

Draft#3:
**A new purpose/preamble statement and a new goal set for
General Education at UND**

**[To be] Offered to the Task Force
By the Goals Subgroup
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(TS: 3/08.06)**

Note to Goals Group and Steering Committee: this draft includes responses and suggested revisions from Ike, Lori, and Tom (mtg 3/3/06) and also Libby (email 2/20/06). I also added Ike's contribution to the "Critical Features" section here (email 3/6/06), but revised it somewhat to fit the same language used in the previous 3 sections (addressed to students directly).

First, as you can see, we decided to start with a name change—from general education to "essential studies" (borrowed from somewhere we don't remember). There's too much confusion about GE—is it just the required courses or does it refer to foundational learning across all four years? We think that a name change might help with that as well as enhance visibility.

Secondly, this draft is based on three main assumptions: at UND, we need to . . .

- 1. Make the purpose plain to students—a simple, direct statement—toward better understanding of ES by students*
- 2. Reflect ideals that seem to be held by most UND faculty and staff—to help us move toward enhancement of the value of ES across campus*
- 3. Improve visibility of ES—use concepts and language that is ready for webpage and brochure*

We've been influenced by: UCLA's purpose statement, IUPUI's goals ("Principles of Undergraduate Learning"), statements by UND colleagues about what they think ES should be about (ESTF, noon discussions, ES Summit, etc.), and most of the things we've been reading (particularly AAC&U's "Greater Expectations").

The goals set—much discussed and debated—is something we developed with the following ideas in mind:

We used a format borrowed from IUPUI: a goal "topic" that titles the idea or concept, followed by more specific goal statements ("bullets"). The topics are simple and clear—easy to communicate and understand. The goal statements are specific enough and outcome-focused for assessability.

IUPUI actually has 6 goal topics—we reduced them to just three. The first two topics are pretty much the same as IUPUI's first two goals, although we've made a few modifications in languages. The third topic is similar to one at UW-Stout, and it collapses three of IUPUI's goals

into one.

Notice that, in the proposal, we've added quantitative literacy and use of information technology to the communication goal—so that goal is expanded from the one we currently have. Also note that we've embedded the diversity goal in goal #3 rather than making it a separate goal as it is in our current list.

What are Essential Studies at the University of North Dakota?

Essential studies (ES) make up the academic core of your university experience. The ES program exposes you to the fundamental ideas and intellectual activities that characterize a broadly educated person. The courses offered in the ES curriculum help you acquire the skills essential to university-level learning: they challenge you to think critically, communicate clearly, read carefully, use information wisely, and solve problems. ES courses also provide diverse perspectives on how human beings think and feel, create and discover new knowledge, and build communities. Taken together, ES is the foundation of a UND education.

Why are you required to take essential studies courses?

UND requires its undergraduates to take a number of Essential Studies courses out of the deep conviction that living a successful and satisfying life demands a wide range of skills and knowledge. Whatever your area of specialization or career plan, you will need the skills to reason logically and quantitatively, and to communicate effectively. Further, as a citizen and a consumer you will need to have an understanding of the ideas and cultural movements that shape our values, the ways in which humans organize and govern their societies, and the sciences that explain and increasingly shape our environment.

What is the best way to approach your essential studies?

When you choose your essential studies courses, UND encourages you to venture into areas that are new, interesting, or arouse your curiosity. By choosing courses that range outside your current experience, you will gain opportunities to explore questions and issues that can cause you to grow and expand your knowledge and awareness. UND also encourages you to choose ES courses that complement each other, so that you can extend what you learn in individual courses. By linking courses this way, you can develop the ability to make connections between them and draw on their ideas and traditions to address the complex, multi-faceted questions of life in the 21st century.

What are the key features of essential studies courses?

At UND, a major objective of essential studies is critical thinking. Consequently, each of your essential studies courses is directed toward at least one critical thinking goal. ES instructors will state the course goals up front, in the syllabus, and they will create specific learning opportunities for you to engage in critical thinking—a serious exploration of the personal, social, and intellectual value of those goals. Besides checking your learning of the knowledge and skills that are particular to the course topic or discipline, you can expect that your ES instructors will also assess your ability to think critically. UND builds these key features into the ES program because we want you to engage *actively* in the learning process, become a *responsible* learner, and develop the *habits of mind* that are needed to address the complex issues and problems in today's rapidly changing society.

Goals of Undergraduate Education At the University of North Dakota

Critical Thinking

The ability of students to analyze information and ideas carefully and logically from multiple perspectives. This skill is demonstrated by the ability of students to:

- analyze complex issues and make informed decisions;
- synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions;
- evaluate the logic, validity, and relevance of data;
- propose resolutions to problems and questions by considering alternatives and broader implications

Core Communication and Quantitative Skills

The ability of students to write, read, speak, listen, perform quantitative analysis, and use information resources and technology are the foundation skills necessary for all UND students to succeed. This set of skills is demonstrated, respectively, by the ability to:

- express ideas and convey information to others effectively in a variety of written formats
- comprehend, interpret, and analyze texts
- communicate orally in one-on-one and group settings
- solve problems that are quantitative in nature
- make efficient use of information resources and technology for personal and professional needs.

Knowledge, Appreciation, and Values

The ability of students to examine and organize disciplinary ways of knowing and to draw on a wide ranges of knowledge and skills to address issues of importance to themselves, their communities, and the world. This is demonstrated by the ability of students to:

- Recognize and appreciate the collective heritage, ideas, and values of a multicultural world and demonstrate sensitivity to sociocultural diversity and the interdependence of groups in society;
 - Recognize and appreciate the complexity of human experience as represented in literary, historical, and philosophical/religious texts;
 - Understand and appreciate the creativity and imagination expressed in the fine and performing arts;
 - Understand the scientific method, use it to investigate how the natural world operates, and appreciate the impact of science on society;
 - Understand the development and consequences of the behavior or individuals, groups, and institutions in the context of major social, economic, and political forces.
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