

Proposed  
Rationale and Guiding Principles  
Of  
General Education  
At  
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

Prepared by  
The College's Academic Council  
Administration and  
Faculty Chairs  
In conjunction with  
The College's Faculty Committee on Instruction  
Subcommittee on General Education

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General Education at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

**Rationale**

The high value of an ESF undergraduate education is well known. The accomplishments of graduates from its array of programs are remarkable across a wide range of societal need in relatively specialized areas of science, management and policy, engineering and design. Increasingly, the ability of ESF graduates to deal with new knowledge and societal change and its global context calls for improved ways to deliver and validate student success in their general education as well as in their curricula's relatively specialized aspects.

Shaping the future through new expectations for student learning in general education at ESF requires understanding of the influence of ESF's specialized mission on its undergraduate curricula. ESF is not a university and it need not become merely a copy of one. Rather, in relatively specialized areas its undergraduate program degrees include only the Bachelor of Science and the professional Bachelor of Landscape Architecture. This mission and program context provide excellent grounds for distinctive programs that celebrate those emphases while achieving the learning outcome goals of general education in the spirit of and within the parameters defined by State University Trustees. In so doing, ESF can significantly impact the progress of higher education in and beyond the State University of New York.

While ESF is not a liberal arts college and it does not offer a Bachelor of Arts degree, its scientific and professional programs are profoundly influenced by its societal-based mission. Thus ESF has many excellent faculty whose principal contributions include instruction in the humanities and the social sciences. Such ESF general education offerings are complemented as appropriate with accessory instruction from Syracuse University. By this approach, each graduate of an ESF bachelor's level degree program will possess a thorough grounding in specialized areas and the ability to solve complex problems in cooperation with others. Each will comprehend worldwide implications of parochial decisions and communicate effectively to make contributions as well-educated citizens in a changing world.

**Guiding Principles**

1. Each specialized ESF program has always included a rich array of general education learning outcomes, with exceptional strength and depth in the natural sciences along with fully integrated competencies in critical thinking and information management. The depth and breadth of specific requirements in mathematics, social sciences, humanities and communications have varied according to program needs.
2. Beginning in the Fall of the year 2000 each entering first year undergraduate at ESF will, as a degree requirement, satisfy nine of the ten knowledge areas

and both competency areas of the State University General Education Requirement (SUGER).

(More)

**Guiding Principles (Cont'd.)**

3. The College has no formal campus-wide knowledge requirement for proficiency in the understanding and use of a foreign language and knowledge of the distinctive features of culture(s) associated with such foreign language.
4. Each student will demonstrate knowledge in the nine remaining SUGER areas (see principles 6 and 7 below) through learning outcomes in at least 30 credit hours of coursework. All students will attain competency in critical thinking and information management throughout their academic programs.
5. Of the 30 credit hours dedicated to the remaining nine areas of the SUGER, no more than 6 credit hours may be accounted for in any single knowledge area.
6. In at least 6 of the knowledge areas students will achieve and demonstrate assessed learning outcomes equivalent to expectations in at least 3 credit hours of study. Included are SUGER Knowledge and Skill areas numbered:

1. Mathematics, 2) Natural Sciences, 3) Social Sciences,

4) or 5) American History or Western Civilization, 7) Humanities and 10) Basic Communication.

1. In the remaining three SUGER knowledge areas students will achieve and demonstrate assessed learning outcomes equivalent to expectations in at least 1 credit hour of study. Included are SUGER Knowledge and Skill areas numbered:

4) or 5) American History or Western Civilization, 6) Other World Civilization and 8) The Arts.

**NOTE:** The three preceding guidelines (5, 6 and 7) apply to the development and accountability of ESF's General Education program. It may be that guidelines 6 and 7 apply but are not included in the submission to SUNY for review.

2. Each ESF degree program has its unique rationale for general education. Therein faculty delineate the philosophy of their program's general education content and approach to student advising.

**NOTE:** The faculty of each program will develop this rationale during the month of November for inclusion in ESF's General Education program submission to SUNY for review.

3. The general and specialized education components of each ESF degree program are designed with the success of transfer students in mind. Accordingly, no more than 6 credit hours of SUGER general education coursework is expected to be at the upper division level.

(More)

### **Guiding Principles (Cont'd.)**

4. Faculty collaboration in the design of ESF general education has helped develop a rich array of general education coursework and learning outcomes appropriate to our specialized programs. When greater breadth or more likely greater depth is appropriate to the curriculum and student educational needs the wide array of more traditional arts and science offerings at neighboring Syracuse University is utilized.

**NOTE:** The Dean of Instruction and Graduate Studies will coordinate task forces of the Academic Council with the needs of the subcommittee of the Committee on Instruction to develop a roster of existing ESF and SU courses having learning outcomes appropriate to each of the knowledge areas. The rosters will be developed during the month of November for inclusion in ESF's General Education program submission to SUNY for review. This same mechanism will coordinate the development of new offerings for consideration by the College

Faculty at their March 2000 meeting to supplement existing offerings in general education at ESF.

5. Competencies in both critical thinking (reasoning) and information management are infused throughout the ESF general education program. In Bachelor of Science programs the development of competencies will be given emphases in the knowledge areas of mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences and basic communication.
6. Relative to its 1999 curricula, the ESF general education program beginning with Fall 2000 includes:
  1. selected new courses (1-3 credit hours)
  2. revised content in key existing courses
  3. multiple knowledge areas are addressed satisfactorily by single courses in selected areas
  4. substantive faculty collaboration
  5. minimal additional accessory instruction
  6. modest resources of new instructional faculty, along with additional library and advising resources
13. Methods and procedures to assess and strengthen learning in general education will be developed as appropriate to fully implement the College's general education program.