

# Where Things Stand with General Education Review and Inquiry

A Synopsis | October 17, 2018

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We provide a synopsis of our work to date, including two key brief statements, the second of which contains links to other documents. Page 2 includes the Mission, Vision, and Outcomes statement that form the basis of our work going forward. The Complete GERI Portfolio site remains <http://portfolio.du.edu/GenEdReviewInquiry2017> -DH

## 1. Brief Overview of Process (8/17/18)

After a year of intense study and campus engagement, on June 19, the General Education Review and Inquiry Committee (GERI) shared its “final” statements of the Mission, Vision, and Outcomes for general education at DU. During the upcoming fall, GERI will facilitate extensive discussions of curricular structures and features before proposing specific revisions of the current DU Common Curriculum. GERI will work with the faculty senate for much of [this process](#). The Mission, Vision, and Outcomes (see page 2 below) grew from a nine-month inquiry processes through which over 200 DU faculty and over 500 DU students provided ideas and responses, some of them multiple times.

In addition, the GERI Committee reviewed the professional literature on general education, studied programs at twenty DU comparison and exemplar schools, and discussed the DU mission, vision, undergraduate learning outcomes, and Impact 2025. GERI sent interim reports to the campus community on [January 3 \(Process and Conceptual Framework\)](#), on [March 5 \(a 100+ page report of findings from our inquiry\)](#), and on [June 19 \(final draft statements and a summary of the year’s work\)](#). While we keep open possible changes to the statements (see page 2), the Committee believes the Mission and Vision are largely finished. The Outcomes are likely to be further refined, although, we’re confident that revisions will best come through the design phase



crucially—and intensively—involve faculty. We explain that phase below, and look forward to continued collaboration with leaders of the Faculty Senate to do it thoroughly and well. You’ll recall that in June we sent a summary of our work for 2017-18. You can access a copy of that email on the GERI portfolio page at <http://portfolio.du.edu/downloadItem/455797>.

**The Inquiry Phase** of the GERI’s work, across 2017-18, focused on understanding the existing DU Common Curriculum. We gathered and summarized faculty and student responses to it, researched campus and national contexts for general education (through Impact 2025, on the one hand, to various AAC&U and similar initiatives on the other), then reported our analyses to the campus. This general education at DU, presented in June and also available here. While the MVO statements can be adjusted (and certainly should be, in response to compelling reasons), we believe our future efforts are best spent in a design phase.

**The Design Phase** will be spent determining the curricular requirements and/or course features that best enact the Mission, Vision, and Outcomes for general education. This innovation phase will best happen with the active and intensive contributions of faculty across campus, in a series of collaborative opportunities. We’ll invite everyone to propose ideas for delivering the learning outcomes, placing a premium on exploratory and innovative approaches. GERI will partner with the Faculty Senate to sponsor many of these activities. We will gather, summarize, and synthesize ideas generated in a first round, then organize additional stages dedicated to further generating and refining. We’ll solicit input both through in-person sessions and through digital/asynchronous means, and we’ll use online means to record, distill, and map ideas. The process and results will strongly inform the committee as we propose any appropriate changes in general education at DU.

## 1. Email to the DU Faculty, 10/8/18

We’re writing with an update about the General Education Review and Inquiry committee’s efforts so far this fall. The Committee has met three times as we move into the Design phase of our work, a process that will

# Mission, Vision, and Outcomes of General Education at DU

GERI, June 2018

## Mission

The mission of the general education program at DU, emanating from our vision to be a great private university dedicated to the public good, is to foster in each undergraduate the knowledge, skills, and critical abilities that are crucial to informed, responsible, and effective participation in civic, scholarly, and professional lives.

## Vision

A successful general education program will be marked by several features:

1. **A sense of identity.** Students, faculty, staff and members of the DU community will understand the program as enacting DU's specific values, and aspirations, including as manifested in Impact 2025. The general education program will be one distinctive marker of DU's identity.
2. **A sense of purpose.** Students, faculty, staff, and members of the DU community will understand and value how general education contributes to the whole of undergraduates' educations. Rather than simply being, as at some schools, a list of obligations to check off, general education courses at DU will be recognized for providing opportunities for intellectual, social, and personal growth.
3. **A sense of coherence.** Students, faculty, staff, and members of the DU community will perceive vital connections among courses in the program; between the program and other courses, particularly in majors; and between academic and other settings. That is, they will experience how information, ideas, approaches, applications, and/or skills travel among different sites, both within and beyond the academy.
4. **A sense of intentional design.** Faculty will create and teach courses that are intentionally (although not necessarily exclusively) designed for the general education program's purpose, vision, and outcomes.
5. **A commitment to meaningful reflection.** There will be compelling analyses of how the program is working, grounded in the interpretation of artifacts, evidence, and practices and done in ways that faculty find valuable, even engaging. Likewise, students will reflect, in ways meaningful to them, upon their experience of the program as a whole and its role in their academic, civic, and professional development.
6. **A commitment to faculty development.** Faculty teaching general education courses will have resources and opportunities for professional development with colleagues across the program, including on concerns of curriculum and pedagogy that originate with them. Resources will be sufficient to implement pedagogical and curricular innovations.

