

Montgomery College

May 6, 2014

Memorandum

To: Dr. Sanjay Rai, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs

From: Professor Samantha Streamer Veneruso, Chair General Studies Program Revision and Assessment Committee

Subject: Final Report General Studies Program Revision and Recommendations

Included with this memo, please find an executive overview of the recommended General Studies program revision and assessment plan, the full proposal and report, a summary of concerns and responses, and recommendations from the 2013-2014 committee. After two years of work, this committee is pleased to recommend a new General Studies degree plan that addresses the concerns raised by our accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education relating to rigor, academic cohesion and assessment. In addition, the proposed degree framework will enhance curricular and co-curricular learning opportunities for over 8000 students. This proposal further develops the degree structure outlined in our 2013 Periodic Review Report and response to the 2011 formal letter of concern from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

In addition to the proposal, please accept the following recommendations related to the implementation of the degree and assessment plan:

1. Create a multi-year, phased implementation plan for the new General Studies degree and assessment initiative, with the initial implementation of the degree requirements beginning Fall 2015
2. Establish a collaborative leadership committee for the General Studies Degree
3. Develop a budget for General Studies
4. Ensure adequate course availability
5. Develop transferability strategies
6. Incorporate General Studies initiatives in the MC 2020 Strategic Plan

In the development of this proposal and the associated recommendations, the committee has actively sought and incorporated feedback from administrators, faculty and students through the Transfer Council, the Advising Steering Group, the Chairs groups on all three campuses, the Faculty Council, individual program coordinators, and student groups. The proposal has been shared publicly and feedback has been incorporated throughout the two-year process.

The proposal reflects significant changes advising, instruction and assessment. We propose an implementation date of the new degree program by Fall 2015 with a year of implementation planning to allow for smooth initiation of the new degree requirements.

Overview of the New General Studies Degree Program

The following is a general overview of the proposed General Studies degree program requirements and assessment plan. For more detailed discussion, please see the full report.

Program Goals and Outcomes Summary

The General Studies degree is designed as a flexible degree that allows students to intentionally explore chosen subjects and disciplines while earning transferable credits. The new degree will emphasize:

- Setting personal, academic, and professional goals
- More complex application of General Education competencies
- Intentional course selection and academic planning
- Opportunities to integrate knowledge across disciplines and personal learning networks
- Connections between course work and personal, civic, and social engagement

Transfer

The General Studies degree is designed to help students who intend to transfer in the following ways:

1. By providing a degree path for students who are transferring to four-year schools in degree programs where Montgomery College does not have existing A.A. or A.S. degrees.
2. By providing a transfer degree path for students who are pursuing a traditional A.A.S. degree in a four-year program.
3. Offering a path for students pursuing a degree path in a four-year school in a program where the four-year school requirements are different from MC A.A., A.S. or A.A.S. requirements.

Degree Requirements Overview

The General Studies degree includes:

Successful completion of 60 credits of college-level coursework, with at least 15 credits at the 200 level, including:

- En 101, 3 credits, if needed; alternate elective, if not.
- General Education requirements, 32-35 credits
- Core requirements, either 15 credits from one Core, or 18 credits, 9 credits each, from two different Cores
- Electives: up to 10 credits of electives

Additional Requirements/Guidelines

Students will:

- Maintain an academic plan on file with the College
- Select a Core upon completion of 30 credits, if not sooner
- Develop and maintain an electronic portfolio

Student should:

- Attempt math and English General Education foundations within the first 24 college-level credits or upon completion of prerequisite or required non-credit coursework

Concentration Areas

Concentration areas are interdisciplinary options for course selection:

- Studies in Humanities, Arts, Communication, and Languages (HACL)
- Studies in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)
- Studies in Social Sciences, Health, and Administration (SSAH)
- Integrated Studies, a combination of 2 cores (INTG)

Courses are included in concentration areas based on course designators as a whole (for traditional A.A. degree disciplines) or on a course-by-course basis (for traditional A.S. degree disciplines) based on transferability and type of course.

General Studies Appeals Categories

Individual Course Selections

Students will have the option of appealing for individual courses to be included in the degree program, in advance, if a course that aligns with their personal, academic, and professional goals is not currently listed as part of a core, and they have used 10 elective credits.

Students who transfer into MC with existing credits

Provisions for students who transfer into Montgomery College will be made so that previously earned course credit will be counted toward the degree by associating the course work with core requirements, if we do not have an existing equivalent course.

