

Senate Document SD 20-18  
Failed, 3/22/2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fort Wayne Senate  
FROM: Steven A. Hanke, Chair of the Education Policy Committee  
DATE: 11/18/2020  
SUBJ: Revision of General Education Program

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WHEREAS, the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) is the parent committee of the General Education Subcommittee; and

WHEREAS, the General Education Subcommittee requested that EPC review a resolution to revise the General Education program; and

WHEREAS, EPC completed the review and voted in support of the document going forward;

BE IT RESOLVED, That the attached resolution be approved by the Senate.

TO: Steven Hanke, Chair of the Education Policy Committee  
 FROM: Carol Lawton, Chair of the General Education Subcommittee  
 DATE: 11/12/2020  
 SUBJ: Proposal for Revision of the General Education Program

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WHEREAS the current General Education program is primarily a distribution arrangement that limits the ability of students to experience a meaningful program that helps them understand how a broad and liberally based education prepares them for life and work after graduation, and

WHEREAS, Purdue University Fort Wayne seeks to assess better its General Education learning outcomes at the program level as recommended for accreditation for the Higher Learning Commission, and

WHEREAS, a signature assignment across Ways of Knowing courses with a common theme of community (broadly defined) could provide both a basis for program-level assessment and a distinctive feature to General Education on our campus, and

WHEREAS, an Artistic/Creative Ways of Knowing category would ensure that students are exposed to the arts, an area integral to the quality of everyday life and valued by our university and community, and

WHEREAS, a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and/or Global focus in selected courses within Ways of Knowing categories would align to the Strategic Plan emphasis on embracing values that support diversity, equity, inclusion, and global awareness, and

WHEREAS, the current Capstone category includes courses that are not generally accessible to freshmen and sophomores and adds 3 credits above the state-mandated minimum for General Education,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Education program be revised to provide students a meaningful educational experience that increases their understanding of the relevance of General Education coursework to the larger community, promotes exposure to the arts and issues of diversity, equity, inclusion and global awareness; promotes consistency in assessment at the program level by use of signature assignments, incorporates a unifying theme of community (local and global) in signature assignments to increase student understanding of the real-life relevance of General Education coursework and facilitates campus contributions to the larger community; and provides coursework that sets the groundwork for further learning by being accessible to freshmen and sophomores, as detailed in the attached proposal.

In Favor

Against

Abstain

Hadi Alasti  
 Noor Borbieva  
 Suining Ding  
 Pat Eber  
 Kent Johnson  
 Shannon Johnson  
 Carol Lawton  
 Erik Ohlander

## Proposal for Revision of the General Education Program

### **Purpose**

The proposed revision of the General Education program at Purdue University Fort Wayne is guided by the philosophy that general education should promote the development of life-long learners and civic-minded individuals who possess the skills necessary to positively contribute to the world around them. The purpose of general education is quite different than that of a major. Whereas a major provides students with the in-depth knowledge and skills to succeed in a specific field, general education applies more broadly to the type of intellectual skills and familiarity with different ways of knowing that will continue to have relevance and meaning to students' personal lives, communities, and careers long after they have graduated from PFW. Its primary aim should be to facilitate a "big picture" mindset early in the undergraduate years, upon which the more in-depth learning in a major can be built. As such, General Education should not oversample from the student's major and its courses should be accessible to freshmen and sophomores.

The changes to the General Education program proposed here are driven in large part by the need for program-level assessment of General Education learning outcomes, as recommended by the Higher Learning Commission. General Education assessment currently occurs at the level of individual courses; given the diversity of courses in the program, there is no meaningful way to carry out program-level assessment. One way that universities across the country elicit specific learning outcomes and collect evidence of student learning across courses is through use of a signature assignment ([UMKC Description and Tools](#); [Weber State Signature Assignments in GE](#); [AAC&U Signature Assignment Tool](#)). A signature assignment is not a single or common assignment across courses but rather it is a template that faculty adapt to their specific course content. Signature assignments often follow a theme tied to the institutional mission. The proposed revision of the General Education program at PFW would use a signature assignment across all Ways of Knowing courses with the theme of community, broadly defined as an interplay of processes that may be local or global, natural or sociocultural. This theme has the potential to increase student understanding of the real-life relevance of General Education coursework and facilitate campus contributions to the larger community, and it is consistent with the designation of PFW as a comprehensive metropolitan university.

