

Recommendations of the Global Learning Subcommittee of the Task Force on Global Education

Introduction

The Global Learning Subcommittee of the Task Force on Global Education is one of five subcommittees established after the Task Force was charged by the President and the Provost in spring, '08. The charge was to develop recommendations that would both transform NAU into a global campus and prepare students to become globally competent graduates. The subcommittee has taken this charge seriously and has worked diligently with a group of faculty and staff representing a cross section of all colleges, many disciplines and departments to develop recommendations that, if implemented, will be truly transformative in terms of the kind of academic experiences NAU students enjoy and the kind of graduates they become.

Why Consider These Recommendations and Why Now?

Diversity, environmental sustainability, and global engagement are values that Northern Arizona University has long endorsed as key themes in our University mission and strategic planning documents. Since curriculum is the most direct and profound means by which a university can embody its values, this proposal seeks to build upon an already rich legacy at NAU of faculty scholarship and programmatic activity in the areas of diversity, environmental sustainability, and global engagement.

These recommendations will result in student learning opportunities—curricular and co-curricular—that will become ubiquitous for undergraduates through repeated experiences in both the major and Liberal Studies. No longer would a single course be thought sufficient to prepare students for an increasingly globalized and multicultural world; one in which we face continual challenges to both our natural environment and to the critical thinking and ethical maturity of any educated person.

These recommendations do not sweep aside all of the rich and vital course work and activity around diversity, environmental sustainability, and global engagement created in the last several decades at NAU. Rather, these recommendations seek to build upon this work and practice to expand learning experiences based on these three elements across the whole of an undergraduate student's educational experience.

We note that these recommendations are being offered at a time of great uncertainty at Northern Arizona University. The severity of the budget cuts and the implications they may have for workload, class sizes and even program viability may constitute such a significant distraction that faculty may find it difficult to engage with proposed recommendations affecting the curriculum. This time of upheaval and change may, however, provide us with a unique opportunity to visualize how we can become even

more effective in realizing the goals that are core to our identity as faculty at this institution and in this historical moment. When we cannot control the national or state economies and when we cannot control decisions over the state budgeting process, it is important to remember what we can control. We still control the curriculum, what and how classes are taught, the body of knowledge, and our aspirations for the character of an NAU college graduate.

The Process

From its inception, the global learning subcommittee has sought to answer three core questions:

1. What should be the characteristics of a globally competent NAU graduate?
2. What are the principal global learning outcomes that students should demonstrate?
3. What should be the principal sites in the curriculum for such learning?

More than 40 faculty and co-curricular professionals representing all colleges and major divisions within the university met frequently to grapple with these questions. These encounters generated lengthy and substantive conversations about global learning goals. Very early in the process, we agreed that any definition of global education should go beyond global engagement to also embrace diversity and environmental sustainability. We felt that these three elements reflect the agenda of global education in the early 21st century, that they do not stand alone but are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent, and that our objectives in advancing global education would be best served by adopting and infusing them into the curriculum as a package.

It also became clear as the process moved forward that these three elements were clearly articulated in the seven strategic goals of the university, that they are ingrained in the principles that govern the liberal studies program and that they reflect values deeply embedded in the NAU community and among NAU faculty. In effect, these three elements are more than simply global learning goals. We have proposed that these three elements should constitute the basis for the three core University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes. We are convinced that this approach to teaching and learning will become the signature experience for undergraduates at NAU

University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes

Undergraduates of NAU will become globally competent through engagement with the University's curricular and co-curricular programming. To become globally competent, students will acquire the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to negotiate the increasingly interconnected and interdependent context of the human condition.

At NAU, global competence is achieved through intentional curricular and co-curricular experiences that foreground global learning. Students will orient themselves in terms of identity with community, society, and the world, and also develop transcultural and linguistic competence mediated through the following three University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes:

- **Global Engagement:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of (analyze, synthesize, and evaluate) the interconnectedness and interdependence of the human experience on a global scale.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Students will understand the scope of environmental sustainability in local and global terms and will know what it means to use natural resources in ethical and responsible ways that will maintain a sustainable environment.
- **Diversity:** Students will critically reflect upon the ubiquity and necessity of diversity in all of its manifestations, including cultural, ethnic, religious, and the natural environment.

Sites for Curricular Infusion

University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes are intended to touch ALL undergraduate students. It is for this reason that all undergraduate majors and the Liberal Studies Program must constitute the primary sites for the infusion of the global learning goals. In this regard, we propose the following:

- That in view of the fact that all undergraduates have an academic home in at least one department, that all departments orient their respective programs of study to ensure that all students realize the three University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes.
- That in view of the fact that the Liberal Studies program offers the one universal academic experience for students, that the Liberal Studies student learning outcomes be reshaped in terms of the three University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes.

