

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

ACTION ITEM

DATE: February 16, 2024

ITEM: Approval of General Education Redesign Proposal

COMMITTEE: Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approve

PRESENTED BY: Dr. Kimberly D. McCorkle
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Sharon James McGee
Dean of the College of Graduate and Continuing Studies

Dr. David Harker
Professor and Chair of the Department of Philosophy and
Humanities

In October 2022, the General Education Advisory Council (GEAC) recommended the initiation of a process for a faculty led redesign of ETSU’s general education. This recommendation formalized a collaborative effort to review the current general education program and make recommendations for revising this fundamental component of the undergraduate academic experience.

General education is intended to prepare students for life, careers, and citizenship; develop core learning competencies; and, facilitate a broad understanding across the arts, humanities, and sciences. However, many students, parents, and community members are unclear about the purpose and values of general education. Multiple universities across the nation are engaged in the process of general education revision by developing collaborative programming, engaged experiential learning opportunities, and relevant connections to a student’s academic, career, and personal expectations.

The General Education Redesign Task Force was charged with the task of leading the review and development of recommendations regarding ETSU’s general education program. The committee met regularly, conducting numerous meetings with faculty, staff, and student groups. The Task Force developed a vision statement for general education to explain the purpose and value of general education to a student’s academic, personal, and professional growth. The redesigned curriculum changes ETSU’s general education to a competency model. It includes five new general education categories: Strengthening Foundations, Understanding Natural and Social Worlds, Exploring Connections,

Cultivating Artistic Awareness, and Growing as an Individual and Global Citizen. The recommended curriculum is 40-43 credits and will begin implementation with the fall 2024 freshman class. The recommended general education revisions will enhance student learning in an array of courses that make connections to content across disciplines while providing students expanded opportunities to engage in active learning, community engaged activities, and content that builds strong foundations for lifelong learning. In the future, general education will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the curriculum remains current, relevant, and focused on student learning. The new General Education curriculum has been approved by the Academic Council and University Council.

Staff will provide the Trustees with a full presentation of proposed General Education enhancements during the Committee Meeting.

MOTION: I move that the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee recommend adoption of the following Resolution by the Board of Trustees:

RESOLVED: The recommendation for approval of a new 40 – 43 credit general education with five new categories of coursework is approved by the ETSU Board of Trustees. The University is directed to implement this program for the fall of 2024 and to assure that all elements of this program meet THEC and SACSCOC guidelines.



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

General Education Redesign

Dr. Kimberly D. McCorkle
Dr. Sharon James McGee
Dr. David Harker

Background

- After visioning process concluded, began meeting with campus groups to discuss General Education redesign
- Convened a task force in Fall 2022
- Selected co-chairs Drs. McGee and Harker
- Set implementation goal for Fall 2024
- Final report submitted January 11, 2024
- New framework approved by Academic Council and University Council
- After BOT approval, full implementation will begin



Why Redesign General Education at ETSU?

- Academic Restructure Task Force
- ETSU 125, Chapter 2
- Faculty Senate support
- General Education Advisory Committee support
- QEP focus on Community-Engaged Learning



Why now?

GenZ students will

- Likely change jobs many times during their professional lives
- Require preparation for some jobs that do not even exist currently
- Need the **core skills** provided by general education for their future:
 - critical thinking
 - creativity & adaptability
 - connections across disciplines
 - communication
 - grounding in science, math, arts, humanities, social and behavioral sciences

Parents, students, and the community often see general education courses as hurdles to jump rather than a way to gain competencies for careers and life-long learning



Current State

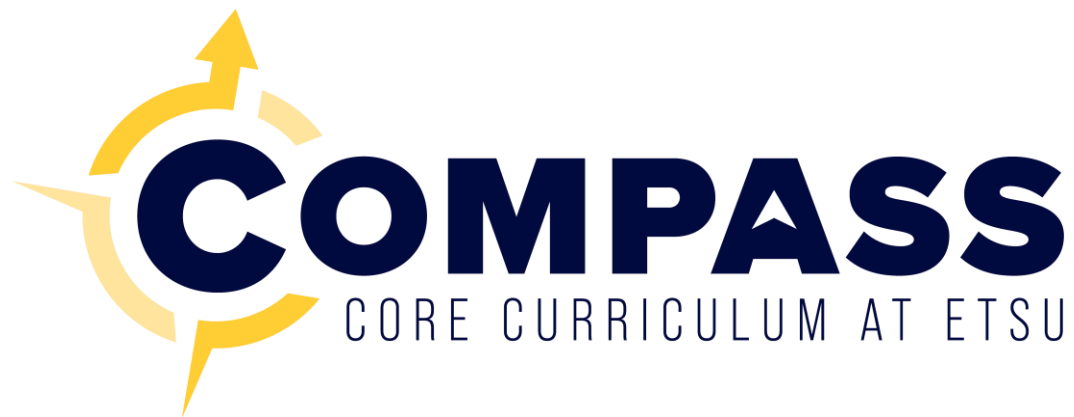
- List of courses to choose from without explicit connection and coherence
- Limited choice for students
- Relevance of curriculum is unclear
- University focus on student success



Recap of Process

- Began in late Fall 2022
- Aligned with best practices
- Benchmarked with peers across state, region, and nation
- Faculty-driven
- Transparent





Compass: Highlights

- Competency-based
- Aligned with best practices
- Integrates high-impact teaching practices
- Distinguishes foundational courses
- Adds a critical thinking requirement
- Includes a focus option
- Provides a clear framework to help students and families see the usefulness of general education



Compass: Benefits

- Transparent
- Flexible with more choice
- Focuses on student-engaged learning
- Improved student success outcomes



Compass: Core Curriculum

Strengthening Foundations (15-16 credits)

- Written Composition (6)
- Quantitative Reasoning (3-4)
- Oral Communication (3)
- Critical Thinking (3)

Understanding Natural and Social Worlds (10-11 credits)

- Natural Sciences (at least 4)
- Social/Behavioral Sciences (at least 3)

Exploring Connections (9 credits)

- History (at least 3)
- Humanities outside of History (at least 3)

Cultivating Artistic Awareness (3 credits)

Growing as an Individual and Global Citizen (3-4 credits)



Feedback from a college

“

This is an exciting change and just the kind of general education our accrediting body would like to see.

(Paraphrased)



Implementation Overview

Compass begins Fall 2024

- **Phase 1:** Legacy courses will be updated and reviewed
- **Phase 2:** Currently approved courses that are not part of current general education can apply (~Fall 2024)
- **Phase 3:** Newly designed courses (~late Fall 2024 onward)



Implementation Team

- Dr. David Harker, co-chair
- Dr. Matt Palmatier, co-chair
- Dr. Bill Flora
- Dr. Evelyn Roach
- Dr. Alison Barton



Questions/Comments?

Kimberly McCorkle
David Harker
Sharon James McGee

