

January 2, 2026

To: Faculty Senate Steering Committee, Senators and ex-officio members

From: University Studies Faculty and Staff (see undersigned)

Re: Feedback on the General Education Task Force Draft Report

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the General Education Task Force Charge, we are providing initial feedback on the Task Force's draft report. Agreeing with the need to clarify and streamline the non-major requirements (i.e., general education) for Portland State's undergraduates, the following corrections, analyses, and suggestions are made to improve the outcomes as the broader campus community undertakes this process.

The draft's strength is its focus on the needs of transfer students, including adding upper-division writing-in-the-discipline instruction, proposing clarified competencies for the middle part of the academic program, as well as adopting the National Institute for Student Success (NISS) recommendation of metamajors. However, as discussed in detail below, the Report's recommendations on how to implement metamajors neglects a dominant theme of the NISS report to "ensure that academic pathways are clearly defined" (p.42).

Moreover, we are specifically concerned about misinformation in the proposal, presumptions presented as facts, and sections without supporting evidence. We encourage the PSU community to consider the information presented here as we undertake this large, structural, and university-wide plan that will substantially impact the experiences of our students.

Also of great concern is the two-year timeline proposed for implementation. At the end of this document, we identify 15 major increased workload requirements impacting faculty, staff, and administrators. For example, the Report stipulates that new general education syllabi across departments be completed by fall 2027. We ask the Faculty Senate to question the two-year timeline for general education reform at PSU.

BACKGROUND

Interconnections: UNST and the PSU Community

Since the establishment of the University Studies program, there have been both positive and negative narratives about its efficacy. As Chimamanda Adichie reminds us of in *The Danger of a Single Story*, let's all consider multiple perspectives while respecting one's own narrative. This way, we can come together to focus on students' success and collaborate to create a clear and effective general education curriculum that better serves our students.

- UNST faculty and programs have been a collaborative-driver for expanding, among others, interdisciplinarity, community-engaged learning, assessment practices, undergraduate research, and peer learning across campus. However, the University Studies Program's status as a separate budgetary unit focused on interdisciplinary teaching and learning continues to be surfaced as evidence that the work of University Studies does not serve the PSU community. In fact, this narrative obscures an understanding of the ways in which we are deeply connected with each other across the campus.

For example:

- Tenured faculty housed in departments came to PSU as UNST Faculty Fellows.
- Shared-line faculty who divide their teaching load between a home department and UNST; likewise, there are multiple agreements across campus for departmental faculty to teach in UNST.
- Faculty of all contract types who started in other departments and found their home in UNST.
- UNST faculty who teach classes in other departments.
- Departments that design and deliver UNST classes at the sophomore and junior cluster level.
- The University Studies Council, composed of 16 Faculty Senate members from across campus who oversee the curriculum and direction of the program.
- The long-standing practice of inviting the campus community to participate in the assessment of student work and ePortfolios.

Despite all of the ways we are connected, the persistent narrative that we are separate and problematic remains. Due to the tenacity of this narrative along with the opportunities provided by a revisioning of general education at PSU, we understand that University Studies as an administrative unit may be substantially transformed. Even when establishing University Studies, it was acknowledged that there were issues with the middle of the program and the concerns raised at that time are still salient (White,

1993). Therefore, we would be remiss to not highlight aspects of the current program, the bookends of the program, that evidence shows, work exceptionally well for our students and are scalable to the NISS report recommendations.

AMENDMENTS

How General Education Matters to Students

General education courses make up a significant portion of a student's undergraduate experience. The Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) defines a liberal arts education as the "collaboration and integration of general education and the major." AGLS maintains that a general education should not merely be the realm where various subjects and ways of knowing are sampled by students, but rather, it should critically examine the connections among different disciplines and approaches.

The Report claims that the proposed model is "future-focused" (p. 18), yet there is not an explanation or evidence presented on how it reflects either theory or research on future-focused pedagogies.

By disaggregating the elements of the first-year and culminating experiences, rather than scaling up their strengths as a foundation and capstone, respectively, aligned with metamajors (NISS Report), the Task Force Report recommendations regarding the first and senior year, squander existing resources, expertise, and opportunities to prepare students with the durable skills needed in an uncertain future. The Agility Imperative report produced by AAC&U names AI literacy, ePortfolios & microcredentials, diverse discussion opportunities, hands-on or applied experience and helping students become informed citizens as essential components of what employers expect students to gain from higher education (Finely, 2025, pg. 3).

