially leading to issues with scheduling, staffing, and implementation. The perception of 1-credit classes in particular being seen as not important was frequently referenced.
2. A lack of clarity in the categories and learning goals
3. Implementation logistics
4. Challenges involving transfer students
5. The lack of a "global" component (this came from forum and group discussions)

Guiding principles

One of the perceived strengths of the program lies in the idea that learning outcome development should be ongoing and iterative. 43.8% of respondents strongly agree with this sentiment, and an additional 41.4% somewhat agree. There was also a strong consensus that learning outcomes should guide decisions about course inclusion, with 41.6% strongly agreeing, and 40.4% somewhat agreeing.

The overwhelmingly positive responses to these questions provide some context into the concern regarding a lack of clarity in the learning objectives (concern #2 above). Respondents wanted more clarity for the guidelines we provided for the individual program elements, but not at the expense of a set of flexible and iterative learning objectives that guide course inclusion for the program. After discussion, the committee elected to stay with framework-level guidelines for learning objectives, passing the development of specific learning objectives for each element to expert teams of faculty to assemble over the summer and beyond. We did respond to the request for more clarity by significantly expanding the set of guidelines that the learning objectives will evolve from throughout the proposal.

The other area of concern in this section relates to transfer students, ensuring that they are able to integrate with the new Gen Ed program in a way that doesn't add new hurdles or difficulties. To this end, the committee met with Jolie Lewis (Associate Vice Provost for Academic Support and Director of Transfer Initiatives). We were able to get our questions answered about state requirements, alignment with Virginia community colleges, and barriers to transfer student success.

Embedded Themes

The embedded themes were generally seen as a strength, reinforcing important skills across the curriculum, encouraging curriculum coherence, supporting interdisciplinary learning, and potentially improving student learning.

The main concerns included a lack of clear definitions, unclear terminology, and confusion about how the embedded themes interact with the rest of the curriculum.

The embedded themes idea is retained in the revised proposal, but the relationship between requirements and the embedded themes has been clarified. The embedded themes are not additional requirements and do not need to be student-facing as an element of course selection. The embedded themes are intended to provide program coherence and oversight in the hands of the group that will eventually administer the program, but the structure of the program would not materially change if the themes were removed.

Launch Requirements

72.7% of respondents strongly agree that information literacy and critical thinking are important components in a Gen Ed program, and an additional 16.1% somewhat agree, resembling a near-consensus.

Conversely, only 44.8% considered Power Skills to be either strongly or somewhat important, against 26% who argued that they aren't important.

There was general support for something resembling a first-year experience, but also significant skepticism involving the 2-1 credit structure along several compelling lines.

In response to these objections, the committee has replaced the 2-1 credit model with a single three credit Information Literacy and Critical Thinking requirement. Power skills will no longer exist as a separate course, but a version of it has been moved into the Embedded Themes category, relying on a set of explicitly stated skills that include information and critical thinking, communication, collaboration and problem solving, global perspectives, well-being, and engaged citizenship and democracy (no longer relying on the "power skills" label).

The Communication I & 2 sequence was somewhat or strongly supported by 90% of respondents and left unchanged beyond some expansion of the framework for learning objectives.

The Well-Being requirement was seen as somewhat or strongly important by two-thirds of faculty, with only 14.3% somewhat or strongly disagreeing. This requirement remains essentially as it was in the draft proposal.

Core Requirements

The specific elements of the core program were all considered to be important by an overwhelming majority of respondents, with the percentage responding either strongly or somewhat important provided below.

Creative Inquiry and Processes (87.4%)

Humanistic and Interpretive Reasoning (90.1%)

Social and Behavioral Inquiry (90.7%)

Quantitative Reasoning (90.6%)

Natural Science and Lab (88.9%)

Science, Technology, and the Built Environment (88.8%)

Overall, the core program was seen as strong, retaining foundational academic areas with an additional emphasis on foundational skills, increased flexibility and the potential for cross-disciplinary participation.

The concerns that came out in the discussions and survey focused on the lack of clarity in some guidelines and advising and scheduling complexity.

