

## **2021 Proposed General Education Model**

### **1.0 USM (COMAR) Requirements**

General Education at any University System of Maryland Public Institution must include within its framework 8 COMAR requirements in each of the 5 following areas:

- 2 courses in Arts and Humanities
- 2 courses in Social and Behavioral Sciences
- 2 Science courses, at least one of which shall be a laboratory course
- 1 course in Mathematics beyond Maryland College and Career Ready Standards
- 1 course in English composition, completed with a C- or better

In addition to these 8 required courses, COMAR requires that each degree program include at a minimum 38 semester hours and at a maximum 48 semester hours of General Education instruction. Moreover, in addition to the 8 required courses, institutions may include up to 8 additional semester hours in coursework outside of these 5 areas.

### **2.0 Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) at SU**

Prior work completed by the Provost-elected GESC and its associated working groups sought faculty input through a number of open-session meetings to identify aspects of the general education program at SU that meet the needs of our students, and ideas for improvement. From these discussions came a re-envisioned list of Student Learning Goals and Outcomes designed to foster the personal, intellectual, and social development of the Salisbury University student. This work culminated in a list of 3 Student Learning Goals: *Essential Competencies*, *Foundational Knowledge*, and *Personal, Social, and Cultural Responsibilities*. Student achievement of these Goals are met by evaluating 18 different outcomes associated with the 3 categories. At the recommendation of the GESC, the Faculty Senate approved these Student Learning Goals and Outcomes on November 20, 2018. In accordance with MSCHE, the Faculty Senate and GESC concurred that both periodic assessment of student learning would be evaluated, as would periodic review of the approved Student Learning Goals and Outcomes every 3 years.

Identification and adoption of the approved 2018 Student Learning Goals and Outcomes was the first step in creating a more impactful (and measurable) General Education program at SU. The next step was to map these 18 outcomes onto the current General Education model. The mapping of these SLOs was facilitated by an online survey, which asked faculty to review and report the alignment of the SLOs with their General Education courses. Only faculty who teach or have taught General Education courses at SU were included in this analysis. In addition to self-reporting the SLOs they currently include in their coursework, faculty were also asked to rank the outcomes they identified in terms of how relevant and/or important they were to their General Education area. The top 3-5 SLOs were selected for each category area in the model architecture and SLOs for the proposed model were populated based on anticipated courses from the current model fulfilled novel category areas.

### **3.0 Stand-Alone SLOs**

Following the faculty poll and mapping of student learning outcomes onto the current and proposed models, 4 SLOs remained that did not clearly fall within existing categories (COMAR plus FYS and Experiential Learning). These were: Wellness, Diversity and Inclusion, Civic and Community Engagement, and Environmental Sustainability.

Treatment of the Wellness SLO was facilitated through creation of a standing category specific to that particular SLO, which will focus on each of the 3 dimensions of wellness: financial, physical, and emotional components of a healthy, successful life.

The remaining 3 SLOs are treated as 3 separate floating categories that students must complete before fulfilling their general education requirements at SU. The floating category is effective and necessary since faculty from different disciplines across campus teach courses in these areas which means that these 3 SLOs do not fit perfectly into a singular category or COMAR area. Every student who attends SU must complete at least one course for each of these 3 SLOs. Students may take more than the required number of courses, but cannot substitute one of these SLOs by taking more than one of the others. Courses that meet these SLOs may be completed and simultaneously fulfill COMAR category areas. Moreover, students may complete these SLOs through pre-approved coursework within their majors.

### **4.0 High Impact Practices (HIPS)**

High-impact practices (HIPS) are the systematic and purposeful use of active learning practices that are beneficial to students across a broad background that contribute to student cumulative learning. Additionally, HIPS have been shown to increase rates of student retention and engagement. Examples of high-impact practices include, but are not limited to: First-Year Experiences, Learning Communities, Writing-Intensive Courses, Undergraduate Research, Internships, and Capstone Courses and Projects.

**First-Year Seminar** style courses are offered to Living Learning Communities (LLCs) and through HONR 111 courses at SU. Analysis of retention and graduation rates of students at Salisbury University demonstrate that those who participated in LLCs had a higher retention rate (87% vs. 81%), GPA (3.16 vs. 2.98), and student satisfaction than those freshman-year students who did not participate in one. The increase in these desired outcomes is credited to time management, peer-supported learning, and small section size from the program. The success of this program at SU and the faculty support of widespread implementation of this initiative during open sessions hosted by working groups demonstrated the practicality and utility of this SU requirement. Successful implementation of FYS courses at SU will bring together students in small section sizes (ca. 20 students) to facilitate frequent writing and revision, information literacy, and critical inquiry as it pertains to an overarching question or topic pertaining to an individual faculty members' area of specialization. The implementation of this course will provide SU faculty with the opportunity to engage with the nearly 50% of students who enter SU with transfer or test credits fulfilling ENGL 103. While some transfer students may demonstrate skills and coursework at other institutions consistent with FYS student learning outcomes, the vast majority of the students who test out of or transfer in credits for ENGL 103 will still be

required to complete this course. Implementation of the First Year Seminar will be consistent with lessons learned from comparable institutions to ensure its success at SU.

**Experiential Learning** opportunities at SU include (but are not limited to) internships, undergraduate research, study abroad/away, upper-division seminars, senior exhibitions, senior recitals, and directed consulting. This SU requirement will require students to extend their general education learning into their Junior and Senior years and will highlight the importance of SU's commitment to applied learning, critical thinking, and experiences.

### **5.0 2021 Proposed General Education Model**

The following General Education Model includes within its framework the 8 COMAR requirements as well as 3 courses unique to the Salisbury University experience: Personal Wellness, a First-Year Seminar, and an Experiential Learning course. This model ensures all SU students have opportunities to achieve our Student Learning Outcomes with courses across the curriculum. In addition to these 11 requirements, students must also complete courses in the so-called signature elements – courses that are pre-approved in the areas of Diversity and Inclusion, Civic and Community Engagement, and Environmental Sustainability.

Overall, the 2021 Proposed General Education Model:

- ✓ Meets USM COMAR minimum requirements in coursework. Advising care must be taken in order to ensure students meet the COMAR minimum credit threshold because it's possible students may complete the program of study 1 credit short of the minimum of 38.
- ✓ Provides overt and intentional connection to student learning outcomes within each category of general education.
- ✓ Reduces student courses requirements from 12 to 11. Advising care must be considered here once again – if students are not careful about taking the 3 floating category courses (Diversity and Inclusion, Civic and Community Engagement, and Environmental Sustainability), in concurrence with a COMAR requirement, then coursework requirements could increase to 14.
- ✓ Most student major checklists will continue to experience 3 (and in some cases 4) “fulfilled by major” exceptions to general education program requirements. However, with reduction from 12 to 11 courses, students may find that they are completing the course of study with one fewer overall course than currently (3-4 credits). This will modestly reduce credit count issues for some of the professional programs across campus, while simultaneously providing students with credit hours they can complete in additional coursework of their choosing within general education, or within upper level coursework of their major.
- ✓ Incorporates HIPS and best practices within general education for all students attending SU, while highlighting floating category areas that contain SLOs that are central to SU's mission.