In addition, the proposed revision to the General Education program would ensure that students are exposed to the arts, an area integral to the quality of everyday life and valued by our university and community, by creating an Artistic/Creative Ways of Knowing category. Also, a requirement to take at least one course with a focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and/or Global issues would align to the strategic plan emphasis on embracing values that support diversity, equity, inclusion, and global awareness.

The current Capstone category, which includes courses that generally are not accessible to freshmen and sophomores and adds 3 credits above the state-mandated minimum for General

Education, will be eliminated. Flexibility will be retained by allowing student choice in 9 credits of the program, as detailed below.

Most courses in the current General Education program would be able to remain in the proposed program, as long as they meet the requirements for prerequisites in their category.

## **Program Structure**

### **A. Foundational Intellectual Skills**

1. Written Communication – 3 credits minimum
  2. Speaking and Listening – 3 credits minimum
  3. Quantitative Reasoning – 3 credits minimum
- Courses in this category would continue to be assessed in the way they currently are.
  - Each course in this category cannot have any prerequisite coursework other than placement testing or one of the other Foundational Skills courses. The rationale is that all students should have access to courses that provide foundational skills and be eligible to take them early in their degree program.
  - These courses should be offered at least once a semester so that students have adequate access to them early in their program of study.
  - Foundational Intellectual Skills courses must meet all state learning outcomes in either written communication, speaking and listening, or quantitative reasoning.

### **B. Ways of Knowing**

1. Scientific Ways of Knowing, as defined by state learning outcomes – 3 credits minimum
  2. Social and Behavioral Ways of Knowing, as defined by state learning outcomes – 3 credits minimum
  3. Humanistic Ways of Knowing, as defined by state learning outcomes – 3 credits minimum
  4. Artistic/Creative Ways of Knowing, as defined by state learning outcomes; includes both arts appreciation and creative courses – 3 credits minimum
- All Ways of Knowing courses must meet the three meta learning outcomes, which synthesize the state-mandated learning outcomes (see section on Learning Outcomes) as appropriate for their respective category.
  - Ways of Knowing courses cannot have any prerequisites other than Foundational Skills courses.
  - Ways of Knowing courses must be taught on a regular cycle, ideally once a year but a less frequent scheduling will be allowed to maintain the variety of courses offered in the program, including those from smaller departments. A multi-year

schedule of course offerings will be published to assist students in creating their academic plans.

- Students shall not take more than two courses from the same prefix across Ways of Knowing courses to ensure a well-rounded education and also allow flexibility for students who may want to complete a minor or a second major (applies to all students regardless of whether taking minor or double major). This restriction does not apply to Foundational Skills courses.
- All Ways of Knowing courses must include a signature assignment (see section on Signature Assignments).

#### C. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and/or Global Requirement

At least one Ways of Knowing course used to satisfy General Education requirements that is designated as having a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and/or global awareness.

Courses designated as having a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and/or global awareness must meet one or both of the following learning goals:

- Develop students' understanding of and appreciation for a) diversity - the ways that differences among individuals and groups of people (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, age, nationality, disability, culture, religion) shape lived experiences and perspectives; b) inclusion - how deliberate attention to diversity creates a community where all members are respected, feel a sense of belonging, and feel that differences are valued; and c) equity - how a commitment to addressing inequalities for the purpose of achieving fairness and justice is a prerequisite for equal opportunity.
- Develop students' understanding of and appreciation for how social, cultural, political, economic, and/or technological processes in societies outside the United States, present or past, or in North America before the arrival of Europeans, shape (or shaped) the human experience in those societies; or how globalization processes impact the United States or societies more broadly.

#### D. Nine Additional Credits

Nine additional credits from any Ways of Knowing or Foundational Skills category, but a minimum of three credits must be from a Ways of Knowing category.

### **Signature Assignments for Ways of Knowing Courses**

Courses in the Ways of Knowing categories will be assessed at the program level via a signature assignment in which students connect course content to their experience of community, such as the peoples (communities, cultures) and environments (natural, physical) that comprise the

region served by PFW. The community connection could include an understanding of how global forces can impact the peoples and environments of our region, how our region can serve as a model for understanding global processes, or how an understanding of diverse communities in specific contexts can deepen students' understanding of themselves in relation to the world around them. This theme can be applied in a variety of ways, depending on the instructor's preference and the discipline and content of the course.

