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***Wolves in Action* Proposal Application (Summer 2019)¹**

APPLICATION DEADLINE: May 1, 2019 submit to Summer DeProw (sdeprow@astate.edu) and Mary Elizabeth Spence (mspence@astate.edu).

APPLICATION PROCESS: Interested programs are welcome to send a brief interest statement and schedule a short informational meeting with *Wolves in Action* program leaders, Summer and Mary Elizabeth prior to submitting this application.

Part One: Project Background

The purpose of the *Wolves in Action* program is to increase course-level, program-level, and co-curricular learning improvement at A-State.

We strive to achieve:

- Demonstrable impacts on student learning in general education courses.
- Demonstrable impacts on student learning in academic degree programs.
- Demonstrable impacts on student learning in co-curricular learning units.
- Demonstrable impact on faculty and/or co-curricular learning leaders (development as teacher-scholars, sense of belonging to the institutional community, motivation and efficacy, etc.).
- Recognition of A-State as a leader in cultivating assessment-affirmed high-impact practices.

To accomplish the *Wolves in Action* program goals, the A-State Assessment Office is committed to providing the following as needed to facilitate the program:

- Assisting with creating a customized workshop to develop and implement strategies to improve learning
- Funding to collaborate with an off-campus discipline expert
- Funding to pay faculty a small stipend for participating in a summer workshop
- Bringing together other departments or units on campus to develop and implement strategies to improve learning
- Support for future data collection and statistical data analysis if needed
- Support for curriculum proposal completion

¹ This application was adapted from the James Madison University Assessment Office with permission from Dr. Keston Fulcher, Assessment Director.



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Part Two: Proposal Requirements

1. Program Overview

- A) Course name; Program Name; or Co-curricular Unit Name

The General Education Program (GEP) as overseen by The General Education Committee (GEC)

- B) Referring to your response to question A: Approximate number of students matriculating through the general education course; program graduates per year; or student participants per year

Virtually all students at ASU take courses in GEP at ASU. (There are a few exceptions, for example, those who enter ASU with an Associates Degree in hand.)

- C) Referring to your response to question A: Number of faculty members teaching the general education course; number of faculty members involved in teaching courses required for the program; or number of staff members in the co-curricular unit

All faculty members at ASU are involved in either directly teaching General Education or in building upon the knowledge in skills learned in the GEP as they teach within their own disciplines and programs.

- D) Referring to your response to question A: Briefly describe the purpose or mission of your general education course; program; or co-curricular unit (200-word limit)

The General Education Program develops a foundation and motivation for the lifelong pursuit of learning in undergraduate students at Arkansas State University by introducing them to a broad range of essential areas of knowledge that will enable them to think critically and participate ethically in a democratic nation and a global society.

The purpose of the General Education Committee is to provide guidance and direction to the VCAAR to improve the quality and relevance of the University's general education curriculum.



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2. Identify Targeted Student Learning Outcome

Provide an overview of the learning outcome targeted by this project.

- A) Include the specific learning outcome that will be targeted. Each outcome listed must be a formal university, general education, or program outcome that is included or will be included in assessment reporting.

The purpose of this series of workshops will not be to review a specific learning outcome. Instead, it will be consider the framework used to determine the specific SLOs. For example, what is or should be included in the “range of essential areas of knowledge that will enable them to think critically and participate ethically in a democratic nation and a global society.”

- B) Indicate why the targeted outcome is important for your course/program/unit, linking to long-term benefits (e.g., graduate school, job preparedness, licensure, civic engagement, diversity, critical thinking, communication, etc.).

If the GEP is the foundation for student success in a major program of study, the institution should occasionally inspect that foundation as a whole. Currently, the GEC assesses the building blocks of that foundation through an assessment of individual courses. There is no mechanism or codified process to examine the structure as such. The workshops for which we ask support will be a first step in that. In essence, we see this as a formative needs assessment, an attempt to set out a roadmap of how the institution can reinvigorate GEP and update it based on current student needs, expert opinion and best practices as currently understood.