Implementation Strategy

Given the significant differences among the majors in terms of content and pedagogy, departments would be expected to determine the strategies best suited to infusing perspectives associated with the three University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes into their respective curricula. To foster this process, an implementation committee appointed by the Provost will provide support in the form of workshops and departmental consultations.

Recommendations from the Global Learning Subcommittee

1. That the three elements of NAU's vision for global education be adopted as the core University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes and that they apply to all undergraduate students in all undergraduate majors, in the Liberal Studies Program, and co-curricular programming.
2. That each department ensure that students have substantive and multiple encounters within the major with perspectives associated with global engagement, diversity and environmental sustainability, regardless of the approach or strategy they ultimately adopt.
3. That the program review process be used as a mechanism to insure that the University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes are adopted by all departments and other academic units and that the existing major and Liberal Studies student learning outcomes are reshaped in terms of these University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes.
4. That in recognition of the uniquely transformative nature of education abroad, that each undergraduate major will modify the structure of their curriculum to accommodate one semester of Education Abroad in order to allow students the chance to exercise the option of taking one semester of Education Abroad without slowing progress toward degree completion.¹
5. That the Graduate College engage in a process to determine how best to infuse graduate education with a global learning agenda.

¹ Education Abroad is widely regarded as a significant experience in the enhancement of global learning and an effective path to global competence. Sadly, less than two percent of American college students participate in education abroad and increasingly, students who elect to participate in such programs are spending less and less time overseas. This recommendation is intended to make the structure of NAU degree programs more accommodating to students who wish to spend at least one semester abroad (the minimum time necessary to achieve some measure of cultural immersion) by incorporating this experience into the programs without resulting in a delay of graduation.

Appendix

Core Assumptions and Commitments

- These recommendations offer a broad framework articulating a new and different approach to infusing global learning in the curricula and co-curricula.
- No one course can capture the perspectives of these University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes.
- The existing infrastructure in terms of courses with significant content around the University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes is impressive and therefore offers departments a useful resource from which to draw.
- No comprehensive or immediate realignment of Liberal Studies courses is being sought.
- On the basis of these recommendations, we anticipate that change will occur in a manageable and phased manner over time.

A Further Explication of the Elements of the University Thematic Student Learning Outcomes for Consideration*

Global Engagement

Students will gain an appreciation of the interconnectedness and interdependence of the human experience on a global scale. This includes, for example, the following issues:

- a. the implications of race, racism and ethnocentrism for transnational, human, and societal interaction.
- b. the relationship among culture, language, community and environment.
- c. the role of ideology, spirituality, and religion in terms of human action and relationships.
- d. the interconnectedness between and among political, cultural, personal and economic decisions and the natural world.
- e. how economic, social, and technological practices and traditions impact climate and the environment.
- f. how historical, political, religious and economic forces have shaped the current world system and the source of global power inequalities and efforts to address them.
- g. the roles, possibilities and implications of diverse technologies on culture and the political economy.

Diversity

Students will appreciate the ubiquity and necessity of diversity in its many manifestations, including cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic and biological diversity. This includes, for example, the following issues:

- a. the scope of racial and ethnic diversity both in the US and globally.

- b. how ubiquitous diversity is and how it intersects with other sociodemographic factors such as gender, class, sexuality, religion, age, language and disability.
- c. the relationship between diversity and survival on the planet.
- d. how the position we take on diversity can either strengthen human communities and sustain the natural environment, or lead to conflict and environmental degradation.
- e. the role of ethnocentrism and Eurocentrism in human and societal interaction.

Environmental Sustainability

Students will appreciate what it means to use natural resources in ethical and responsible ways that maintain a sustainable environment. This includes, for example, the following issues:

- a. how culture determines how we construct the appropriate use of environmental resources.
- b. the connection between responsible engagement with the environment and global citizenship.
- c. the scientific basis of environmental sustainability.
- d. the vocabulary and concepts around environmental sustainability (e.g., finite and renewable resources, environmental footprint, global commons, peak oil).
- e. the role of human interactions with the environment and its relation to the root causes of many global problems.

Self and Society

Students will understand the self in terms of identity with community, society and the world. This includes, for example, the following issues:

- a. one's own ideology, worldview, cultures and histories: pursue 'the examined life.'
- b. the values, beliefs, ideas, and worldview of others.
- c. oneself and one's role as a global citizen.
- d. personal responsibility for global issues that have human rights implications: ethical action.
- e. recognize how personal actions at the local level can impact global phenomena.

Transcultural and Translingual Competence

Students will develop transcultural and translingual competence. This includes, for example, the following issues:

- a. the ability to read, speak and write at least one language other than one's own.
- b. the ability to have successful interactions with people from cultures other than one's own.
- c. in depth knowledge of a culture other than one's own.
- d. the ability to communicate through the use of technology.

- e. how to reconcile/negotiate ambiguities that arise in interactions with others and in their engagement with a range of issues.

*** Please note that this information is not intended to be prescriptive**

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