Program Assessment

Program assessment will be completed using electronic portfolios and signature assignments. Electronic portfolios will be implemented by embedding signature assignments in existing courses. In the long term, completion of portfolios will be required for graduation, but quality of portfolios will not be a requirement for graduation. Quality of portfolios will be assessed through individual courses and program assessment. Co-curricular activities will be included in the e-portfolio process. E-portfolios will be assessed periodically by the General Studies Committee using standard rubrics. The use of badging to enhance the portfolio contents will also be explored.

There are a several implementation models for e-portfolios; a new group will be exploring options for an e-portfolio implementation plan during the summer of 2014. An initial pilot implementation is expected to begin in Fall 2015.

General Studies Program Revision and Assessment Committee

Final Report Recommendations

1. **Create a multi-year, phased implementation plan for the new General Studies degree and assessment initiative to include planning for**

- formation of the collaborative leadership team
- professional development opportunities focused on General Studies advising, integrative learning, high impact practices, and electronic portfolios
- creating stronger linkages between co-curricular and curricular activities
- enhancing instructional offerings with principles of integrative learning
- implementation of e-portfolios for learning and assessment
- a communication plan
- development of identified resources and informational materials
- an assessment of the changes to the degree program and a process for adjusting, as needed.

2. **Establish a collaborative leadership committee-** The General Studies degree program is an interdisciplinary, flexible degree that is not aligned with a single discipline. In order to create clear and effective pathways to degree completion, to offer rich programmatic options, and to ensure students can meet the program outcomes, there must be conscientious cross-discipline coordination among academic disciplines, counseling, student services, and student life. Additionally, the use of a portfolio assessment process will require support and leadership from both instructional and counseling faculty in order to implement, assess, and use the data effectively. The leadership team for General Studies should include a team of instructional and counseling faculty to represent each core, student life representatives to advise on the integration of student life activities, and resource representatives from student and academic services to support the degree structure and assessment plan. Resources members may include graduation coordinators, transcript evaluators, and academic support services. Developing reciprocal relationships with the Libraries, the to-be developed General Education Committee, Outcomes Assessment, the Centers for Teaching and Learning, and the to-be developed Integrative Learning Council would also enhance the degree.

Activities for this committee include:

- Ensuring that integrative learning opportunities exist in each Core
- Developing and reviewing interdisciplinary suggestions for pathways in each Core
- Developing and maintaining materials for students including brochures, information sessions, major day information, and other identified needs
- Developing strategies for integrating co-curricular experiences in the program
- Reviewing Core inclusion appeals
- Working with academic disciplines and making recommendations about student needs for course availability (online, at night, and weekends)

- Developing, maintaining, and overseeing assessment activities including signature assignment guidelines, the e-portfolio process, data collection, and the use of data
- Developing and implementing professional development opportunities and materials for academic and counseling faculty to support integrative learning, Core initiatives, and academic advising
- Periodically reviewing the degree and making recommendations for revisions to the degree
- Completing administrative activities such as the College Area Review and program assessment
- Recommending resources needed for this degree program
- Recommending alternate scheduling options, including accelerated and online options, and working with disciplines to develop these options.

An initial steering committee should develop the structure and selection process for this committee as well as create a formal charge and description of committee activities. There should be a faculty position Director of General Studies to provide ongoing coordination and leadership for General Studies activities.

3. **Develop a Specific General Studies Budget-** The General Studies degree does not currently have a specific budget line or specific resources set aside for the supporting the degree. Over 8000 students are currently registered as General Studies students. This degree serves the largest number of students at the College and is an essential transfer pathway. Budget costs might include costs for administration of the degree, costs associated with the assessment of the degree, costs associated with developing and promoting the degree to students, costs associated with providing advising and curricular development, and professional development costs.
4. **Ensure Adequate Course Availability** - Moving forward, the College needs to ensure that students have access to enough 200 level courses in off peak times and alternate formats (evenings, weekends, and online) to allow them to complete the degree effectively and efficiently. Students should be able to complete the degree fully online, and we should develop accelerated degree completion options. In the implementation of this degree, a process for reviewing and identifying course scheduling gaps, recommending innovative scheduling options, and advocating for the course scheduling needs of General Studies students should be developed.
5. **Develop Transferability Strategies-** The General Studies degree serves a large portion of our transfer student population. We need to work with academic disciplines, the articulation office, and our transfer partners to develop more seamless transfer strategies that encourage students to complete the General Studies degree at Montgomery College and transfer with limited loss of credit.
6. **Incorporate General Studies Initiatives in the MC 2020 Strategic Plan-** The General Studies degree serves the largest population of Montgomery College students. The initiatives planned as

part of this degree are aligned with the MC 2020 themes, Theme I- Educational Excellence, Theme II, Access, Affordability and Success, and Theme V- Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness.

