

MOREHEAD STATE UNIVERSITY  
Application for the  
Association of American Colleges and Universities  
Institute on General Education

Narrative Responses to Application Questions:

**Question #1.**

**Purpose:**

Our current General Education program was remodeled in the mid 1990's and currently has the following structure:

**MSU General Education**

**Purpose:** The purpose of Morehead State University's general education component is to equip all students with the knowledge and skills to live fulfilling and productive lives as educated citizens of the world. The General Education program at MSU has been designed to help students become educated citizens through an intentionally designed curriculum framework. It leads to mastery of core competencies and results in students becoming "INTENTIONAL LEARNERS who can adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from different sources, and continue learning throughout their lives" (Greater Expectations, AAC&U, 2002). Specifically, the General Education Goals at MSU have been designed so that students will be able to:

- A. Communicate accurately and effectively.**  
Students must be proficient in both written and spoken English.
- B. Locate, select, organize, and present information efficiently.**  
Students must be able to retrieve and organize information from various disciplines and to use appropriate computer technologies.
- C. Think and reason analytically.**  
Students must be able to use methods of scientific inquiry, understand and apply mathematical concepts, and reason logically by evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing information.
- D. Make informed and ethical value decisions.**  
Students must make responsible decisions after considering the moral, aesthetic, and practical implications of their actions.
- E. Function responsibly in the natural, social, and technological environment.**  
Students must recognize and understand both the dynamics and social implications of political, environmental, and scientific processes.
- F. Recognize and respond to aesthetic values in creative human expression.**  
Students should develop an appreciation for the arts and humanities.

**G. Develop life skills.**

Students should develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors which promote well being.

**H. Recognize and value the multicultural nature of American society and respect the rights of all citizens.**

Students must consider how others think and live in order to develop understanding of and respect for the cultural diversity within American society.

**I. Analyze global issues in the context of cultural diversity.**

Students must understand the diversity as well as commonality of the world inhabitants and understand the need to act responsibly as world citizens.

Students attain competence in the core areas by taking specified **Required Core** courses in writing, oral communications, math reasoning, and computer applications. These courses clearly define expectations for student mastery of intellectual and practical skills. *Student learning outcomes of core competencies, teaching strategies and assessment procedures are identified for each course in the core.*

Students obtain a broad liberal arts education by taking 30 hours in **Area Studies** courses in humanities, natural and mathematical sciences, social and behavioral sciences, and practical living. *Student learning outcomes, teaching strategies and assessment procedures are identified for each area studies course.*

Students learn to integrate and use what they have learned through the collective experience of their major and general education. The culmination of this process is the **Integrated Capstone** course where students demonstrate mastery of general education core skills, mastery of content specific to the major, and ability to integrate, synthesize and use what they have learned.

**General Education requirements: 48 hours total**

**I. Required Core:** 15 hours composed of

- 6 hours Writing I and Writing II
- 3 hours Fundamentals of Speech Communication
- 3 hours Math Reasoning (choose one of 7 math courses)
- 3 hours Computer Competence (choose one of 9 courses)

**II. Area Studies:** 30 hours composed of

- 9 hours Humanities
- 9 hours Natural and Mathematical Sciences
- 9 hours Social and Behavioral Sciences
- 3 hours Practical Living

**III. Integrative Component:** 3 hours of major-specific capstone course

Faculty and administrators have seemingly come to the conclusion that what was once a more tightly organized set of courses designed to ensure students reached certain

educational goals has become a very loosely organized collection of courses. MSU currently has approximately 150 courses approved as Gen Ed courses. A complete listing is in the Undergraduate Catalog. It has been likened to a smorgasbord and now serves partly as a way to recruit students into majors, serves as a lightly veiled extension of majors, and serves as a way to generate teaching load. Assessment results have played some role in this current review through demonstrating that the current program is so amorphous that it is difficult to assess in meaningful ways because students have such varied general education experiences. Students can choose from such a wide variety of courses that we are at a beginning point in designing an appropriate assessment as a starting point for transformational change. The consensus seems to be that general education is broken and needs fundamental restructuring. The political reality is that there are two factors that will serve as competing and powerful forces in any general education reform at MSU. The present policy requires that the entire faculty vote on any changes to the current general education program. The other reality is that we are in a state with a heavy mandate to make our general education program as similar as possible to the other Kentucky public institutions of post-secondary education in order to fulfill legislative mandates for maximizing transfer and transferability of general education coursework.