- The theme of community in signature assignments would increase students' understanding of the phenomenon of community and how people in communities grow, change, and interact with their environment. It would encourage students to think about how communities can be improved and may inspire them to propose or complete projects that increase the well-being of the people and environments around them. The theme of community connection would reveal the ways large-scale, if not global, social and natural trends and phenomena impact their community.
- Signature assignments would be developed by instructors to be appropriate for their specific courses—in other words, the same assignment will not be used for all Ways of Knowing courses. Guidelines for the assignment are the following:
  - i. It will require students to demonstrate how discipline-specific knowledge and processes are relevant to the theme of community. This can include having students demonstrate how discipline-specific knowledge and processes are relevant to the peoples and environments in the region served by PFW or how our region may be impacted by global issues related to course content.
  - ii. It will involve a written component geared toward a community audience. Expressing knowledge in a form that can be understood by those not familiar with the field will assist students in better understanding the material and emphasize for them the relevance of Gen Ed course content to the broader community.
- Instructors can determine how they want the signature assignment to count in the student's grade in their course.
- A General Education Evaluation Committee will review a representative sample of signature assignments across all Ways of Knowing courses to conduct a program-level assessment. The committee might convene in the summer and should be compensated for their time.

### **Learning Outcomes for Ways of Knowing Courses**

The proposed revision simplifies the state's 19 learning outcomes for Ways of Knowing categories by synthesizing them into the following three meta-outcomes to be assessed at the program level. Courses in Ways of Knowing categories would need to meet all three meta-outcomes relevant to their Way of Knowing. In essence, the state's 19 learning outcomes will be achieved in the aggregate.

1. Knowledge: Understanding essential concepts of the discipline;
2. Evaluation, Analysis, and Process: Using methods of the discipline to evaluate and analyze sources of information or artifacts; and

3. Application: Using discipline-specific knowledge and processes to address a real-world issue.

### **Regulations**

- As in the current program, a student must earn a grade of C- or better in each course used to satisfy General Education requirements.
- A course can be included in only one category of the General Education program.

### **Application Process**

Courses in the current Foundational Intellectual Skills category that meet the prerequisite requirements in the proposed program will remain in Foundational Skills in the revised General Education program without the need for application. Courses in current Ways of Knowing categories will need to submit a brief application for review by the General Education Subcommittee in Fall 2021 in order to be listed in the revised program in the 2022-23 Catalog. The application (see attachment) will ask for the intended Way of Knowing category, course prerequisites, and fulfillment of meta learning outcomes. Course syllabi will also be collected but syllabi for current Ways of Knowing courses will not be reviewed and therefore do not need to be revised.

In order to remain in the revised General Education program for 2022-23, approved courses will need to submit a description of a signature assignment.

There will be a process to provide feedback on signature assignments and allow for their resubmission.