The AAC&U report suggests that what students most need in order to adapt to a rapidly changing world, including the emergence of increased dependence on artificial intelligence, is the mastery of a set of durable skills (Guerola-Navarro, Oltra-Badenes, & Gil-Gómez (2024); Hutson & Ceballos, 2023; Hutson, et. al., 2023). The University Studies program provides a unified general education experience, and its four main learning goals directly align with the career readiness competencies of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) as well as the "durable skills" suggested by the [America Succeeds Initiative](#).

The Importance of a Year-long, First-year Seminar Experience: Student Success, Belonging, and Retention

We are concerned that the year-long first year seminar that currently supports our students (a three-term FRINQ) is eroded in the new proposal, which we believe will undermine retention unless strong measures are taken to support cohorts of first-year students over their first year. Because our student body has so many students who do not live on campus, for equitable access, cohorting must necessarily be part of academic programming. Additionally, as part of our process of continuous improvement, several of our FRINQs are already explicitly aligned with the idea of meta-majors (e.g., business, environmental science, COTA).

How would a one-term FRINQ align with PSU's admission practices? Are we certain all the students PSU admits will get the support they need with a one term first-year seminar? If so, what is the evidence for that? The proposal fails to mention the FRINQ Student Success Pilot except in reference to the NISS report, which highlights the Pilot, or the positive outcomes of the Student Success Pilot, especially for Portland Scholars (students who enter PSU less prepared for college level work/with low high school GPAs). We would invite more inventive options about how we can meet these students' needs effectively.

The proposal as it stands does not clearly articulate the ways in which students would be cohorted, particularly over time (within the first year). Because the proposal lacks this specificity, we are concerned that the elements of belonging and connection that stand as a hallmark for so many first-year students would disappear, and we would revert to a streamlined, yet disconnected, form of first-year engagement. Students could get through fast, but they would experience less connection, and subsequently have a higher tendency to leave the university, especially if they were not well prepared academically to begin with.

FRINQ Alignment with the State of Oregon Core Transfer Map (CTM) and Major Transfer Maps (MTM) Designations

FRINQ already aligns with the CTM and MTMs mentioned in the proposal and also meets the Higher Education Coordinating Committee (HECC) directives for "credits with a purpose":

“The 'purposefulness' of the credits is very high [...] the credits transfer in key disciplinary areas –students are well set up to use these 15 credits meaningfully as they further their education.” - HECC approval letter for High School FRINQ

Senior Inquiry and FRINQ transfer as:

4 credits WR121z

4 credits social science

4 credits arts & letters

3 credits science literacy

Writing in the First Year

WR121z was officially approved by the HECC in 2022. In fall of 2022, the UNST Council revised the credit distribution in FRINQ to reflect the writing-intensive practices of the course.

Since the implementation of the common course number WR121z, UNST conducted an assessment to determine how FRINQs address the learning outcomes of WR121z. This review was completed in [2024](#). After the review, a [common syllabus](#) was developed and FRINQ courses now include WR121z learning outcomes in their syllabi. These changes will be assessed at the end of the academic year and any adjustments made based on the assessment.

The Report states that "Our students would be better served by a designated writing composition class in their first year" (p.8) and cites three studies on the positive impact of first-year composition courses. The efficacy of embedded, continuous writing instruction and practice that FRINQ students experience throughout their first-year cannot be disproven by the positive impact of a different course.

Challenges with student writing ability are not unique to PSU and require on-going instruction and focus across university courses (Graham, S., et al., 2018). Furthermore, in Wardle's 2019 analysis of Russell's *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History*, she notes: "There is no evidence that student writing over all is any better or worse than it has ever been. What is true is that faculty members have been complaining about student writing for as long as students have been writing" (<https://www.chronicle.com/article/what-critics-of-student-writing-get-wrong/>).

Faculty in UNST bring a great deal of training and experience related to teaching writing across the curriculum, feedback, and scaffolding the processes throughout the year-long sequence. The emerging requirements of information literacy and ethical use of AI exacerbates the pitch of this learning curve for students. UNST faculty actively

participate in professional development related to these emerging issues of writing pedagogy.

Critical thinking and research within general education at PSU

The report argues that the current FRINQ model “tries to address too many learning outcomes in the same course,” therefore, the cohorted first-year experience doesn’t work. FRINQ, like every UNST course, focuses on four main learning goals. These goals are interconnected, and the curriculum and assignments often address multiple goals at the same time. While all of the goals are important, in the first-year classroom, focusing on critical thinking and inquiry is crucial. In FRINQ, students are taught to pose researchable questions, to identify methods for answering them, to critically evaluate sources, and to synthesize and analyze their findings, the basic steps for a college-level research assignment. In addition to multiple shared student success assignments, students in every FRINQ course complete a term-long research assignment. It would be simple for FRINQ faculty, if they don’t already focus these activities on the academic interests of individual students, to collaborate with metamajors.

