Program Review for the General Studies program(s) in the School of Professional Studies

**Introduction**

The General Studies program provides an interdisciplinary approach to academic learning that has grown in popularity and influence over the last hundred years as the Academy has matured to embrace a view of human knowledge as integrated, related to experience and inseparable into fundamentally different spheres. Pursuit of the B.A. in General Studies provides students with the opportunity to attain skills and knowledge at the intersection of different academic disciplines in an integrated, coherent program of study. General studies students develop well trained minds while honing critical thinking and writing skills. General Studies students also enjoy the flexibility to choose focal areas according to their interests and experience. Traditionally, this has been a program popular with students with diverse interests in the liberal arts.

Originally designed as a degree completion program for students with transfer credits, Trinity’s Bachelor of Arts in General Studies allows students to specialize in one concentration area or to create an individualized degree program by choosing two areas of concentration ranging from Business Administration to the Humanities.

Outside of the general education core, the BA in General Studies currently requires 42 credit hours, which includes two required seminars (GST 301 TELL Seminar and GST 400 Senior Seminar) and major coursework in up to two concentration areas (with at least 15 credit hours in each concentration area, and the remainder of the 42 hours in another concentration area or special concentration electives).

**Goals and Objectives**

**Program Level Outcomes for General Studies Degrees**

1. Read, understand, and analyze texts
2. Communicate effectively in speech and in writing
3. Understand and use quantitative reasoning to solve problems
4. Locate, evaluate, and synthesize information in the construction of knowledge
5. Explore and connect fields of knowledge in the liberal arts
6. Apply diverse modes of inquiry to the study of human societies and the natural world
7. Develop facility for moral reasoning and examine the moral and religious dimensions of human experience
8. Develop capacities for responsible citizenship and leadership in diversecommunities**.**

**Business Administration Concentration**The business administration concentration introduces the field of business and develops the conceptual, analytical, functional, interpersonal, and communication skills that are essential for success in an increasingly complex and global business environment. Students develop the ability to assess and analyze complex situations, determine the relative importance of internal and external variables affecting organizational objectives and think through problem solving strategies. The BADM concentration is useful to students seeking graduate study or advancement in business.

Concentration Outcomes

1. Define the role and functions of business in society;
2. Demonstrate knowledge of cultural differences in management practices in the context of a global market place;
3. Evaluate trends in the internal and external environment and develop strategies to convert them into profitable opportunities.
4. Communicate persuasively quantitative and qualitative information about the functioning of business organizations to a variety of stakeholders;
5. Organize the activities of the various functional areas to optimize the outcomes for the organization as a whole;
6. Achieve business profitability without sacrificing ethical business practices;
7. Apply technology for achieving organizational effectiveness.

**Human Resource Management Concentration**  
The Human Resources concentration introduces this growing field, a specialized blend of management and organizational behavior, psychology, and sociology. Grounded in the recognition that human capital is a key component of an organization's competitive advantage, emphasis is placed on developing a broad Human Resource perspective, as well as familiarity with the technical aspects of the field. Human Resources study prepares individuals to assume positions in the HR profession within business, government, and nonprofit organizations.

Concentration Outcomes

1. Define the role and functions of human resource and capital management in business;
2. Demonstrate knowledge of cultural, religious and gender differences in management practices in the context of a global market place;
3. Evaluate trends in the internal and external environment and develop ethical strategies to convert them into profitable opportunities.
4. Communicate persuasively quantitative and qualitative information about the functions of staffing and performance management in business organizations to a variety of stakeholders;
5. Utilize theories and practices in human resource planning, recruitment, performance appraisal, and compensation and benefits to improve the productivity of business organizations;
6. Evaluate the role of group dynamics and leadership on the personality, motivation, and decision making of work teams and develop methods to achieve greater efficiency

**Communication Concentration**The Communication concentration introduces the scientific and artistic basis of communication with emphasis on interpersonal interaction and human relationships, organizational and institutional communication, public discourse and mass communication. The communication concentration is recommended for students pursuing employment and graduate study in areas that require demonstrated abilities in oral communication and written communication in different contexts.