### **Attachments**

Overview of Proposed Requirements

Comparison of Credit Requirements in Current vs. Proposed Program

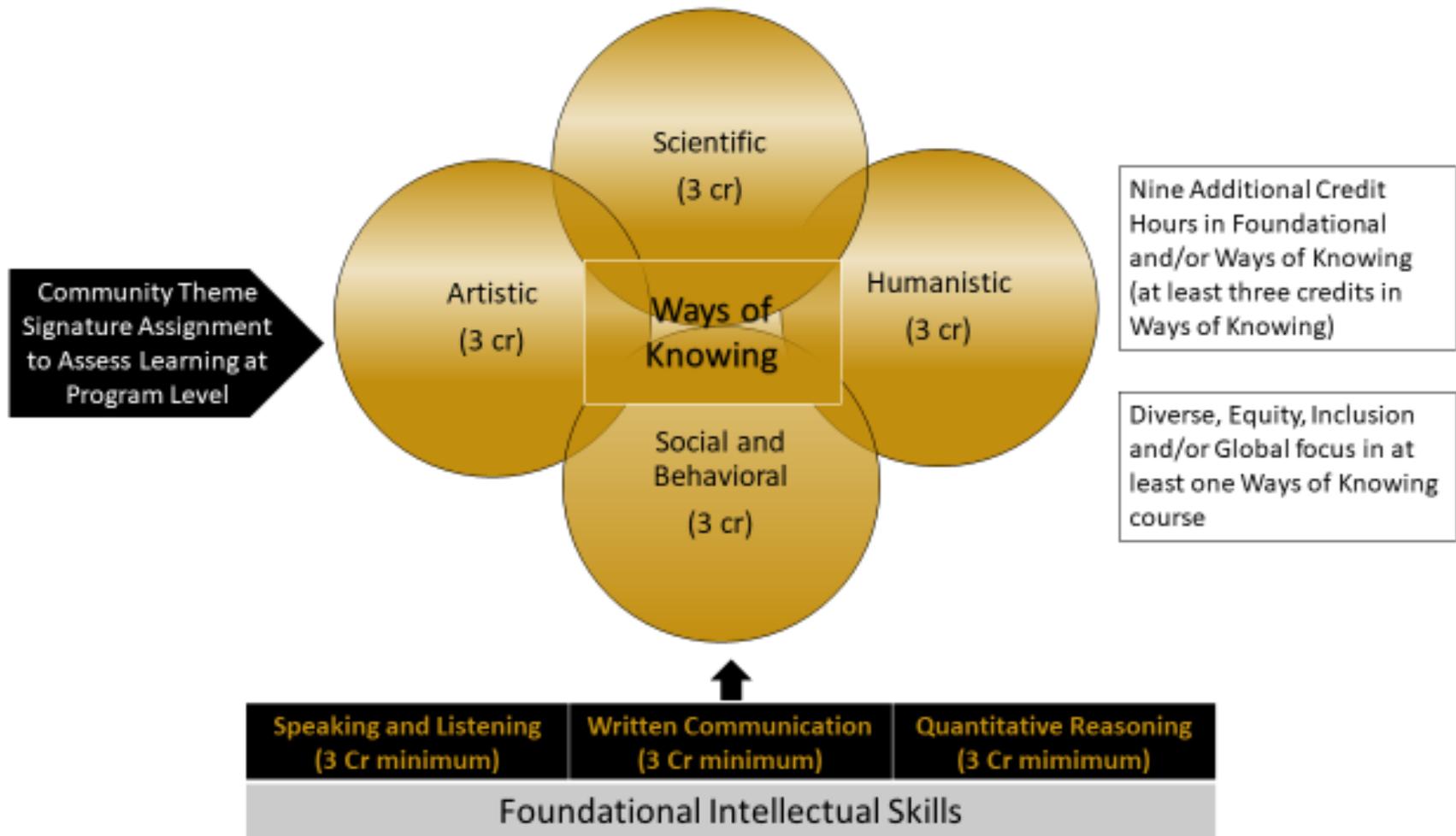
Meta-outcomes Mapped to State Learning Outcomes

Signature Assignment Guidelines

Rubric for Signature Assignments

Rationale for Enrollment Minimum

Course Application Questions



## Credit Requirements: Current vs. Proposed General Education

	Current	Proposed
<b>Foundational Intellectual Skills</b>		
Written Communication	3 (minimum)	3 (minimum)
Oral communication	3 (minimum)	3 (minimum)
Quantitative Reasoning	3 (minimum)	3 (minimum)
<b>Ways of Knowing</b>		
Scientific	3 (minimum)	3 (minimum)
Social and Behavioral	3 (minimum)	3 (minimum)
Humanistic and Artistic	3 (minimum)	
Humanistic		3 (minimum)
Artistic		3 (minimum)
Interdisciplinary or Creative	3 (minimum)	
<b>Additional Foundational Skills and/or Ways of Knowing</b>	9	9 (at least 3 in Ways of Knowing)
<b>Diverse, Equity, Inclusion and/or Global focus in at least one Way of Knowing course</b>		0 (required)
<b>Capstone</b>	3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>

## Ways of Knowing Meta-Outcomes Mapped to State Learning Outcomes

<b><u>Outcome 1: Knowledge</u></b>	
<b>Understand and explain essential concepts of the discipline.</b>	
<b>IN Objectives</b>	
4.5	Use current models and theories to describe, explain, or predict natural phenomena.
5.1	Demonstrate knowledge of major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical patterns, or historical contexts within a given social or behavioral domain
5.5	Recognize the extent and impact of diversity among individuals, cultures, or societies in contemporary or historical contexts.
6.1	Recognize and describe humanistic, historical, or artistic works or problems and patterns of the human experience.