## Outcomes

At the completion of general education, DU students should demonstrate:

1. The ability to define "the public good" with sophistication, for contexts ranging from local to global, informed by how different areas of study contribute to understanding and realizing the public good.
2. The ability to address complex questions by applying and synthesizing knowledge of human cultures and the physical world, using methods of inquiry and analysis practiced across the liberal arts and sciences.
3. A critical understanding of human diversity and the importance of social, historical, and cultural identities in addition to one's own.
4. The ability to evaluate evidence and source materials and to employ them responsibly.
5. The ability to communicate effectively, ethically, and creatively for a variety of situations and purposes, using written, spoken, visual, material, and/or digital modes.
6. The ability to use quantitative methods responsibly in addressing questions and solving problems.
7. The ability to work productively with others and to collaborate effectively and ethically with different communities.
8. The ability to apply general knowledge and skills in experiential learning settings.
9. The ability to reflect meaningfully on relationships among areas across the general education curriculum; between general education and their majors and careers; between personal goods and public goods; and between intellectual and other aspects of living.



# Chancellor's Roundtable

October 17, 2018 | 3:30 | Garden Room, Chambers Center

We are pleased to welcome you to a collaborative working session sponsored by the DU Faculty Senate and the General Education Review and Inquiry committee. GERI, which arose from a core Impact 2025 initiative, has been charged with researching the current Common Curriculum, exploring options for general education in the current DU climate and national best research and practices, and authoring potential revisions in the Common Curriculum, for voting by the Faculty Senate and other decision-making bodies. As we have reported, GERI has completed an inquiry phase and is now entering a design phase. This phase is intended to be a collaborative endeavor, involving all faculty, including the Senate and its Academic Planning Committee.

We plan to engage as many faculty as possible, in multiple opportunities, both physical and virtual. We'll ask for specific ideas, gather and present them, interpret them, and ask for responses to work in progress and to drafts.

## Discussion 1: Fully Engaging Faculty in the Design Process

In consultation with the Senate, GERI has temporarily paused the timeline it put forward in June 2018. Together, we want to get YOUR best ideas for executing a fully informed and engaged design phase.

What specific ideas do you have for fostering informed, meaningful faculty engagement in **the design phase**, one that builds from the Mission, Vision, and Outcomes?

Specifically, we would like you to consider two dimensions of the process moving forward:

- A. The "Backbone" Process: This dimension of the process focuses how the ideas generated by GERI are most effectively communicated to the Faculty Senate and how the Senate and GERI can most effectively work together to garner the insights of faculty, so when a proposal is considered in late spring, we are confident that has been thoroughly discussed and fully understood before moving onto the approval process.
- B. The "Wide Consultation" Process: This dimension of the process focuses on incorporating the insights of the wider DU faculty. Among them are faculty with specific expertise. For example, the proposed outcomes describe goals for diversity, quantitative reasoning, written and other communication, and so on; and there are professors with particular knowledge on those areas.

What ideas and suggestions do you have about either or both of these process dimensions? For instance, what do you think are necessary components of the "backbone" process? How might the "wide consultation" happen most effectively?

Note: We'll likely have this discussion as a whole group. But if we divide into small groups instead, we suggest that you first brainstorm ideas, then together choose two or three that seem most promising. For the purposes of this exercise, we ask you to assume that it's desirable to have a final draft of a proposal by June 2019.

## Discussion 2: An Initial Foray into Design

The Mission, Vision, and Outcomes (provided in a separate handout and also available at the GERI portfolio site) define features and outcomes of a general education program at DU. Translating those into a specific curriculum and/or into revised course features is the next step. Following are several prompts, each devised to focus on one or more challenges. We'll ask you to work in groups to generate ideas about one prompts. Brainstorm. Then forward one or more of your most promising ideas.

- A. One possible way to create identity, coherence, purpose, and intentional design in general education is to have courses fit themes that arch across several courses. Identify some possible themes that might serve this purpose. Generate ideas for how at least four or five outcomes could be manifested in those themes.
- B. In what ways could a general education program built around the Mission, Vision, and Outcomes contribute to DU's distinctive identity? You might brainstorm one or more signature initiatives that could help accomplish our Outcomes.
- C. How might we engage the professional schools more to accomplish the outcomes of general education? What might be some of the challenges and benefits of having professional schools involved? To explore these questions, consider A or B through the lens of how DU's professional schools might (or might not) play a role.
- D. One of the visions for general education is "Intentional Design." Option 1: Choose two or more of the Outcomes above and brainstorm single courses that would advance those outcomes. Option 2: Create sequences of two or more courses that together would advance those outcomes.
- E. "A commitment to faculty development" is one of the visions for general education. What features will be important to DU faculty development around general education? Brainstorm one or more examples of meaningful faculty development initiatives, perhaps even a comprehensive system.