- C) What data suggest the targeted outcome needs improvement? Leaders of general education course/s, programs, or co-curricular units are encouraged to reference direct measures, indirect measures (e.g., self-report surveys), disciplinary trends, specialized accreditor, and/or program review recommendations.

In the Spring semester of 2019, the GEC heard from Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Dr. Lynita Cooksey as well as the Deans of three colleges about the importance of the GEP to the university overall and to students within a variety of programs. Dr. Ed Salo offered a presentation on trends in General Education in U.S. higher education. Committee members were also made aware of the ongoing strategic planning process at ASU. Their concerns, along with anecdotal data about enrollments in general education classes and the need to improve student performance within majors vis-à-vis skills presumably learned in GEP, led to the members of



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GEC, themselves experts and authorities on the topic, to unanimously vote that this project was needed.

- D) To demonstrate student learning improvement, programs traditionally assess student performance before changing curriculum and pedagogy, and after. Therefore, assessment is critical to the process. Some improvement initiatives have begun with strong assessment at the outset. Other have not, but improvement initiatives can begin from before or after initial assessment conclusions. Comment on the strength of the program's current assessment methodology (i.e., instrument, data collection) relative to the targeted student learning outcome and how you will go about assessing the learning outcome after the improvement initiative is implemented.

As stated above (section 2B) there is currently no formal process by which the framework of GEP is evaluated. Current GEP assessment is piecemeal, focusing on the courses as building blocks. The purpose of these workshops will be on the need (or not) for creating such a process and the institutional resources required for doing so.

3. Faculty or Co-curricular Team

Document faculty and/or co-curricular leader commitment to the project.

- A) The vast majority of faculty/co-curricular leaders who teach in courses/unit programming targeted by the learning initiative must be willing and enthusiastic participants. This includes instructors on the tenure-track as well as on part-time or full-time renewable term contract and/or full and part-time staff in co-curricular units. Other faculty are welcome and encouraged to collaborate as well and a combination of general education course/program faculty and co-curricular leaders is strongly encouraged. Please complete *Appendix A- Team Member Form*.
- B) Characteristics of successful teams include a commitment to improving the learning environment; a collaborative spirit; and a critical, yet constructive disposition. Provide evidence of how your faculty or co-curricular unit has worked together effectively to address program wide issues.

For this evidence, please see the meeting minutes of the GEC, available at <https://www.astate.edu/a/shared-governance/shared-governance-committees/general-education-committee-/index.dot>



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C) Describe the culture of your program. The following are some questions that may help frame how you think about your program.

1. What are the dynamics within the culture?

Collegial arguments with a liberal mix of humor, resignation and hope.

2. What is the typical communication flow among members of the program?

As far as I know, most communication is verbal face-to-face during committee and subcommittee meetings. There is a minimal amount of discussion via general email among all committee members. I am unaware of the personal e-mail exchanges among individual GEC members, though I presume it does occur. Unlike what I witness in departmental committee meetings, I seldom see people passing notes in committee meetings of the GEC.

3. Who makes decisions about programmatic changes, pedagogy choices, and assessment? Are these change-agents supportive of this proposal?

The GEC votes on all decisions, requiring a majority. The committee voted unanimously to make this proposal.

D) Consider the courses/program/co-curricular programming targeted by the learning initiative and a typical semester. The following are some questions that may be helpful to consider.

1. How many of the instructors of these courses are tenure-track, full-time renewable term instructors, and part-time instructors?

NA

2. How many co-curricular leaders in the unit are full or part-time?

NA

3. What is the turn-over in who teaches these courses from semester to semester?

Are the core group of faculty members ones you anticipate remaining within the program for the next three years?

Regarding GEC committee membership: The chair, who must be tenured, will serve a three-year term and may not be reappointed to a consecutive three-year term. Members of the committee will be tenured faculty with a minimum of three-years of continuous service prior to serving on the committee. Each college will be responsible for determining the selection of its representative(s).