The proposed model does not include any required coursework that explicitly teaches critical thinking or college-level research skills. Presumably, students will get some of this instruction in their Quantitative Literacy course and in their 1-credit Information Literacy class, but there is no required WR 122 course (i.e. research paper writing).

Mentor Program

Peer mentoring is an effective practice for student success, retention, and belonging, and a peer mentoring model should be recommended in a general education model and integrated into the model design.

Peer mentors are instrumental in a sense of belonging and connection, as is demonstrated in the following data:

- According to the Spring 2025 end of year FRINQ survey, 94% of FRINQ students agreed or strongly agreed that their mentor helped them feel comfortable at PSU (N = 411). 90% reported that the mentor helped them connect to resources at PSU.
- 79% agree/strongly agree FRINQ mentor helped get to know classmates (2025 FRINQ End of Year Eval)
- 84% agree/strongly FRINQ mentor encouraged students to get involved on campus (2025 FRINQ End of Year Eval)

Peer mentors help with student retention. At the end of the 24-25 academic year, when asked whether someone helped them stay in school, among students who said yes, 60% of FRINQ students said a mentor (203 said yes, 121 said mentor helped) helped them and 35% of SINQ students said a mentor helped them (502 said yes, 175 said mentor).

The report recommends improved mentor training if any peer mentor program is included in the new model, citing an external review from 2016, but does not include any current data on mentor training, and the peer mentor program did not receive any requests for this information. The program currently provides 20 hours of training per year to all mentors (new and returning) and an additional 20 hours per year of training to new mentors who start in Fall.

UNST Mentor training includes the following:

- Mentor role and expectations
- Supporting mentees with writing
- Applied concepts of equity and social justice to student support and learning
- Lesson planning for engaged mentor sessions
- Facilitating group discussion and managing conflict
- Promoting connection, belonging, and success
- Basic library research and PSU Library resources
- PSU campus resources and referrals (e.g., QRC, DRC, VRC, Cultural Centers, WRC, CARE Team, Writing Center, Learning Center, SHAC, etc.)
- Mandatory reporting obligations and support offices (e.g., Child Abuse, Title IX (Sexual Assault), Conduct, Advocates, DOSL, GDI, etc.)
- Faculty-mentor relationship building

The report also cites the 2016 external review findings of lack of structure and redundancy in the mentor program. Two initiatives since 2016 have responded by developing a more structured mentor curriculum, in collaboration with the Office of Student Success. First, the FRINQ Student Success Pilot, now in its second year, which integrates a student success curriculum and connections to campus resources (academic, social, etc.) at planned points throughout the year. Second, the Online SINQ Mentor Curriculum Redesign initiative, which developed a set curriculum of workshops for online SINQs focusing on research and writing, student success, and career readiness.

The undergraduate mentor program offers students paid on-campus positions, supporting them financially while training them in leadership and playing an important role in their career readiness and in their own sense of belonging at PSU. In addition to

recommending more training and structure, the 2016 external review found that mentors “described the transformative power of the mentoring program on their own self-awareness as learners and used terms such as “invaluable” or “life-changing” to characterize their experiences.”

UNST Affiliated Curricular and Student Access and Success Programs

The proposal is silent on the future of the Higher Ed in Prison (HEP) program and the Senior Inquiry (SrINQ) program. If University Studies is sunsetted, perhaps HEP can be housed elsewhere. But the SrINQ program is inextricably linked with FRINQ. The Senior Inquiry program provides a pathway for metro area high school students to seamlessly enroll at Portland State. Our first Senior Inquiry program was housed at Westview High School in Beaverton. Our program began at Westview 30 years ago and that program still exists. Over the years we have added schools that serve districts where students are more likely to have been excluded from opportunities in higher education. Our Senior Inquiry students are more likely to be first generation college students, more likely to be from immigrant communities and more likely to be from Black and Brown communities. They are exactly the students that we want to be serving with our mission and vision for a more just and equitable future.