<b><u>Outcome 2: Evaluation, Analysis, and Process</u></b>	
<b>Understand and explain the processes that lead to the discovery of new knowledge or creation of new works and evaluate the sources of information or artifacts</b>	
<b>IN Objectives</b>	
4.1	Explain how scientific explanations are formulated, tested, and modified or validated.
4.2	Distinguish between scientific and non-scientific evidence and explanations.
4.4	Apply basic observational, quantitative, or technological methods to gather data and generate evidence-based conclusions.
4.6	Locate reliable sources of scientific evidence to construct arguments related to real-world issues.
5.2	Identify the strengths and weaknesses of contending explanations or interpretations for social, behavioral, or historical phenomena.
5.3	Demonstrate basic literacy in social, behavioral, or historical research methods and analysis.
5.4	Evaluate evidence supporting conclusions about the behavior of individuals, groups, institutions, or organizations.
6.2	Apply disciplinary methodologies, epistemologies, and traditions of the humanities and the arts, including the ability to distinguish primary and secondary sources.
6.3	Analyze and evaluate texts, objects, events, or ideas in their cultural, intellectual or historical contexts.
6.4	Analyze the concepts and principles of various types of humanistic or artistic expression.

<b><u>Outcome 3: Application</u></b>	
<b>Apply discipline-specific knowledge and processes to address real-world issues or problems.</b>	
<b>IN Objectives</b>	
4.3	Apply foundational knowledge and discipline-specific concepts to address issues or solve problems.
5.6	Identify examples of how social, behavioral, or historical knowledge informs and can shape personal, ethical, civic, or global decisions and responsibilities.
6.5	Create, interpret, or reinterpret artistic and/or humanistic works through performance or criticism.
6.6	Develop arguments about forms of human agency or expression grounded in rational analysis and in an understanding of and respect for spatial, temporal, and cultural contexts.
6.7	Analyze diverse narratives and evidence in order to explore the complexity of human experience across space and time.

## Signature Assignment Guidelines Ways of Knowing and Community Connected Courses

The Ways of Knowing signature assignment must include the components listed below.

- The assignment must include a written component.
- The audience for the written component must be community members who are not familiar with the course topic.
  - The purpose of writing for a community audience is: 1) for the student to convey their knowledge in a way that can be understood by those who are not professionals in the field, and 2) for the student to understand how the course content is relevant to real-world issues.
  - The audience needs to be clearly identified. If the instructor requires that all students use the same target audience, the audience can be identified in the directions for the assignment. If students have a choice of audience, the student should provide a short description of the target audience in their assignment.
- The assignment must require students to address a real-world issue related to the course content that addresses the theme of community. This may include an issue relevant to the peoples or environments in the region served by PFW, an understanding of how global communities and physical and natural forces can impact the peoples and environments of our region, how our region can serve as a model for understanding global processes, or how a reasoned understanding of diverse communities in specific contexts might serve to deepen students' understanding of themselves in relation to the world around them.
- The assignment must require students to demonstrate their learning of the three Ways of Knowing objectives (see the Signature Assignment rubric for how each will be evaluated):
  - Knowledge:** Understand and explain essential concepts of the discipline
  - Evidence, Analysis, and Process:** Use methods of the discipline to evaluate and analyze sources of information or artifacts
  - Application:** Apply discipline-specific knowledge and processes to address a real-world issue related to the theme of community
- It is suggested that students submit the assignment in at least two parts (developmental stages) with the instructor providing feedback on the initial part/s before the final submission is due. This process would ensure that students have the opportunity to receive feedback to improve their learning. Only the final written component will be reviewed by the General Education Subcommittee as part of the evaluation of General Education objectives.

Examples:

- Describe an example of how field surveys and laboratory analysis of genetic variation have been used to understand the viability of a plant or animal species in our region and have aided community organizations to recover and sustain that species.
- Describe how comparative politics can be used to understand political behavior or economic development in our region.
- In a short essay, based on your understanding of interactions between monks and laity in Buddhist societies generally, reflect on how such interactions within the Burmese Buddhist community of Allen County deploy traditional forms of religious sociability to address local concerns.

- Describe how a work of art you have created in this course could be installed in a public space in the community and reflect on how your work would benefit and/or challenge the public.
- Describe an example of stereotyping or prejudice that you have observed in your community and based on research presented in the text, suggest a way that such stereotyping or prejudice could be combatted.
- Conduct fieldwork (interviews, observations of group events) among members of an identified social organization in the community and offer a short account of your experience that addresses how individuals relate to the group, how the group relates to the community, and how your own identity affected your research.