General Studies Revision and Assessment Proposal

The General Studies Program Revision and Assessment committee was convened in September 2012 to refine Montgomery College's response to questions raised about our General Studies degree by our accrediting agency, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The concerns raised about the degree include questions of rigor, academic cohesion, and assessment. This committee was charged with developing a recommendation for a general studies program that provides a clear pathway for students to reach their educational goals, meets Middle States accreditation expectations, avoids substantially replicating existing degrees, and encourages student degree completion. Working under the direction of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs' Office, the committee was asked to develop: a statement of purpose and clearly articulated goals aligned with student learning outcomes that encourage degree completion and allow for assessment of student learning; a curriculum with a program outcome/course map; an implementable assessment plan; an implementation plan and any associated recommendations.

The 2013-14 committee includes:

Denise Simmons Graves, Counseling Faculty
Sharon Fechter, WL Faculty
Jennifer Haydel, PS Faculty
Michel Leger, Counseling Faculty
Cory Newman, CH Faculty
Benjamin Nicholson, MA Faculty
Jennifer Polm, MA Faculty
Samantha Streamer-Veneruso, EN Faculty, Chair
Claudia Greer, Resource Member
Rodney Redmond, Acting Dean of Humanities
Carolyn Terry, Interim Associate Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs

The 2012-2013 committee included:

Sarah Campbell, WL Faculty
Tim Fuss, Nursing Faculty
Jennifer Haydel, PS Faculty
Michael LeBlanc, EN Faculty
Julie Levinson, Counseling Faculty
Jennifer Polm, MA Faculty
Samantha Streamer-Veneruso, EN Faculty, Chair
Kathy Wessman, Resource Member
Raquel Bunai, Resource Member

The following proposal is the culmination of work of both committees and includes revised program outcomes, degree structure, assessment plan, and a summary of concerns and responses. An overview of the new program structure and associated recommendations is included separately.

Background

Multiple influences have shaped our thinking in developing this proposal for the General Studies Associates of Arts Degree. These influences include the original Middle States concerns, recent developments relating to Federal Financial Aid restrictions, the recent State of Maryland SB 740 legislation signed into law in July 2013, Completion Agenda initiatives and best practices highlighted by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) programs, including the Liberal Education And America's Promise (LEAP) program, AAC&U high impact practices and the principles of integrative learning. These resources created a framework of required assumptions and ideal values on which this proposal is built.

In June 2011, Montgomery College received a letter from our accrediting agency, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Key concerns were raised in the letter regarding our General Studies Associates of Arts degree program. The College was charged to respond to those concerns by revising the degree program and developing an assessment plan. Specifically noted in this letter are concerns relating to compliance with Middle States Standards 11 Educational Offerings and 14 Assessment of Student learning relating to General Studies.

In a formal letter to Montgomery College on behalf of Middle States, Linda Suskie states, "One program specifically discussed...was the General Studies AA. It consists of Montgomery College's general education curriculum plus free electives, which students may choose without faculty or advisor input nor an articulated plan. Such a program fails to comply with this standard [Standard 11] in two ways. First, it is entirely possible for a student to complete the program without taking any 200-level courses—a level of rigor inappropriate for an associate's degree. Second, the program lacks the coherence, integration and synthesis that the Commission expects."

Ms. Suskie notes that Standard 11 explicitly requires:

- "The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings."
- "Educational offerings...conducted at levels of rigor appropriate to the programs or degrees offered"
- "Formal...programs—leading to a degree or other recognized higher education credential—designed to foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning."
- "Assessment of student learning and program outcomes relative to goals and objectives of the undergraduate programs and the use of the results to improve student learning and program effectiveness."

Additionally, Ms. Suskie states that the General Studies program does not comply with Standard 14 which explicitly requires:

- "Assessment of student learning demonstrates that at graduation or other appropriate points students have knowledge skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and higher education goals."
- "Clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes at all levels (institution,

degree/program, course) and for all programs that aim to foster student learning and development, that are appropriately integrated with one another.”

- “Assessment results that provide sufficient, convincing evidence that students are achieving key institutional and program learning outcomes.”
- “Evidence that student learning assessment information is shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and is used to improve teaching and learning.”

In the interim, several other developments have occurred that influence the consideration of how to revise this degree. Those include restriction of federal financial aid to courses that are required for a major, MHEC restrictions on degree replication, and the SB 740 legislation.