SrINQ is a successful example of a for-credit bridge program recommended in the NISS report. Not only are students who attend PSU after completing Senior Inquiry retained and graduated at higher rates compared to other incoming first year students, for the graduating seniors who came to Portland State directly after Senior Inquiry between 2019-2024 62% have either graduated or are currently enrolled. This includes cohorts from the pandemic years (cognos enrollment data). For students who came to Portland State, the experience is overwhelmingly positive and expands the community network and potential alumni base for fundraising. Additionally, the positive relationship we have with our partner schools is crucial for them to recommend us to other students who don't take Senior Inquiry. On average we enroll over 500 students a year in Senior Inquiry and about 20% of those students end up at PSU, and we receive state revenue for students who complete these courses regardless of whether or not students come to PSU. For some schools the percentage is much higher, for example about 30% of students who take the class at Reynolds High School end up coming to Portland State. From the 2019-2024 cohorts, 87 students have graduated from PSU and some of those are currently enrolled in graduate programs. There are currently 386 students enrolled at PSU who took Senior Inquiry in high school and some of those are students who went and got their bachelor's elsewhere but returned to PSU for graduate school. One student who returned to PSU for grad school recently attended a panel with current

Jefferson Senior Inquiry students because the memory of her time in the course meant so much to her (student communication via email). While the program has always been a space for soft recruitment, schools have signaled receptiveness to heavy recruiting. They have been asking for time with athletes to understand the programs we offer, time in classes and time with faculty who teach in different disciplines to explore pathways. Getting rid of FRINQ and by default Senior Inquiry, will have a negative impact on undergraduate enrollment, structural pathways, reputation, and community trust.

Finally, as mentioned above, FRINQ faculty and mentors play a critical role in fostering student persistence and retention (see annual assessment data). First-year students struggling with academic, personal, or financial issues will often reach out to their FRINQ faculty or mentor first. Even then, by the time students reach out, their problems have often ballooned and require complex interventions. FRINQ faculty and mentors help steer students towards appropriate resources, and with faculty and/or mentor advocacy, students are able to get more timely relief. Without the support of a first-year experience class, students may struggle to navigate support systems at PSU and within the community. This could lead to lower rates of persistence and retention of first-year students.

Recent interventions in FRINQ (AY 24-25), in partnership with the Office of Student Success, show not only alignment with many of the recommendations of the [NISS Report](#), but have had the effect of retaining low-GPA students through the first year at higher rates, as well as increasing metrics of connection and belonging (specifically connection to advising resources). The first year of the program, which garnered a national award from the Association of General and Liberal Studies (a Gen Ed association) has its full report [here](#).

The implementation of the new general education model is of key concern to the instructors who work closely with PSU's first-year students, as it is to all community members who wish to support and retain students. We believe that a clear plan and budget should be included in this proposal before the PSU community is asked to weigh in on changes.

Senior Year Culminating Experience

The proposed model for the culminating experience discusses the idea of emphasizing PSU's motto, "Let Knowledge Serve the City." Missing is a meaningful analysis of the data that we have collected at PSU regarding what is currently working *and* incorporation of the best practices in the field of community-engagement including critical pedagogy, reciprocity and an exploration of the root causes of social and

environmental issues. It could be helpful to engage a handful of departmental faculty as well as experienced PSU Capstone faculty to expand the current criteria for Capstone courses. We encourage the Ad-Hoc General Education Committee steering the proposal to consult closely with PSU faculty and academic professionals with expertise in Capstones and community engagement to craft the final design of the culminating experience. Consultation should be focused on aligning the culminating experience with best practices in the field, inclusive of AAC&U recommendations for high-impact learning.

Eliminating interdisciplinary capstones and focusing instead on major-related career readiness can overlook the fast-changing nature of our economy and the importance of graduating adaptable students with durable, transferable skills. The task force document posits that a new form of culminating experience would "allow disciplinary expertise to make the culminating experience more meaningful, facilitate career development, and avoid forcing students to take a random capstone with no relevance to their major or career path." Currently, the majority of our students have full choice in their Capstone with a range of courses that represent interdisciplinary as well as disciplinary themes. The current "[Capstone Capsule](#)" provides an overview of the current offerings.

Data to consider as we co-create our culminating experience:

Faculty Senate and the wider PSU community should consider an evidenced-based culminating experience which factors in the current data from PSU Capstones including:

- Over the 23-24 and 24-25 academic years, 88%-91% of Capstone students agreed or strongly agreed (in their end of term course evaluations) that they were satisfied with their experience in Capstones compared with the data that 71% of students report being satisfied with their overall educational experience at PSU (2025 Campus-wide Student Experience Survey performed by the Office of Student Success).
- 92% of Capstone students reported that their instructors display personal interest in their learning; 90% feel supported by their Capstone instructors.
- 83–92% report deepened teamwork skills, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and meaningful peer connection.
- 85–86% say Capstones allow them to apply disciplinary knowledge and develop skills they will use in their careers.
- Community partners overwhelmingly state their expectations are met or exceeded, emphasizing increased capacity, enhanced services, and transformational experiences for both their organizations and our students. Data has been collected and incorporated into UNST Assessment Reports which are available to the Faculty Senate.