### Question #2.

#### Goals:

It is hoped that a unified vision of planned reform will emerge as the General Education Reform Leadership Team attends the summer workshop and engages in follow-up activities. In order to return to campus and begin the review and revision of General Education with a larger work group, our team needs to explore three high priority areas during the institute:

1. To identify and study successful models of general education reform and to determine the components of a 21<sup>st</sup> century student liberal education and appropriate student learning and program outcomes. Although we don't know the problems we will have to face in the future, we believe the following skills will be critical:
  - a. First, the capacity to make sense of the unfamiliar- a capacity that is at the heart of liberal learning.
  - b. Second, the social capacity that derives from "there being someone out there (i.e. broadly trained liberal arts graduates) who knows at least something about the newly emerging problem." (Paul Courant, Provost at the University of Michigan, *The Value of a Liberal Education*)
2. To understand how a variety of assessment techniques and models can be used to evaluate not only our current model of general education, but also how to develop meaningful student outcome assessments and program assessments as we move forward with a new curriculum.
3. To understand how state guidelines and regulations, as well as transferability, will play a role in the reform process.

While there is a general consensus that general education needs fundamental restructuring, there has not been a focused study of best practices and data analysis of the current demographic. Between now and May, these issues will be examined to provide a more focused experience during the Institute.

### **Question #3.**

#### **Team Characteristics:**

The Morehead State University team includes six faculty and staff, representing the humanities, natural and biological sciences, social sciences and teacher education. Each has been confronted, at one level or another, with the difficulty of assessing our current general education program – including our Associate Provost of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs responsible for campus-wide assessment of general education, a department chair and individual faculty concerned with assessment of course clusters and individual courses within the general education program, and our Director of Educational Services concerned with assessing the impact of our general education program on teacher preparation. The team also represents current or emerging campus leadership – including an associate provost, department chair, chair-elect of the Faculty Senate, and three current members of the President’s Leadership Academy. The team offers a broad spectrum of disciplines and expertise, an understanding and appreciation of the role of general education in the undergraduate experience and a commitment to providing the collaborative leadership needed to engage the campus in a comprehensive and collegial review of our general education program.

The additional team member is:

Ms. Kathryn Mincey

Associate Professor

English

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### **Question #4**

#### **Contributions:**

Morehead State University will bring an extremely energetic team that is focused and excited about the challenge ahead and the opportunity to have a very real impact on one of the most critical issues confronting the institution. They are a truly exceptional group and will add depth and breadth to the sessions and discussions at the Institute. Each is a skilled communicator and, perhaps more important, they are all excellent listeners. The team will be there to learn from the sessions and the Institute faculty and to learn from the other teams.

The Morehead team members will come with an openness of mind to consider new ideas and approaches to general education. They will be focused learning more about innovative, best practices in general education and will be very eager to know about the

most effective program assessment practices. They will come with the dedication and commitment to being the most productive and most supportive team at the Institute.

The Morehead State University team will contribute the perspective of a masters-level institution that serves a unique area and a unique population. Of each entering freshman class, over 40% require remediation in mathematics and 30% require remediation in reading and composition. With these skills creating the heart of general education, it is imperative that the institution have a program that confirms the individual student's preparation to enter degree programs and to serve as the foundation to grow in those degree programs.

Additionally, over half of MSU students are the first family member to attend college. This presents the challenge to the institution of changing culture among our students to value education and to realize the worth of general education.