Assumptions for the Revision- Required

Our General Studies program structure must:

- Have a plan and process for assessing program outcomes and using that information to improve student learning;
- Require students to take 200 level courses (a curriculum proposal for a requirement of 15 credits at the 200 level was approved before this group began working.)
- Promote academic cohesion, intentional learning and synthesis of knowledge and skills;
- Not allow students to substantially duplicate an existing degree;
- Explicitly list degree requirements so that students can use financial aid to pay for coursework;
- Provide a clear pathway to completing the degree.

Assumptions for the Revision- Ideal

Our General Studies Program should:

- Allow students to explore a variety of content areas
- Allow students with specific transfer requirements to fulfill those requirements

Who is the General Studies Degree designed for?

The General Studies Degree is designed to allow students to explore personal, professional and academic areas of interest while setting up a program that supports transfer to a four-year institution.

This degree is designed to serve the student who:

1. Is undecided on a major focus on entry to college
2. Has transfer plans that are not met in another degree program
3. Has specific interests and academic goals which are not met by any existing degree programs

The General Studies degree does not replace academic degrees in specific discipline or career areas. It should allow a student to explore an area or areas of interest as identified by the student in collaboration with counseling and instructional faculty.

General Studies Degree Program Goals and Outcomes

The General Studies Degree is designed to allow students to explore personal, professional and academic areas of interest while setting up a program that supports transfer to a four-year institution.

1. The General Studies degree is a flexible curriculum that fosters intentional exploration of academic and career goals through academic coursework and supportive, developmental advising.
 - a. Students will be able to articulate a plan for their educational and career development that relates their coursework to their goals.
 - b. Students will be able to identify available resources related to their ongoing educational and professional development.
2. Using interdisciplinary application of practical and intellectual skills, the General Studies program creates a flexible framework that encourages students to engage in complex problems related to their chosen path of study while promoting enhanced application of General Education competencies.
 - a. Students will be able to apply critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and/or scientific reasoning skills by articulating, analyzing, and evaluating problems and scenarios across discipline areas.
 - b. Students will be able to find, evaluate, use, and synthesize information needed to address increasingly complex problems and scenarios.
 - c. Students will be able to use technology effectively to accomplish a variety of general and discipline specific activities.
 - d. Students will be able to communicate effectively in writing and orally appropriately across disciplines.
3. The General Studies program promotes a sense of academic cohesion, asking students to make intentional choices and connections in their course of study and fostering integrative learning, personal responsibility and civic engagement by encouraging them to forge connections among academic knowledge areas.
 - a. Students will be able to make and articulate the connections within their course of study.
4. The General Studies program promotes personal responsibility and civic engagement by providing an academic framework in which students explore contemporary and enduring questions, integrate learning across disciplines, and develop knowledge, skills, and motivation, allowing them to frame issues and questions presented in the academic experience in the context of a broader community.
 - a. Students will be able to explain the relevance of their coursework to their participation in the community.

- b. Students will be able to recognize how coursework connects to how they live their lives, the choices they make, and their obligations to the community.

Note about Goal #4 and Outcomes 4A and 4B

Promoting personal, civic, and social responsibility and global citizenship is a key value held by the Montgomery College community as evidenced in our self-identified General Education area of proficiency, and through our investment in programs promoting diversity, equality, social justice, global citizenship and multiculturalism. However, as an academic program, we do not have an overarching academic framework that supports this goal beyond General Education. Our committee feels that students are exposed to content and ideas and skills that prepare them to be well educated global citizens, and through the General Studies program we hope to provide integrated academic experiences that explicitly give students opportunities to explore their understanding of, and connection to, the broader community.

We are invested in the goal of fostering personal, civic, social responsibility through the General Studies degree at Montgomery College because we think it represents the values of the Montgomery College community, and we feel that it reflects the needs of students in 21st century. Education does not exist in a social vacuum, and this goal promotes student awareness of this fact. This goal asks students to connect their education to the significant and relevant issues in the world around them, whether those issues are civic, global, or ethical. Providing an academic experience that gives students ethical and civic frameworks

General Studies Degree Requirements

Curriculum Requirements

EN 101*	3	Credits
Gen Ed Core^	32-35	Credits
General Studies Concentration Core(s)**	15	Credits
Open Electives***	Up to 10	Credits
Total minimum required credits****:	60	Credits

* If necessary, if not required, select an alternate elective.

** A minimum of 3 credits at the 200 level in a concentration core is required.

*** Elective courses should be selected to support the student's academic, personal, professional goals and interests, and as needed to reach a total of 60 credits.

**** Total credit count must be at minimum of 60 credits, including a minimum of 15 credits of 200 level courses. Individual student course selections may result in a range of final credit counts, up to 63 credits.