These data are not incidental—they are the result of decades of intentional evolution with evidence-based and high impact practices including community-engaged learning. These courses are internationally grounded in equity, social justice, collaborative power and authentic, sustained relationships with the community.

PSU's Faculty Senate defines community engaged learning (CEL) as collaborative, reflective, and mutually beneficial. Community-engaged learning involves collaboration among community partners, students, and faculty/staff for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge, experiences, and resources. According to the PSU Faculty Senate-approved description for academic courses bearing the CEL tag, it is important that CEL courses include community-engaged experiences that are central to course outcomes and goals (for all participants) and ask students to reflect critically on their community engagement.

Before the Faculty Senate replaces this program with an unknown structure, we would do well to remember the university's investment in the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement, which the university first earned in 2006 and requires ongoing benchmark data to maintain –which our PSU Capstones serve as a central pillar.

Currently, most PSU graduates leave having participated in a Capstone program course. A community-engaged learning experience that connects their academic studies to real-world challenges in real-world places of work. These experiences are not only high-impact practices; they are, for many students, the moment their education “clicks”—when they begin to see themselves as capable actors in their communities and professions. Without appropriate planning and intention, the proposed "culminating experience" will lack essential best practice elements that facilitate an impactful culminating experience.

The Faculty Senate should consider that whatever form the “senior culminating experience” takes, it remains grounded in community-engaged learning: experiential, reflective, justice-oriented, and deeply connected to Portland and the region's communities.

Assessment as a Core Principle of UNST Practice

The information above is known because the University Studies Program operates on an assessment practice of continuous improvement through iterative change. In addition to knowing what students are learning, this culture of assessment allows us to quickly respond to student needs and curricular imperatives as society changes rapidly around us.

- Students enrolled in Senior Inquiry and FRINQ complete a prior learning survey at the beginning of the year, as well as multiple formal and informal assessments throughout the year so that faculty respond to student learning and feedback in real time.
- Midterm and end-of-term assessments also happen in Sophomore Inquiry and Capstone courses, both to evaluate the delivery of the curriculum and to provide opportunities for students to contribute to the direction of the class.
- The advanced culture of assessment practiced in the first, second, and fourth-years of the curriculum, model the very purpose that is now emerging for general education in society as a whole. Because of the rapidly changing world, especially in the age of AI, what students need most from their general education experience is the development of skills that will allow them to be flexible in the society they inherit (Hutson, J., et.al., 2023).

Expanding the Deadline for General Education Reform at Portland State University: Highlighting Fifteen Major Workload Actions to Complete in Two Years (2026-2028)

The purpose of this section of the document is to troubleshoot the two-year timeline for curricular change in general education given the report's list of new committees, new admin positions, new workshops, and altered budgets for the Office of Academic Innovation (OAI). Below, we highlight how the white paper proposal creates additional workloads for faculty (both TT and NTTF) who are still employed by PSU following expected cuts from the PIVOT process. Additionally, this section calls out the speed of curricular changes in the report, encouraging Senators to reconsider the two-year timeline for the rollout of a new gen ed model.

The table below indicates 15 new workload assignments for faculty, staff, and administrators across the university (e.g., new committees, new staff positions, new budgets). Such workloads are designed to be completed by fall 2028, although it is not clear if such workloads will come from teaching/research releases or additional stipends or count as university service. If the Senate is voting on this this winter or spring 2026, this report suggests that these 15 new workloads must be completed within two years (winter/spring 2026 - fall 2028).

What does the Report ask?	New workloads, new committees per the Report (2025)	Questions highlighting timeline incongruencies and workload concerns for remaining faculty and staff
1. Developing a "Unified Strategic Plan"	"Develop a Unified Strategic Plan: The university should commit to a concerted effort involving various stakeholders to develop a clear set of goals and objectives for UNST to achieve over the next 4-5 years" (10).	When does the clock start for "next" 4-5 years? 4-5 years from which year? The report states that the new general education model will be implemented starting fall 2028 (38).
2. Adopting a "Comprehensive Planning Approach"	"Adopt a Comprehensive Planning Approach: The university must take a comprehensive approach to planning for UNST by linking four key areas: 1. Assessment of student learning related to liberal education goals.	What's the timeline for creating this planning approach? Describe which faculty and staff will be invited to this planning approach?