Concentration Outcomes

* Define and describe how messages and meanings are constructed and created within and across various contexts and media.
* Critically analyze, organize and compose messages in multiple contexts.
* Learn the principles of ethical communication in various contexts, such as interpersonal, small group, organizational, media and public discourse.
* Examine the relationship of communication to the social constructions of differences, such as gender, culture, ethnicity/race, social class, sexuality, and ability.
* Research and evaluate the role of communication and its modalities in terms of their effectiveness, use and application
* Utilize traditional social scientific and cultural/critical theories to develop communication that is used to inform and persuade people and organizations in public, political, and work environments.

**Humanities Concentration**The Humanities concentration introduces students to Philosophy, Art, English, History, and Theology and Religious studies. Study of the Humanities encourages deep reflection on life, and helps students make sense of personal and work experiences as they are situated within the larger context of the meaning of human existence. The Humanities concentration is recommended for students interested in graduate study in humanities-related fields, law school, and employment in fields requiring analytical thinking, writing, and communication skills such as business, government and public service.

Concentration Outcomes

* Develop an understanding of the role of philosophy, art, English, history, theology and the humanities in history.
* Demonstrate the ability to research and write about the role of humanities in expanding the meaning of human existence.
* Understand the structure of scientific knowledge and explain how to acquire knowledge of the physical world
* Demonstrate an understanding of the General Studies degree and the humanities concentration as an interdisciplinary program that expands the knowledge of self and society.
* Explore the dynamics of history, culture, music, and literature in order to contribute to improving access to social justice and equality for diverse communities.

**Information Systems and Technology Concentration**The Information Systems and Technology concentration introduces students to this growing field. Students studying information systems and technology develop the skills and knowledge necessary to function in roles such as project managers, network engineers, and system administrators.

1. Define and develop the role and functions of hardware, software, and information systems management in business society;
2. Demonstrate knowledge of cultural differences in information management practices in the context of a global market place;
3. Evaluate trends in the internal and external environment and develop strategies to convert them into profitable opportunities.
4. Communicate persuasively quantitative and qualitative information about the information systems and its impact on the functioning of business organizations to a variety of stakeholders;
5. Organize the activities of the various functional areas to optimize the outcomes for the organization as a whole;
6. Achieve business profitability without sacrificing ethical business practices;
7. Apply information technology to improve quality, production and competition and achieve organizational effectiveness.

**Data**

The program measures its exit competencies or program level outcomes throughout its courses. Each outcome has at least one course associated with it. Charts that detail the course mapping for each program are attached.