^ Students are required to complete a Global and Cultural Perspective requirement as part of the General Education Program.

Additional Requirements and Guidelines

1. All students are required to create and maintain an academic plan kept on file with the College.
2. Students are required to develop and maintain an electronic portfolio reflecting course work and other items that demonstrate completion of the program outcomes.
3. Students should attempt EN and MA foundation requirements within completion of the first 24 credits of college level work or at the completion of any prerequisite or required non-credit coursework.
4. It is recommended that students attempt all General Education Foundation requirements within completion of 30 credits of college level credits.
5. Students should select a concentration core upon completion of 30 credits of coursework, if not sooner.

Concentration cores are not designed to replace an existing degree in a specific academic discipline. Each core is designed to facilitate an interdisciplinary, introductory exploration of the disciplines in the core area.

NOTE: The General Studies Concentration Core and General Studies elective courses should be considered courses that are in addition to courses taken to fulfill General Education Requirements.

General Studies Concentration Cores

Transfer Note: Students should carefully review transferability of course selections to their selected transfer institutions.

Core 1- Studies in Humanities, Arts, Communication and Languages (HACL)

Core 1 allows for an interdisciplinary exploration of the Humanities and Arts disciplines. Students are required to take a minimum of 15 credits from core courses, with a minimum of 3 credits at the 200 level. Generally, students will take at least 5 courses in Core 1 discipline areas, with a recommendation of at least 2 courses at the 200 level, in addition to courses meeting General Education requirements for ARTD and HUMD. Electives may also come from Core 1 concentration courses. It is recommended that students take a minimum of two courses from the same discipline designator in order to achieve some depth of study.

Students who select studies in HACL will select at least 15 credits from any of following discipline courses or individual courses, including at least 3 credits at the 200 level:

Individual Courses- only listed courses are available	Discipline Courses- any course with discipline designator listed below unless otherwise noted		
<p><i>GDES- GDES 116, GDES 120, GDES 134, GDES 136</i> <i>GNDS- GNDS 102</i> <i>IDES- IDES 101, IDES 211, IDES 212</i> <i>ISTD- ISTD 273</i> <i>PHOT- PHOT 150/L, PHOT 161/L</i> <i>TVRA- TVRA 134</i></p>	<p>MUCS-MUSIC PHIL-PHILOSOPHY PORT-PORTUGUESE RUSS-RUSSIAN ASLD-SIGN LANGUAGE SPAN-SPANISH COMM-SPEECH * THET-THEATER WMST- WOMEN’S STUDIES</p>	<p>FREN-FRENCH GERM-GERMAN HIST-HISTORY ITAL-ITALIAN JAPN-JAPANESE KORA-KOREAN LING - LINGUISTICS LATN-LATIN</p>	<p>ARAB - ARABIC ARTT – ART CHIN – CHINESE DANC – DANCE ENGL – ENGLISH * (Except ENGL 101, ENGL 115) FILM- FILM</p>

* ENGL 102, ENGL 103, COMM 108, COMM 112 not eligible if used for General Education Foundation Requirements. ENGL 101 is not part of the HACL core.

Core 2- Studies in Sciences Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

Core 2 allows for interdisciplinary study in mathematics, science, technology and engineering disciplines. Students are required to take a minimum of 15 credits, with a minimum of 3 credits at the 200 level. Generally, students will take at least 4 courses in STEM discipline areas, with a recommendation of at least 2 courses at the 200 level, in addition to courses meeting General Education MATF, NSLD and

NSND requirements. Many science and math courses are 4 credit hours, so in planning the Core 2 concentration, total credit counts need to be considered. It is recommended that students take a minimum of two courses from the same discipline designator.

Students who select studies in STEM will select at least 15 credits from any of following discipline courses or individual courses, including at least 3 credits at the 200 level:

Individual Courses- <i>only listed courses are eligible</i>	Discipline Courses- any course with discipline designator listed below unless otherwise noted	
<i>BIOT- BT 110</i> <i>CMAP – CMAP 120</i> <i>ARCH- ARCH 101</i> <i>LNTP- LNTP 100</i> <i>NWIT- NWIT 101</i>	GEOL-GEOLOGY MATH-MATHEMATICS AOSC-METEOROLOGY NUTR- NUTRITION AND FOOD PSCI-PHYSICAL SCIENCE PHYS- PHYSICS	ASTR - ASTRONOMY BIOL – BIOLOGY CHEM - CHEMISTRY CMCS – COMPUTER SCIENCE ENEE – ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING ENES – ENGINEERING SCIENCE

Core 3- Studies in Social Sciences, Administration, or Health (SSAH)

Core 3 allows for interdisciplinary study in traditional behavioral and social science disciplines as well as business, accounting, health and physical education courses. It allows students to explore any combination of these areas. Students are required to take a minimum of 15 credits, with a minimum of 3 credits at the 200 level. Generally students will take at least 5 courses from Core 3, with a recommendation of at least 2 courses at the 200 level in addition to courses meeting General Education requirements. It is recommended that students take a minimum of two courses from the same discipline designator.