	<p>2. Retention, completion, graduation, and time-to-degree rates.</p> <p>3. The distinctiveness of PSU's mission and goals.</p> <p>4. Increased internal and external funding necessary to sustain the program" (10).</p>	<p>Will university-wide NTTF teaching in UNST be invited to this planning approach?</p> <p>What are the teaching/research workload releases to complete such a planning approach?</p>
3. Engaging with other colleges and universities	<p>"Sustain External Engagement: Maintain ongoing engagement with other colleges, universities, and regional community colleges to learn how to best position UNST in the rapidly evolving national higher education environment" (10).</p>	<p>For this work to be "sustained" and not ad hoc, this work needs centralized faculty and staff.</p> <p>Who will be doing this work?</p> <p>What are the teaching/research workload releases for this work?</p>
4. Writing assessment	<p>"Writing Assessment: PSU must make a budgetary investment in formative assessment for all student groups—incoming freshmen, transfer students, and students in capstones—to accurately gauge readiness and ability" (13).</p>	<p>When will this assessment begin?</p> <p>Who will create the "formative assessment"?</p> <p>What's the timeline for implementing this assessment?</p> <p>Given that writing is being assessed across disciplines, how will you ensure that all faculty from all disciplines create the assessment tools (i.e., writing rubrics)?</p> <p>What happens when students do not do well on this assessment. Right now we meet them where they are at in FRINQ and build skills. BUT does this result in creating multiple 000 level classes so students can work their way up to WR 121 competencies? This is what happens currently with the math assessment.</p>
5. Newly formed University Writing Committee's "regular interaction"	<p>"Leadership Team: The newly formed University Writing Committee and the Academic Leadership Team should structure regular interaction to provide leadership for Improvement" (13).</p>	<p>How do we define regular interaction?</p>
6. "Writing Inventory"	<p>"Writing Inventory: PSU should develop a Writing Inventory (a descriptive, non-evaluative tool) to determine the current expectations, practices, and outcomes across all Departments" (13)</p>	<p>What's the timeline for creating this inventory?</p> <p>Who will create such an inventory?</p> <p>What are the workload releases for this work?</p>

<p>7. Creating a new Writing-across-the-Curriculum Program</p>	<p>“WAC Program: PSU needs to create a new, well-funded Writing-across-the-Curriculum (WAC) program with a dedicated Director who reports to the Provost’s office. This is the optimal way to address the needs of the large transfer student population” (14).</p>	<p>What’s the timeline for creating this new, “well-funded” program?</p> <p>How will staff be trained to teach “Writing in the Disciplines” as teaching writing is a skill most current faculty are not trained in?</p> <p>FRINQ is an example of writing across the curriculum.</p> <p>How will this new program address the needs of multilingual learners (42% of our first-year students population) since the program that provided support to these students (IELP) was eliminated?</p>
<p>8. Creating a new implementation committee for the transition plan</p>	<p>“The implementation committee will create a transition plan, working closely with the Registrar’s Office. The implementation committee should develop a completion plan that continues to offer UNST courses for 6 years or map a transition that does not require students to complete UNST requirements and does not unduly burden students by having them take more credits and costing more money” (37).</p> <p>“Academic years 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 will be critical periods for the implementation of a new model by fall 2028. During these two years, the campus will need to engage in curricular revision work and establish the governance and administration of the GE model” (38).</p>	<p>Who will form this implementation committee?</p> <p>What will be the workload releases for members of this committee, if any?</p> <p>When will the six-year plan of offering UNST courses begin and end?</p> <p>Who will be teaching those courses during those six years?</p> <p>What will be the transition process for community partnerships?</p>
<p>9. Requiring a budget re-structuring for the Office of Academic Innovation (OAI) & offering buyouts for faculty</p>	<p>“Existing resources on campus will also need to be allocated to this effort. For example, this process will require OAI’s budget priorities be focused on supporting the general education effort and faculty and academic departments as they prepare to become the “sites” of general education. We recommend OAI’s budget be used to compensate or buy-out faculty with university teaching experience and pedagogical expertise to design and facilitate institutes, working groups, and communities of practice for other faculty” (38).</p>	<p>When will the Administration announce the restructured OAI budget if the deadline for new curriculum and teaching practices be in place by fall 2028?</p>