Although each program has embedded assessment and measurement of skill attainment, only a selection of courses measure and evaluate the program level outcomes that students achieve. A table containing this information is below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | **Course** | **Assessment** |
| Read, understand, and analyze texts | ENGL 107, ENGL 215, GST 400 | **ENGL 107**- The pre- and post- tests measure the student’s reading comprehension, grammar and writing skills  **GST 400**- The final research paper in the senior seminar assesses the strength of the writing, research and analysis of each student’s work |
| Communicate effectively in speech and in writing | ENGL 107, COM 290, GST 400 | **ENGL 107**- The pre- and post- tests measure the student’s reading comprehension, grammar and writing skills  **COM 290**- Students are required to deliver presentations to the course and professor; those presentations are evaluated for content  **GST 400**- The final research paper in the senior seminar assesses the strength of the writing, research and analysis of each student’s work |
| Understand and use quantitative reasoning to solve problems | INT 109, BIOL 101, ENVS 101, GST 400 | **GST 400**- The final research paper in the senior seminar assesses the strength of the writing, research and analysis of each student’s work  **ENVS 101**- Students test data and samples in the laboratory setting; they use the results in their lab tests to solve scientific questions  **INT 109**- the midterm and final assess the student’s ability to find and evaluate quality information |
| Locate, evaluate, and synthesize information in the construction of knowledge | INT 109, FNAR 101, | **INT 109**- the midterm and final assess the student’s ability to find and evaluate quality information  **FNAR 101**- all students visit either Dumbarton Oaks or National Gallery of Art and write paper on the pieces they see and their connection to the historical themes present at the time |
| Explore and connect fields of knowledge in the liberal arts | HIS 132, FNAR 101, ENGL 271 | **HIS 132**- Students are required to write a reaction paper where they review and reflect on the issues and themes (industrial revolution, women’s rights, civil rights movement, etc) of the 20th century presented by the readings and the lectures  **FNAR 101**- all students visit either Dumbarton Oaks or National Gallery of Art and write paper on the pieces they see and their connection to the historical themes present at the time |
| Apply diverse modes of inquiry to the study of human societies and the natural world | HIS 132, HIS 155, FNAR 101, FNAR 102, RST 290, PHIL 245, SOCY 100, PSYC 101, ENVS 101 | **SOCY 100**- Students use sociological concepts and/or theories to discuss topics relating to current events and explain specifically how each of these concepts and/or theories relates to their topic in at least one paper  **PHIL 245**- Students are required to write a paper on the topic of ethical relativism (the theory that holds that morality is relative to the norms of one's culture)  **RST 290**- Students participate in a panel presentation on world religions  **ENVS 101**- Students examine and are tested on their understanding of specimens of nature and environmental science  **HIS 132**- Students are required to write a reaction paper where they review and reflect on the issues and themes (industrial revolution, women’s rights, civil rights movement, etc) of the 20th century presented by the readings and the lectures |
| Develop facility for moral reasoning and examine the moral and religious dimensions of human experience | RST 290, PHIL 245, PHIL 345 | **PHIL 245**- Students are required to write a paper on the topic of ethical relativism (the theory that holds that morality is relative to the norms of one's culture)  **PHIL 345**- Students are required to write a paper on the intersections of ethics, morality and religion  **RST 290**- Students participate in a panel presentation on world religions |
| Develop capacities for responsible citizenship and leadership in diversecommunities | PHIL 345, HIS 132, HIS 155, | **PHIL 345**- Students are required to write a paper on the intersections of ethics, morality and religion  **HIS 132**- Students are required to write a reaction paper where they review and reflect on the issues and themes (industrial revolution, women’s rights, civil rights movement, etc) of the 20th century presented by the readings and the lectures |

**Analysis**

One thing that has become evident is that certain courses, which are consistently taught by the same core of adjunct faculty, have good assessment and rubrics. Among them are HIS 132 and 155, PHIL 245 and 345, INT 109, SOCY 100, COM 290 and RST 290. There are a few courses that are undergoing strengthening to include more standard assessment, like ENGL 107, PSYC 101, ENVS 101, and the upper level English and humanities courses.

Concepts and learning outcomes are readily introduced at the 100 and 200 levels; however, the upper level courses do not measure the extent to which they have advanced that outcome. For example, there is evidence that students examine the issues and themes affecting and impacting society through the ethical and religious lenses, however, there is little demonstrated evidence of the ability to analyze and apply or synthesize those concepts to examine a wide variety of other issues. Further examination of the syllabi and student work product, in addition to the design of specific assignments that develop these skills will need to happen. New rubrics to assess the effectiveness of the outcomes are being developed to address this in the capstone/senior seminar as well.

**Conclusion**

The General Studies degree program serves an important need for the adult student population. Upon examination, it became clear that the courses in the business administration and communication concentrations were very different that those offered in the existent BA/BS programs in Business Administration and Communication. Students are learning different content in their field and the academic quality needs improvement. It is also duplicative to have similar degrees, so these two GST concentrations will be eliminated in the 2011-2012 academic year.

The GST in Information Systems has experienced declining enrollment over the past 3 years. The program is not as timely or relevant in its coursework as is needed for the program to grow. The ability to work with hardware and software or design websites is being refined and our program has not kept up. A new program in Media Studies will address some of these issues, although cyber security, a growing area, has not be addressed. That may be the subject of a future redesign. The existing GST in Information Systems will be suspended until revisions can be made.

The GST in Humanities will continue, although some revisions may be implemented to increase the quantitative and qualitative literacy and problem solving skills of graduates. It will continue as the liberal arts option for students in the School of Professional Studies.

It is believed that the human resource management content in the remaining GST would be better served in a Business Administration degree or concentration, so the program chair for UG Business Administration is developing a strategy for that. In its place, a GST with an open concentration will be created. This will allow students who transfer in credits from a previous program that SPS does not have (like chemistry, engineering, painting, etc), to received a concentration in that field. The specific number and type of credits will be detailed, along with the general education core and GST core.