Students who select the studies in the SSAH concentration will select at least 15 credits from any of the following disciplines or individual courses, including at least 3 credits at the 200 level.

Individual Courses- <i>only listed courses are available</i>	Discipline Courses- any course with discipline designator listed below unless otherwise noted
<i>ACCT- ACCT 221, ACCT 222</i> <i>BSAD- BSAD 101, BSAD 210</i> <i>ED- ED 101, ED 102</i> <i>EP- EP 110</i> <i>FM- 105, 110, 111, 107, 204, 208</i> <i>HI- HI 125, HI 126</i> <i>HM- HM 100, HM 101, HM 121, HM 240, HM 270,</i> <i>IS- 140, 240</i> <i>MG- MG 101, MG 103, MG 201</i>	AN – ANTHROPOLOGY CJ- CRIMINAL JUSTICE (*except CJ 255) EC – ECONOMICS GE – GEOGRAPHY HE-HEALTH PE-PHYSICAL EDUCATION * (students are limited to 2 PE activity courses #100-199) PS-POLITICAL SCIENCE PY-PSYCHOLOGY SO-SOCIOLOGY

Core 4- Integrated Studies (INTG)

Core 4 allows students to explore a unique interdisciplinary combination of coursework. Students select a minimum of 18 credits, 9 credits from each of two different concentration cores. Students must complete a minimum of 3 credits at the 200 level within the 18 credits. Generally students will take at least 6 courses selected from two different concentrations areas, with a recommendation of at least 2 courses at the 200 level.

Limited Appeal Process

Recognizing that there may be some rare occasions where a student needs a course that is not included in one of the concentration core lists to transfer to another institution, we recommend an appeal process that would allow students to petition for the inclusion of specific courses for their degree plan. The appeal would be based on the transferability of the course and the student's rationale for wanting to take the course. In general, the student should file for an appeal as part of an academic planning process, not as at the end of the degree program.

Program Assessment

Direct assessment of student learning at various points in the completion of the curriculum is a requirement of all programs; fundamentally, we must demonstrate that students are achieving the outcomes of the program as set forth, and we must use information from assessment of student learning to improve our practices. Further, Montgomery College is committed to course embedded assessment, which provides an authentic link between assessment and learning. As with the delivery and administration of the degree program, the assessment of the General Studies degree program will require regular collaboration among faculty, staff and administrators representing student services and disciplines.

This committee, after reviewing a variety of options, is recommending an electronic portfolio assessment process using course embedded signature assignments. Additionally, the committee recommends a consideration of the use of electronic badging to enhance student portfolios. For the purposes of program assessment, the committee recommends that the student portfolios be assessed by a General Studies assessment group (to be formed) on a cyclical basis. The committee recommends, that portfolio completion would be a requirement for graduation, but portfolio work is graded (given credit) as part of the student's regular coursework. The committee also suggests that indirect assessment activities be used to supplement the direct assessment data collected from the portfolios.

Embedded e-Portfolio with signature assignments*- The committee recommends the use of an electronic portfolio process which incorporates course embedded signature assignments*. In this system, students would compile examples of their course assignments and co-curricular activities throughout their time at Montgomery College (or previous to Montgomery College) demonstrating their achievement of the General Studies outcomes in electronic portfolios. There are a variety of models that can be implemented to support the use of electronic portfolios, and the committee recommends a

thorough review of options for embedding portfolios in courses and developing support networks be completed in order to implement an effective model for Montgomery College.

*Signature assignments are generic assignments that can be adapted to specific courses, disciplines, or contexts. In this process, a core General Studies committee will develop the guidelines for these assignments, to align these assignments to the program outcomes, and discipline or individual faculty will tailor them to individual courses.

Electronic Badging- An additional initiative this committee recommends is the development of an electronic badging system which can be integrated into the electronic portfolio. This electronic badging system can be used to make connections among co-curricular and curricular experiences to extend and advance integration of student learning. It can also be used to recognize and encourage students for achieving benchmarks and milestones during their time at Montgomery College.