10. Redesigning new general education courses per department by fall 2027.	“Also during AY 26-27, faculty and departments should be redesigning and developing curricula for the new GE courses and related changes to curricula in the majors; OAI would need to be structured to support these efforts. In Fall 2027, academic departments will submit redesigned or developed courses for the GE categories” (38).	If all departments will be creating new general education (GE) syllabi by fall 2027, what support will OAI provide during the winter 2026 through fall 2027? If SLO are not available until June 2027 - how are departments supposed to work on redesign? Academic departments are supposed to submit, redesign, and develop courses from Aug 27- Nov 27. More than ½ of this time occurs when most faculty are not on contract, how is this going to be funded?
11. Creating a university-wide general education (GE) assessment coordinator	“A new GE model will require an assessment coordinator to oversee GE assessment across the University” (40).	For a university this size, will this office be composed of only one (GE) assessment coordinator? Will departments or colleges create assessment coordinators for their discipline or colleges so that GE assessment is authentic to the diverse disciplines?
12. Creating one faculty-lead Curriculum Committee	“The Finance & Data Task Force subcommittee highlighted the need for one faculty-led Curriculum Committee with subcommittees for different curricular components that is overseen by a centralized Gen Ed administrative office housed in OAA” (40)	Given that this general education (GE) assessment in the disciplines is new to PSU, will workloads be offered during the first 2-3 years of this transition plan?
13, 14, 15. Creating three subcommittees of the undergraduate curriculum	“We recommend one undergraduate curriculum that oversees all aspects of the undergraduate curriculum with separate subcommittees for each component of the undergraduate curriculum (e.g., First Year Seminar/Transfer Bridge; Culminating Experiences; Core Literacies; Ways of Knowing” (40).	Given that this general education (GE) assessment in the disciplines is new to PSU, will workloads be offered during the first 2-3 years of this transition plan?

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Signed by*

*Due to the December Break and that the Report was shared with us after final grades were posted, we will share an updated signatory page after January 5:

Leanne Serbulo, Associate Professor, University Studies

Rowanna Carpenter, Director of Assessment and Research, University Studies

Óscar Fernández, Assistant Professor of Teaching, University Studies

Neera Malhotra, Assistant Professor of Teaching, University Studies

Sarah Dougher, Associate Executive Director and Teaching Assistant Professor,
University Studies

Meredith Michaud, Director of Mentor Programs, University Studies

Sonja Taylor, Senior Inquiry Director and Assistant Professor of Teaching, University
Studies

Gareth Mitchell, Teaching Assistant Professor, University Studies

David Osborn, Adjunct Assistant Professor, University Studies

Celine Fitzmaurice, Teaching Associate Professor and Faculty Support Facilitator,
University Studies

Michelle Swinehart, Teaching Assistant Professor, University Studies

Daneen Bergland, Teaching Associate Professor, University Studies

Zapoura Newton-Calvert, Teaching Associate Professor, University Studies

Joel Bettridge, Professor, English and University Studies

Norene Hough, Senior Instructor and Director of Undergraduate Programs, Toulan
School of Urban Studies and Planning

Anmarie Trimble, Teaching Associate Professor, University Studies

Gisela Rodriguez Fernandez, Teaching Assistant Professor, University Studies

Molly Gray, Senior Instructor II, University Studies

Rick Hugo, Teaching Assistant Professor, University Studies

Michael Lupro, Teaching Associate Professor, University Studies

Moshe Rachmuth, Associate Professor, Department of World Languages and Literatures

Heather Petzold, Senior Instructor II, University Studies

David Percy, Teaching Assistant Professor, University Studies

Appendix:

Below are questions that we would ask all community members to consider before agreeing to make the proposed changes to the general education program

Where is the data that shows FRINQ students aren't writing well?

The information included in the writing section of the report are from 2013 and 2014. Since then, UNST has assessed student writing in several ways. This assessment is reflected in UNST Annual assessment reports from [2015](#), [2019](#), [2023](#), and [2024](#).

As the purpose of a liberal arts education is to provide students with experience in broad knowledge, critical thinking, and adaptable skills (communication, problem-solving) for navigating change and diverse careers, how will focusing first-year experience on the meta-major model provide a robust interdisciplinary experience that matches or exceeds the success of the current model?

The proposed model contains different buckets of requirements, but **it does not provide students with an opportunity to explore how these ways of knowing are interconnected**. How will students integrate the knowledge they gain from the various buckets of requirements?

During the first and second years of the UNST program, students engage in **inquiry-based learning**. What types of pedagogies are associated with the proposed model? Is there any pedagogical coherence among the various components?