### Rubric for Signature Assignments

		Highest Level (4)	(3)	(2)	Lowest Level (1)
Knowledge	Demonstrates understanding of essential concepts from the discipline as they relate to the topic	Student demonstrates all of the following: -Concepts are relevant to the topic -Explanations of concepts are clear -Explanations are understandable by the target audience	Student demonstrates only two of the following: -Concepts are relevant to the topic -Explanations of concepts are clear -Explanations are understandable by the target audience	Student demonstrates only one of the following: -Concepts are relevant to the topic -Explanations of concepts are clear -Explanations are understandable by the target audience	Student demonstrates none of the following: -Concepts are relevant to the topic -Explanations of concepts are clear -Explanations are understandable by the target audience
Evaluation, Analysis, and Methods	Integrates appropriate sources of information or artifacts in a way that demonstrates understanding of disciplinary methods of inquiry	Student demonstrates all of the following: -Evidence/artifacts used are appropriate for the standards in the discipline -Information/artifacts are meaningfully integrated -Understanding of the processes used in the discipline	Student demonstrates only two of the following: -Evidence/artifacts used are appropriate for the standards in the discipline -Information/artifacts are meaningfully integrated -Understanding of the processes used in the discipline	Student demonstrates only one of the following: -Evidence/artifacts used are appropriate for the standards in the discipline -Information/artifacts are meaningfully integrated -Understanding of the processes used in the discipline	Student demonstrates none of the following: -Evidence/artifacts used are appropriate for the standards in the discipline -Information/artifacts are meaningfully integrated -Understanding of the processes used in the discipline
Application to Community	Applies discipline-specific knowledge and processes to address the theme of community	Student demonstrates all of the following: - Application directly stems from the information or artifacts presented -Application is relevant to the theme of community -Effective communication of the application to a community audience.	Student demonstrates only two of the following: - Application directly stems from the information or artifacts presented -Application is relevant to the theme of community -Effective communication of the application to a community audience.	Student demonstrates only one of the following: - Application directly stems from the information or artifacts presented -Application is relevant to the theme of community -Effective communication of the application to a community audience.	Student demonstrates none of the following: - Application directly stems from the information or artifacts presented -Application is relevant to the theme of community -Effective communication of the application to a community audience.

### Application for Ways of Knowing Courses

To be submitted via Qualtrics survey (Tentative deadline: mid-Fall 2021)

1. Course prefix, number, and catalog title.
2. Department and unit offering the course.
3. Is the course part of the current general education program?
4. Is there anything that you would like the GES to know regarding the history of the course in relation to the (I)PFW general education program?
5. Is the course intended as one of the Ways of Knowing categories (specify: Scientific, Social/Behavioral, Humanistic, Artistic)?
6. If the course is currently approved as fulfilling the Interdisciplinary Ways of Knowing category and is being submitted for re-certification one of the four Ways of Knowing course, please briefly describe why it fits in the Ways of Knowing category selected in question 5.
7. Does the course have a focus on diversity/equity/inclusion or global issues and if so, briefly describe how it encompasses this focus.
8. Does the course represent an early-level introduction to thinking and problem solving in a Way of Knowing with content that is of general or broad interest across majors? Briefly explain.
9. Does the course have prerequisites and if so, what are they? Note: Courses in Ways of Knowing should not have prerequisites other than Foundational Skills courses.
10. How often will the course be offered? (fall and spring; fall, spring, and summer; fall or spring only; summer only; once every two/three/four years)
11. What is the minimum enrollment per unique section? If below 24, is there a pedagogical reason? If yes, explain.
12. Attach a copy of the course syllabus. (Note: Syllabus does not need to be revised to include a signature assignment for the application in January.)
13. Name and email address of individual submitting application.

Signature assignment description for Ways of Knowing courses will be due in Spring 2022. The following information must be provided:

1. Briefly describe how the signature assignment will meet each of the following outcomes:

- Outcome 1 – Knowledge: Understand and explain essential concepts of the discipline
  - Outcome 2 – Evidence, Analysis, and Process: Understand and explain the processes that lead to the discovery of new knowledge or creation of new works and evaluate the sources of information or artifacts
  - Outcome 3 – Application: Apply discipline-specific knowledge and processes to address real-world issues or problems.
2. Briefly describe what a signature assignment for the course might look like and how it would address the theme of community. (See guidelines for signature assignments)