Indirect Program Assessment Options

Additional indirect assessment data collection which may be used to supplement the data from the electronic portfolios include:

- Academic Plan audits (random)
- Graduation Survey (possibly administered as part of graduation application)
- Graduate Survey (possibly administered to General Studies students when they accumulate 54-60 credits)
- Advising Survey (administered after advising contact)

Summary of Concerns

The revision of the General Studies degree program is a significant endeavor initiated by our accrediting body, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The committees involved in this revision embraced the concerns raised in the 2011 letter from Middle States as well as a variety of other external concerns. These concerns are documented in the background section of the final report. The committees also embraced the need to develop a degree program framework that meets the needs of students in the 21st century and reflects the changing pressures and expectations of higher education.

Based on the extent of the changes required by the external mandate and the changing nature of higher education, it is not surprising that a number of internal concerns were raised throughout the revision process. The committee made it a practice to be transparent and collegial in response internal concerns. The committee proactively sought feedback from internal constituencies, opened the plan for broad community feedback, and sought to incorporate suggestions and resolve issues in the proposal as much as feasible. Internal concerns can be summarized into two categories: philosophical concerns and practical concerns.

A number of the concerns raised were determined to be outside the scope of this committee's charge; several of the recommendations associated with the final report reflect these concerns. The committee addressed the rest of the concerns in a variety of ways including meeting with individuals, seeking more information, adjusting the degree structure, or incorporating solutions.

Philosophical Concerns- The committee attempted to resolve philosophical concerns by listening to feedback, adjusting requirements, and seeking clarification from senior leadership. The Chair of the committee met with senior leadership from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs on several occasions to

request direction and resolution of philosophical differences. Ultimately, it was determined that using interdisciplinary concentration cores was the recommended option for providing academic cohesion in the degree plan. The committee worked hard to balance competing interests of transfer, possibilities for broad exploration and student choice with the need for academic cohesion and synthesis. This committee believes the current proposal provides a middle ground that will support a developmental advising model while providing for academic rigor and cohesion and transfer needs. Further, the committee believes the framework for this degree sets a foundation for meeting the needs of students in the 21st century.

Practical Concerns- The committee addressed practical concerns where possible by adjusting the degree requirements and structures. Practical concerns included concerns about degree requirements, transferability, implementation and use of e-portfolios, the role of counseling and instruction faculty in relation to the degree, barriers to completion, existing articulation agreements, availability of 200 level courses, availability of courses online, ease of understanding for students, and inclusion and exclusion of courses in Core lists.

Examples of changes to the degree plan initiated by practical and philosophical concerns include:

- Reducing the number of 200 level Core course credit requirements from 6 credits to 3 credits
- Adding 10 credits of open electives
- Eliminating a third category of course selections
- Providing an appeal process for individual course appeals
- Ensuring that existing articulation agreements work with the core structures
- Recommending that a process be established to ensure that enough 200 level courses are available in off-peak time and online
- Changing the language of the EN and MA requirements to reflect attempt rather than complete and moving from a requirement to a recommendation
- Ensuring that courses students need for transfer in specific programs (Criminal Justice and Hospitality Management, for instance) are available in a Core list
- Reviewing the Cores lists with transfer expectations to ensure that Cores will not inhibit transfer
- Recommending the need for a collaborative counseling and instructional faculty leadership team
- Delaying implementation of the new proposal until Fall 2015 with a year of implementation work

This is not a comprehensive list of the issues that the committees deliberated, but it reflects a selection of the responses to concerns raised internally.

We recognize that this degree reflects significant change in a time of rapid, Collegewide change. We recommend that benchmarks be established, by the implementation team, that can be used to assess the effectiveness and the implementation of the new degree structure, so that adjustments can be made in the future, as needed.

SP 14 Proposal Revision- General Studies Curriculum Planning Worksheet

Course Selection Notes:

1. Degree requires minimum of 60 Credits
 - a. General Education Requirements- 32-35 Credits
 - b. General Studies Core Courses- at least 15 Credits (with a minimum of 3 credits at 200 level) or Integrated Studies^^
 - c. Electives- Up to 10 credits as needed to complete 60 credits
2. Degree requires minimum of 15 Credits at 200 level.
3. Any credits beyond the minimum in General Education or Core selections are counted in open electives.
4. Students should attempt EN and MA foundation requirements within completion of the first 24 credits of college level work or at the completion of any prerequisite or required non- credit coursework
5. Students should select a core when they have completed 30 college-level credits.