Many of the core and shared-line faculty in the UNST program conduct research on the scholarship of teaching and learning and are active members of general

education-related professional organizations. Will the faculty who will be designing and teaching the new courses and curriculum be expected to engage with the scholarship of teaching and learning and to keep up with the latest research on general education?

FRINQ and SINQ courses are currently capped at 38 students. While our class sizes exceed the recommended cap for writing-intensive courses, this relatively small class size allows students to build a strong sense of community with one another. Will courses in the new model be capped at a reasonable class size that facilitates active learning, or will they be large lecture courses?

FRINQ courses currently enroll from across departments with about 30 well enrolled classes each year, offering flexibility of time, modality, and topic to meet student interest & needs. Under this proposal, if students were taking only one class within a meta-major, students would be far more limited in choices. This may result in under-enrolled classes or smaller classes. This may result in further delays to graduation as this new model will be less flexible and not as easily adaptable to students' lives.

The majority of first year students are first generation and 42% speak a language other than English at home. Like transfer students, many first-year students are juggling work and family responsibilities as they make the transition from high school to college. How will the faculty teaching these students address their unique strengths and challenges? How will faculty teaching the new general education classes address the needs of students whose prior education did not prepare them for college-level coursework? What research-based strategies will faculty use to help students successfully transition from high school to college-level coursework?

University Studies pays a portion of the salaries of shared-line faculty. If the UNST program is abolished, will these faculty be guaranteed a 1.0 position with their departments? How will this impact their home departments' budgets?

Junior cluster courses are often highly enrolled. How will the loss of "U" courses impact departments? Could the loss of these courses leave them vulnerable to further cuts?

Why did the task force ignore the data they collected from symposium participants? Sixty percent of respondents selected a 2 or 3-term first-year seminar as their first option, yet the task force recommended a 1-term FRINQ course.

Who is on tap to teach first-year courses in this proposal? Would it be tenured and tenure-track departmental faculty? How will PSU support faculty development needs of

onboarding, teaching and continuing professional development in general education (especially first-year students)?

Since most if not all of the current inconsistency noted in the proposal can be traced to decades of budgetary and other administrative decisions/erosion, what can be built into a new program that protects the faculty support necessary to teach effective, student-centered best-practice curriculum, that is taught by faculty (to promote ongoing relationships between students and faculty) and not off-loaded onto grad students and adjuncts?

How can we make sure that the challenges of teaching first-year students are recognized in tenure review? (Thus not perpetuating the real issue that faculty teaching first-year students are not recognized for their expertise?)

Did the task force consider adding a WR122 requirement in addition to the scaffolded FRINQ experience to get at the goal of additional writing practice?

How will PSU intentionally engage current Capstone faculty and administrators in the process of more closely aligning Capstones with departmental faculty? The General Education Task Force Report mentions the adoption of current Capstone partners in newly developed departmental Capstone courses. We recommend that work takes place very carefully with the current Capstone Director and Capstone faculty to ensure that we don't unintentionally cause harm in the relationships with long-standing community partners. This work will impact PSU's reputation in the community, so must be done thoughtfully and strategically. The willingness of current community organizations to continue to partner with PSU will depend on how we manage these conversations.

How is it hoped that the proposed changes impact student persistence and retention?

How will the proposed model support multilingual students? Will faculty teaching the writing classes be given training and support in how to effectively teach writing to multilingual students?

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 80% of college students will change their majors at least once during their academic career. Portland State used to recognize this reality by providing tailored support to "exploratory" students. How will the proposed model support exploratory students? Students who switch their majors have a slightly higher completion rate than those that don't. With the emphasis on "meta

majors” and major-specific career readiness, will students who change their majors be disadvantaged?

Can an informed subcommittee get formed to craft a senior culminating experience that both broadens the PSU definition of Capstones, engages departments more deeply and reflects best practices in the field of community engagement?

Can we be clear and honest about the labor dynamics of this proposal? Whose jobs are proposed to be cut and within what timeline?

Did the authors of this proposal read any of the literature on the best practices in general education? Did they consult with respected organizations within this field like AGLS or AAC&U?

Did task force leadership review the extensive assessment data from UNST? Did members of the task force who don't teach first-year students or community-based learning courses interview UNST affiliated faculty who have experience and expertise in these areas? Did the task force conduct a serious program review before proposing this new model? If so, how does this new model improve upon the current one? Is the new model grounded in the literature around best practices in general education? Did the authors of this proposal review any of the literature about teaching first generation, multilingual and multicultural students? Did the task force consider the needs of students with disabilities when crafting this proposal?