MEMO

To: Academic Coordinating Commission
Cc: Faculty Senate Executive Council
From: General Education Task Force
Re: General Education Task Force Report
Date: March 28, 2016

The General Education Task Force, reporting to the Academic Coordinating Commission, was tasked by the Faculty Senate and Faculty Senates Executive Council to provide the campus community with “three options for improving the GUR program. One of the options [would] involve minimal adjustments to the structure and goals of the current GUR program.” During fall and winter quarters the task force reviewed Western’s current general education program and researched programs from other colleges and universities to consider how to strengthen our current practice. Task force members thank the Faculty Senate and ACC for this opportunity as the members found this process to be both inspirational and educational by allowing us to envision what our general education program could become.

Findings
After reviewing seventeen different general education programs at a variety of colleges and universities, the task force identified four key characteristics that are necessary for any general education program:

- Coherent Structure: Connection between classes
- Developmental over 4 years
- Student Ownership
- Strong Diversity Component

Considering these characteristics, the task force identified concerns and weaknesses in Western’s current GUR program:

- Poorly designed diversity education requirement
- Lack of coherence in the GUR course structure
- Inadequate communications requirement, including the current writing requirements

The task force presents three alternative models for general education at Western: Thematic, Core-Distribution, and Distribution. Western’s current GUR program is a distribution model; in this report, we identified improvement opportunities within our current program that would meet the key characteristics and address its weaknesses. For both the Thematic and Core-Distribution models we present examples from two specific institutions to help campus colleagues understand how those approaches address our concerns about Western’s current practices and how our campus could adopt these models.

ACC and Faculty Senate stated that the task force was not responsible for items such as, but not limited to, implementation, resources, and assessment. Although the task force felt strongly that assessment was important to any successful general education program, it is not addressed in the report.

Co-chairs Angela Harwood and Elizabeth Stephan want to express their deepest thanks to the members of the task force for their time, hard work, and passion for general education. This endeavor has been both challenging and rewarding. The task force presents these plans to the campus community with hope they will foster meaningful and engaged dialog from all campus constituents. We invite you to consider how our general education program could become an engaging cornerstone of the unique Western experience for students.