

Spring 2008

Response to Report of External Reviewer

**Bachelor of General Studies
Associate of General Studies**

**University College
Northwestern State University of Louisiana**

The following are recommendations in the March 2008 summary report of the consultant who reviewed the General Studies Degree Programs of University College at Northwestern State University. This response to the report includes strategies and activities appropriate to implementation of the suggested actions.

1. Make greater use of the capstone course for General Studies candidates.

A capstone course will be developed in interdisciplinary studies that will include service learning opportunities and other field experiences as appropriate for college to career transition. This course or an alternative course will be recommended for all baccalaureate students applying for admission to the General Studies program.

Alternative capstone options currently available are SPS 4000: College to Work Transition Skills, IDS 4010: Internship, or COOP 3010: Cooperative Occupational Experience II. A 3-6 hour field experience is currently required for BGS concentrations in defense leadership, non-profit leadership, and professional studies.

2. Continue the attention to the current balance on the General Studies Council: long service vs. new induction to General Studies.

The Council faculty represent a wide range of disciplines, tenured and non-tenured status, and assistant to full professor ranks. The Council membership is guided by the Committee on Committees of the Faculty Senate. We will continue this healthy balance of membership, and Council members will continue to promote understanding of General Studies within their respective faculties.

3. Make improvements to the facilities to include the following:

- create a reception area and meeting space for students**
- locate computer equipment and furniture in a lab accessible during the day**
- designate a testing room for students with disabilities**
- locate offices together within the unit.**

Furniture in the reception area in 239 Kyser Hall will be rearranged to allow for more comfortable seating. A space for students to meet will be partitioned from current space in the study laboratory. The computer laboratory adjacent to University College

will continue to serve General Studies students during the regular semesters, with an alternate laboratory made available to them during the summer semester.

A designated testing room will be located in 241D Kyser Hall, adjacent to the conference room (239E) and staff offices. An additional testing room will be available in 143 Kyser Hall within the Dean's office. The College will continue to explore locations where offices, testing spaces, and laboratories can be together.

- 4. Make changes in staffing of University College to include the following:**
 - modify the organization of the unit and its relationships with other units**
 - review job descriptions and responsibilities of the advising staff**
 - create additional advising positions; fill advising vacancies as soon as they occur**
 - assign personnel to undertake a research schedule internally and in cooperation with other offices of the university.**

By July 1 a reorganization of University College will be proposed. This plan will include a status change in the current combined position of Academic Advising/ADA.

The Academic Advising coordinator will become the director of the division of General Studies. The director will be responsible for the research and marketing functions, and for maintenance of the website and a program of rewards and recognitions. He will be the direct liaison with the CALL program and BPCC regarding transfers, and the ACE program concerning career development. He and other department heads will consider developing mutually beneficial concentrations or certificates.

The coordination of Disability Services will be assigned to an advisor. The unit will request three additional positions—an advisor, administrative secretary, and receptionist—and will rewrite position descriptions for the General Studies staff.

By July 1 we will fill a vacancy in the position of coordinator of the Academic Center. This person will assume responsibility for evaluation of the retention and support programs of University College which serve students in all majors and, in concert with ACE, determine future viability and direction of those programs.

- 5. Pay special future attention to the possibilities of technology, including:**
 - make computer equipment available at convenient places and times for students**
 - encourage increases in online course inventories of academic departments**
 - use online advising innovations such as advising resources delivered online**
 - create additional online tutoring opportunities**
 - utilize online collaborative and record-keeping packages for advisors.**

University College will determine whether to make additional computer equipment available for our students. We will assist CALL staff in encouraging departments to adapt additional courses for online delivery to General Studies majors. .

We now conduct advising through internet and other electronic resources and use AdvisorTrac for record-keeping within the unit. We will continue to seek funds from administration for online tutoring opportunities such as Smarthinking, particularly for CALL students who do not have access to on-campus tutoring laboratories.

6. Develop a plan to formalize use of the libraries by General Studies students.

The unit will encourage General Studies exploratory students to take LIB 1030: Information Sources and Services, which will help them apply key technological and information applications. This one of the core values established by the University.

We will incorporate library usage and resources into the capstone courses for upper level students. The knowledge and skills from service learning and other field experiences will build a foundation for success in their chosen careers or in further study.

The Dean chairs the Student Research Involvement committee of the University Research Council. We will advise future General Studies students of potential capstone experiences in research with departmental faculty.

7. Utilize General Studies personnel to advise Northwestern as it moves forward with the ACE program.

The Dean is directly involved in the selection of the ACE director, and also co-chairs the Academic Advising Council. Advisors serve on various committees. Our national-award-winning program, the Dean's Select Advisor program, was a model for the design of the ACE initiative. We will continue as a resource for the program in ways that do not place additional burdens to implement ACE on the University College staff.

Conclusions and Timeline

Five major areas to strengthen University College were summarized as follows:

- Reorganization of the College and addition of staff
- Online solutions for academic and administrative functions
- Marketing the degree for specific populations and community needs
- Conducting research to support the marketing plan
- Defining the role of the College with other units and institutions on campus.

The timeline provided a schedule for implementing these changes over the next five years. Year one strategies will begin immediately and are as follows:

- Establish Director of the Division of General Studies in a change of status; assign disability services to a coordinator/advisor
- Write position descriptions for an advisor, secretary, and receptionist
- Develop capstone course for General Studies majors; include library usage plan
- Improve facilities to include a reception area and designated testing room
- Conduct research on General Studies alumni and develop a long-range plan for on-going research, in concert with other units
- Provide assistance to other units for University initiatives, i.e. ACE and CALL.

A status report on these strategies will be provided at the conclusion of next year.