4. Identify the project leader(s). Ideal characteristics for leaders are that they have experience within the program, are respected by all program members, have a



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voice within the program, have the time to commit to the project, and are able to enact change via collaboration with other program/faculty members.

David Harding, Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Administration, will lead. Harding has been a member of the ASU faculty for 27 years, chaired the GEC during a major reform of GEP in the 1990's, has served as Director of the Environmental Sciences Program and of an earlier incarnation of the Faculty Center (The Teaching and Learning Center). He has over two decades of experience in assessment at ASU and is an expert in program and policy formulation and evaluation within his academic specialization.

- E) Consider departmental support for team members. Some areas to consider include the following.
1. Is there departmental support for the team members' involvement, such as course release or release from other service activities?
NA
 2. Is this service rewarded in the faculty members' promotion and/or tenure process?
NA.
 3. Is this service rewarded in the staff members' promotion and/or merit raises?
NA
 4. Does the core group of faculty or staff have the time to commit to this project?

The core group have been made aware of the commitment involved and have volunteered for the role.

5. Are the core faculty aware of and willing to commit to a two-day workshop in Summer 2019 plus follow-up work to make the project a success?

The core group have been made aware of the commitment involved and have volunteered for the role.

- F) The Academic or Co-curricular Unit Head must support this process. Provide a letter of support from the AUH. Please see [Appendix B- Academic or Co-curricular Unit Head Letter of Support](#).

NA

- G) Describe any other situational factors that may enhance or hinder this process (e.g., new hires, retirements, program going through academic program review or



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specialized accreditation, grants to improve program). What, if any, barriers do you foresee?

The proposal calls for obtaining five additional volunteers for the core group from outside the GEC. We have held off recruiting for this until the application is approved.

4. Investigate Current Efforts

Document what your program is currently doing to help students reach the targeted learning outcome.

- A) Provide a curriculum map illustrating which courses address the targeted outcome. Discuss the extent to which this map accurately represents courses that meaningfully address the targeted outcome.
NA
- B) Provide an overview of the in-course strategies, pedagogies, and assignments currently used to address the targeted outcome or co-curricular strategies used to help students achieve outcomes success. Do not reference particular faculty or co-curricular leader names.
NA
- C) Provide an explanation/hypothesis about why the current approaches in these courses, programs, or co-curricular units are not supporting student learning to the degree desired by faculty or co-curricular leaders.

The GEC workload is currently heavily skewed toward assessment of individual courses and allows little if any room for examination of the larger questions of GEP program design or consideration of the GE SLOs. These workshops will allow for that by a subset of GEC members' along with input from a wider set of stakeholders.

5. Propose Tentative Learning Modifications

Briefly describe any proposed learning modifications (i.e., interventions, curricular or pedagogical changes).

- A) Briefly outline proposed interventions (i.e., curricular or pedagogical changes) the program desires intends to make to enhance the learning environment with regard to the targeted learning outcome.



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We propose a series of four two hour workshops hosted by a working group of approximately 10 members of the ASU faculty. Five members of the GEC will be joined five other faculty in hosting the workshops.

Topics for the four workshops are as follows.

W1. Trends and issues in General Education. AACU experts and others will inform the group about national trends, best practices, and emerging issues in GE.

W2. Exploring the needs of majors and programs. The focus will be on identifying how the GEP program can be redesigned to respond to the changing needs of programs across the university community.

W3. Rethinking General Education SLO's and how to achieve them. Informed by previous workshops, the focus of the third workshop will be to hear from current and potential providers of classes can meet the challenges and needs identified in 1 and 2.

W4. Summarizing and report writing. The ten members of the group will meet to summarize what we have learned and to create a brief report to be delivered to the full GEC in early F2019.

The GEC will meet early in F2019 to consider the report with the intention of delivering it to the ASU Strategic Planning Committee. Our hope is to impress upon those charged with creating a strategic plan the importance of GEP in that plan and suggest issues they should consider in the final Strategic Plan.

- B) Why does the core faculty or co-curricular team think these interventions will be powerful enough to make a substantial change in student learning?