The committee has expanded the framework guidelines for most of the core components, with substantial clarification for the Creative Inquiry and Processes, Humanistic and Interpretive Reasoning, Natural Science and Lab and Science, Technology, and the Built Environment elements. Natural Science has been defined (as different from Social Sciences), and “Physical” has been removed from the Science, Technology, and Built Environment component, which now has three approaches to meet the requirement specifically laid out.

Engaged Citizenship and Democracy

The Engaged Citizenship and Democracy elements also received broad support, with 77.7% of respondents somewhat or strongly highlighting the importance of Foundations of Democracy, 69.2% support for Problem-Solving for the Public Good or Practicing Democracy. While Civic education was perceived as an important educational goal, there were concerns about the risk of political or ideological bias and lack of clarity about course content and learning outcomes.

In response to feedback, the committee changed the name of the second course to Practices for the Public Good, with two branches: Public Problem-Solving and Public Expression and Engagement. The framework guidelines for both of these have been significantly expanded.

Connection

Support for the Connection requirement was mixed in the survey, with 45.7% of respondents supporting and 37.0% of respondents skeptical. Comments identifying strengths most often emphasized the potential for the requirement to encourage integrative and cross-disciplinary learning and to create a structured opportunity for reflection on students' academic development. Concerns focused overwhelmingly on lack of clarity about course expectations and structure. Some concerns reflected misunderstandings that demonstrated that the committee needed to offer more clarity in the proposal. In response, the committee expanded the framework guidelines and continued refining the language describing the requirement's purpose and structure.

The Connection requirement remained a subject of active discussion through the committee's final meetings. Ultimately, the committee concluded that the requirement has the potential to meaningfully advance several objectives of the proposed curriculum and campus general education reform efforts. The final version of the Proposed Core Curriculum therefore retains the Connection requirement and clarifies its purpose, benefits, and anticipated structure. At the same time, the committee recognizes that realizing these benefits will depend on thoughtful implementation, including faculty development and ongoing evaluation. Most faculty feedback pointed to implementation challenges rather than a rejection of the educational goals the Connection requirement is designed to support, and the committee expects that continued faculty oversight will help ensure the requirement develops in ways that best serve students and the broader goals of the program

Double-Counting

The poll for double-counting showed a preference for a two or three course limit, with a skew towards larger numbers. The comments suggested that low double-counting would reduce student and program flexibility, whereas high double-counting would potentially limit student interaction with students from other disciplines.

In the end, the committee adopted a 10-credit overlap, allowing for one (4) credit class and two (3) credit classes (or any other combination) to be double-counted as a major course as well as

meeting a Gen Ed requirement. The Connections requirement stands outside of this and can always be double counted with an existing requirement.

Additionally, cognate courses (courses required by the major but that do not share the academic program's prefix) are not restricted from double-counting.

Global Requirement

One objection to the initial PCC (that was presented by many people and in multiple contexts) had to do with the lack of any requirement for a global perspectives course, arguing that meaningful engagement with non-American or non-Western contexts is an essential part of a general education program.

The committee (after engaging in lengthy debate and evaluating several alternative approaches) responded by adding this requirement as a credit-neutral overlay that could be achieved through several of the program elements but must be acquired at least once as a student navigates the program.

Going Forward

While the committee developed expanded framework guidelines for each of the elements of the proposal, with the purpose of making clear our intent for each element, we stopped short of developing specific learning objectives. We did not feel that we had the appropriate expertise to accomplish that effectively, and elected to defer this to faculty working groups to be assembled in the summer and/or fall. It is with gratitude that the CCC learned that the provost extended the timeline to ensure time for development of these learning objectives and subsequent shepherding through the C&I process.

We also considered making the Democracy/Public Service and Connections elements upper level (300-400) courses with the idea of ensuring that all JMU students (including transfer students) would have some elements of a shared General Education. While this idea had its origin in faculty feedback, we did not feel that it had sufficient evidence to support or oppose the idea in the proposal, so we chose to defer.