

Overview of the University Studies Program

William Paterson University should “redesign its GE Program to ensure that the courses are offered in a more coherent and in-depth program. Further, the institution’s Self Study recommendation that “course integration, sequencing and coherence” be immediately implemented,” and WPU’s “initiative to strengthen the GE requirements remains largely subject to the efforts and interest of individual faculty members. For this reason the reviewers suggest a stronger institutional initiative over the next five years that will provide a more systematic framework to encompass these efforts.” – **2001 and 2006 Middle States reports**

The USP model offers such a systematic framework meeting the GE concerns of our students and faculty to:

- 1- provide a broad liberal arts and sciences foundation within a reduced number of credits
- 2- include a developmental sequence of key skills and knowledge needed throughout college and life.
- 3- be taken early enough to be of use in higher-level courses and the major.
- 4- explicitly lead somewhere – be clearly connected to upper-level GE and to the major.
- 5- involve students with various disciplines working together – multidisciplinary approaches.
- 6- greater emphasis on how to learn, to better enable students to continue learning on their own.
- 7- engage students’ interest by permitting them to select courses according to their interest.
- 8- clearly differentiate college from high school learning
- 9- address information and technological literacy; global and diversity awareness and justice.
- 10 - clarify our university identity and advantages of WPU over alternatives such as community colleges.

The key features of the USP response include:

1. Emphasis on a **structured First Year**, including a Core of critical thinking in the Liberal Arts and Sciences to aid in transition to college by :
 - providing a foundation for higher level GE and major courses
 - enabling a more informed selection of majors and minors
 - setting high expectations for college career
2. A comprehensive strategy to **make GE more transparent and meaningful to students** by organizing the GE curriculum into four dimensions applicable to all majors: effective communication; critical thinking; self, society and values; and understanding the complexity of global issues. These dimensions guide students through the curriculum, channeling the array of courses and disciplines into developmental experiences throughout their college career.
3. **Creates explicit connections within GE:** between introductory courses, with upper-level courses and also between GE and the major. Encourages major programs to more explicitly incorporate GE knowledge and skills through the designated “Applications” courses that bring the dimensions of GE into the major, responding to concerns from the major disciplines that students are not adequately prepared for major work. The explicit presence of GE learning outcomes in selected major courses will promote connections in the student learning experience and essential dialogue between faculty offering GE courses and those teaching in majors. Departments will be encouraged to select and revise courses to incorporate higher-level GE learning outcomes. Our goal is that no additional courses be added to any major unless the major so desires. We will have several years to develop this level of the curriculum.
4. Developmental strategy of **applying the skills and knowledge learned in introductory courses to real world issues** in such areas as global and ethical/social/civic problems. These advanced GE courses are offered at the junior level and may be included in the major.
5. **Creates a curriculum** – an explicitly ordered and reasoned arrangement of courses – within a reduced number of credits. Students see why they take each course and where it leads to in the program. Having GE in senior level courses provides opportunities for assessing the GE program as a whole.