The members of the GEC understand that the knowledge and skills gained in the GEP are fundamental to both student success within their major program of study and to the success of programs in educating their majors. We believe this cannot be guaranteed by way of piecemeal assessment of courses of static GE SLOs. To do so requires a systematic and deliberate examination of the guiding principles of the GEP which shape the specific outcomes in light of the needs of both students and the major programs in which they enroll. In short, it requires a strategic plan.

If we acknowledge that the primary function of an institution is to teach, and that over one quarter of instructional hours is received under the heading of general education, it behooves the institution to pay special attention to the topic in formulating a



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strategic plan. The GEP, unlike every other program of instruction or co-curricular program, has no direct formal representation, no director or dean or administrator, to speak on its behalf in the formal councils of institutional governance. Thus, we, the members of the GEC, voting unanimously, have taken it upon ourselves to speak about the central role of the GEP in the future of ASU, the success of its graduates and of the institution.

6. Propose Improvement Timetable

Provide a specific timeline showing when the changes will be implemented in the curriculum and when they will be assessed.

May 15 – May 31	Recruit 5 additional core members Set date for Workshop 1. Invite outside experts (AACU, etc) Publicize meeting of W1
June 1 -15	Hold Workshop 1. Trends and issues in General Education Finalize dates for subsequent workshops. Publicize timing of Workshops 2 and 3, generally Work to identify and encourage attendance at Workshops 2 and 3 through personal invitations.
June 16 - 30	Hold Workshop 2. Exploring the needs of majors and programs. Continue publicity campaign and personal invitations.
July 1 – July 15	Hold Workshop 3. Rethinking General Education SLO's and how to achieve them
July 15 – July 31	Hold Workshop 4. Report Writing.
August 1 – August 15	Finalize report. Submit to GEC.
August 15 – August 30	Discuss report at meeting of GEC. Submit report to Strategic Planning Committee pending approval of GEC.

Also, the program must provide evidence that the selected assessment measures and data collection design will provide valid evidence of learning improvement if such improvement occurs.



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7. Commitment to Sharing Results

Are the general education course faculty, program faculty, and/or co-curricular leaders willing to share the results of the *Wolves in Action* project through presenting at the subsequent Learn@State symposium?

Yes

Part Three: Project Support

Please complete the following tables and appendices to show the scope and level of project support that will align with the learning improvement initiative.

FACULTY and/or CO-CURRICULAR TEAM SIGNATURES

We approve the prospective project as described above and commit to proceed if selected.

The project was approved unanimously by members of the ASU General Education Committee April 29, 2019' as recorded in the minutes of said committee.

_____ Print <i>Applicant</i> Name	_____ Applicant Signature	_____ Date
_____ NA	_____ NA	_____ NA
_____ Print <i>Department Chair/Supervisor</i> Name	_____ Department Chair/Supervisor Signature	_____ Date
_____ NA	_____ NA	_____ NA
_____ Print <i>College Dean/Vice Chancellor</i> Name	_____ College Dean/Vice Chancellor Signature	_____ Date



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APPENDIX A - TEAM MEMBER FORM

In the table below, please list all faculty members or co-curricular unit members who regularly teach courses related directly to this learning initiative. Map each faculty member to the courses targeted for learning improvement. As necessary, create additional columns for each course and rows for each additional faculty member. Please place an asterisk (*) beside the names of faculty members serving on the core faculty team.

GEC Members who have volunteered to serve on the Working Group	Rank	Department	
David Harding	Associate Professor	Political Science	
Marc Williams	Assistant Professor	Fine Arts	
Karen Yanowitz	Professor	Psychology	
Bethany Seaton	Instructor	Developmental Writing	
Zahid Hossain	Associate Professor	Civil Engineering	

Additional Team Members

Name		
To be identified. See Section 6		



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APPENDIX B- ACADEMIC or CO-CURRICULAR UNIT HEAD LETTER OF SUPPORT

The Academic Unit Head (Vice Chancellor, Dean, or Chair) is to submit a brief letter acknowledging support of this initiative.