Credits	Course	Category
3		EN 101*
		General Education Foundation Requirements
3		● EN Foundation
3		● MA Foundation
1-3		● HE Foundation**
3		● SP Foundation
(13-15)		En 101 and Foundation Requirement Total Credits
		<i>* if required, alternate elective if not required</i>
		<i>** Please review transferability of HE course selections.</i>
		General Education Distribution Courses^
3		● Arts Distribution
3		● Humanities Distribution
3		● Arts or Humanities Distribution
3		● Behavioral Social Science Distribution (Discipline 1)
3		● Behavioral Social Science Distribution (Discipline 2)
4		● Natural Sciences Distribution with Lab
3-4		● Natural Sciences Distribution with or without Lab
(22-23)		Total General Education Distribution
		<i>^one course must fulfill Global and Cultural Perspectives requirement</i>
		Core Course Selection (Select One Core- HA CL, STEM, SSAH, INTG^^)- 15 credits selected from One Core Area with at least 3 credits at 200 level- See Core Course lists
(15)		Total Core Courses (3 credits at 200 level)

		<i>^^See alternate Integrated Studies Grid</i>
		Electives (# needed to reach 60 credits, up to 10 credits)
(10)		
(60)		Total En 101, General Education, Core Courses, and Electives

^^Integrated Studies (INTG) Core Worksheet

		Integrated Studies Core
		IS Core I Courses (Select 9 credits from 1 core list: HAAC, STEM, or SSAH Core list)
(9)		Total IS Concentration Core I (minimum 9)
		IS Core II (Select 9 credits from a second core list: HAAC, STEM or SSAH Core List)
(9)		Total IS Core II (minimum 9)
(18)		Total Integrated Studies Core
		Electives (# needed to make up reach 60 credits, up to 7 credits)
(7)		
(25)		Total Integrated Studies and Electives

Useful Definitions

Academic cohesion- On a program level, academic cohesion exists when a group of courses is specifically chosen based on the content and outcomes of the courses to reach a broader set of goals and when they are planned to create a cohesive learning experience with explicit links in the content. The learning in that program of study connects and builds, leading the student to the desired outcomes. However, academic cohesion can also exist at the course level when instructors help students identify how their learning fits together. Students can create academic cohesion themselves by having a clear set of goals and intentionally selecting learning experiences and activities that work together to reach an identified goal. Academic cohesion enhances far transfer of skills and knowledge as well as deep learning.

Direct Assessment- Direct assessment is the measurement of student performance. Direct assessment measures student knowledge, skills or attitudes in response to a specifically designed assessment. Examples of direct assessment instruments include tests, research papers, projects, portfolios or any other type of student produced assignment that allows the instructor to directly measure how the student is performing on a particular student learning outcome.

Integrative learning- From the AAC&U Value Rubric on Integrative Learning, “Integrative learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus... Fostering students’ abilities to integrate learning—across courses, over time, and between campus and community life—is one of the most important goals and challenges for higher education. Initially, students connect previous learning to new classroom learning. Later, significant knowledge within individual disciplines serves as the foundation, but integrative learning goes beyond academic boundaries. Indeed, integrative experiences often occur as learners address real-world problems, unscripted and sufficiently broad, to require multiple areas of knowledge and multiple modes of inquiry, offering multiple solutions and benefiting from multiple perspectives. Integrative learning also involves internal changes in the learner. These internal changes, which indicate growth as a confident, lifelong learner, include the ability to adapt one’s intellectual skills, to contribute in a wide variety of situations, and to understand and develop individual purpose, values and ethics. Developing students’ capacities for integrative learning is central to personal success, social responsibility, and civic engagement in today’s global society. Students face a rapidly changing and increasingly connected world where integrative learning becomes not just a benefit...but a necessity...Integrative assignments foster learning between courses or by connecting courses to experientially-based work... Integrative learning, whatever the context or source, builds upon connecting both theory and practice toward a deepened understanding.”

Intentional learner/learning- Intentional learning is characterized by learners making conscious, informed educational choices including the courses they take and the content they explore. Rather than being driven entirely by scheduling options, instructor reputation, transfer or some other unconscious criteria, intentional learners also consider the content of a course and how it fits into their educational goals. Their motivation for selecting a course is deliberate and related their educational journey. Further, the student can articulate his or her reasoning for selecting a course.

Indirect Assessment- Indirect assessment may indicate that learning has taken place but indirect assessment measures do not directly measure student performance. Indirect assessment measures can include surveys, interviews, course evaluations, retention rates, grades, or other broad measures of student performance. Indirect assessment is important as it can help verify the validity of direct assessment or can help target points where direct assessment is necessary.