Learning Communities for General Education Review

Create Student, Staff and Faculty Learning Communities using members of SSTF as the core and recruiting others as necessary.

Meeting schedule: Learning communities will meet seven times during academic year.

1 November 1. **Internal Scan**: Brainstorming about best experiences in a general education curriculum; generating a list of preferred practices

15 November 2. **External Scan I**: Research on general education through library databases; find one good article and summarize; present to learning community; generate annotated bibliography (see one article at: [http://www.aacu.org/peerreview/pr-fa04/pr-fa04feature1.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/peerreview/pr-fa04/pr-fa04feature1.cfm))

29 November 3. **External Scan II**: Research on model general education programs through web catalogs; find one good program and summarize; present to learning community; generate annotated listing (see one model at: [http://www.jmu.edu/gened/](http://www.jmu.edu/gened/))

January 4. All three LCs meet to discuss lists

5. **Internal Plan**: Develop possible strategies and structures for general education, using lists as well as results from spring 2007 learning communities

February 6. Distill brainstorming down to five strategies and structures, and then decide upon the best one

7. All three LCs meet to discuss each other’s top 5 and each other’s best one; findings presented to entire SSTF
Issues that the revised General Education Program must consider and include:

Results of First Faculty, Staff and Student Learning Communities (Spring 2006):

- Implement and sustain a campus culture that supports innovative teaching strategies: the university needs to continue and extend the beginning that has been made in creating curricular, co-curricular, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning experiences

- Create social and informal learning spaces on campus: significant learning occurs in the context of relationships that are built outside of the classroom between students and faculty and between students and students, requiring plenty of spaces for unexpected conversations, shared work and unstructured activity

- Develop an adjunct faculty program to inform and incorporate them into the community: as the majority of courses are taught by adjunct faculty, an integrated approach to teaching and learning needs to consider the structure of teaching as a strength to be built on rather than a weakness to get around

- Develop focused groups or alliances to address common life, community and career issues: learning transcends the classroom experiences into the co-curricular area where organizations function as learning environments and such realities need to be actively incorporated into our thinking about educating the whole student

- Create affiliations around transdisciplinary issues for all members of the community (students, staff and faculty): similar to the point above, many of these issues transcend particular disciplines, professions and established organizations and extend to all involved at the university, regardless of status
Conclusions from BEAMS workshop concerning General Education:

- Address the unintended consequences of the current program that was transfer-credit centered where more and more students are taking significant portions of their general education credits from community colleges even after they enroll at Woodbury

- Create a specific Woodbury general educational experience that makes it an essential rather than tangential experience, in effect a Woodbury ‘brand’ of general education that fits our mission and educational goals

- Integrate explicit co-curricular and professional/personal development elements with academic curriculum and degree completion to educate the entire student for whatever their futures hold, as far as possible

- Prepare regular and adjunct faculty for participation in the general education curriculum through training and workshops, making inclusion a privilege rather than an obligation so that faculty actively seek out roles within the general education program

- Move towards a capstone general education experience that both concludes the program as well as prepares students for the capstone experience in their major, both as a synthesizing element and as an analogous assessment and data collection site to that in the majors
Woodbury’s Educational Goals

• Academic Quality: In times of great change, standards can change. The university seeks, as it has always done, to add value to the lives of its students through the educational experiences it provides. At the same time, the course and outcomes of learning must adhere to the highest principles and goals. This provides assurance to the students and to the community that the learning at Woodbury University is not only significant but of significant quality.

• Innovation and Creativity: Creativity suggests that one is a maker of knowledge, goods, concepts and not just a receiver of them. Innovation suggests that what one makes is new and forward-looking. We try to foster the values of innovation and creativity in all members of our community.

• Communication: The diversity of forms in which communications take place has swelled, as have the people and places that one must communicate with. In addition to the expanding media, the types of communication have expanded and given heightened importance to visual and physical as well as written and oral communication. We strive to produce good communication and excellent communicators across diverse media and audiences.

• Transdisciplinarity: Transdisciplinarity understands the interdependence of all knowledge and widens the forms of knowing to include emotional intelligences, intuition, and physical knowing. It recognizes the importance of collaboration among the disciplines to solve complex problems. We believe that collaboration of people, each able to make a unique contribution, is important.

• Social Responsibility: Social responsibility no longer is an option for the educated. At base, social responsibility implies a respect for the planet, a respect for its people and the environment. It asserts that all action has impact on the planet and that understanding that impact and accepting responsibility for one’s actions is the moral and ethical condition for the educated global citizen. Civic engagement has come to embrace principles of sustainability as well as social justice. Members of our community will be socially responsible.

• The Integrated Student: Because of the principles above, Woodbury University finds it more important than ever to assure that the aspects of a student’s personal and professional life are fully integrated. What one will do as a professional is an outgrowth of what one will become as a person. All parts of the university will work on producing this integrated student.
Greater Expectations Learning Outcomes:

- Strong analytical, communication, quantitative, and information skills—achieved and demonstrated through learning in a range of fields, settings, and media, and through advanced studies in one or more areas of concentration.

- Intercultural knowledge and collaborative problem-solving skills—achieved and demonstrated in a variety of collaborative contexts (classroom, community-based, international, and online) that prepare students both for democratic citizenship and for work both in their local communities and in a global society.

- Deep understanding of and hands-on experience with the inquiry practices of disciplines that explore the natural, social, and cultural realms—achieved and demonstrated through studies that build conceptual knowledge by engaging learners in concepts and modes of inquiry that are basic to the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and arts.

- A proactive sense of responsibility for individual, civic, and social choices—achieved and demonstrated through forms of learning that connect knowledge, skills, values, and public action, and through reflection on students’ own roles and responsibilities in social, environmental and civic contexts.

- Habits of mind that foster integrative thinking and the ability to transfer skills and knowledge from one setting to another—achieved and demonstrated through advanced research and/or creative projects in which students take the primary responsibility for framing questions, carrying out an analysis, and producing work of substantial complexity and quality.