In spring 2013, a Task Force was charged by Faculty Senate and the Provost’s Office to propose a revision to General Education that would enable students to acquire the skills, knowledge, and experiences for living and working in interconnected and globalized contexts so they can contribute to making life better for others, themselves, and the larger world. Since that time, over 90 task force members (comprised of senators, faculty, administrators, academic advisers, and students representing all colleges and campuses) have participated in conversations throughout the University, drawn upon scholarship on General Education, and have deliberated on what matters about General Education.

The Task Force reached consensus to create a Gen Ed curriculum that:

- Is distinctive and capitalizes on Penn State’s research and educational strengths as a world-class public research institution with an extensive variety of academic opportunities
- Reflects the strengths of our faculty and the needs of our students at all Penn State locations
- Is flexible and allows for multiple pathways for all student populations

Through General Education, all Penn State Students will:

1. Strengthen Communication
2. Establish Literacy in Key Areas
3. Develop Critical and Integrative Thinking
4. Practice Social Responsibility and Ethical Thinking
5. Develop Intercultural Knowledge and Competence
6. Foster Intellectual Curiosity

In achieving these overarching goals, the General Education curriculum will also:

- Require students to take coursework in all five knowledge domains (arts, humanities, health and physical activity, social sciences, and natural sciences).
- Require students to achieve a minimum level of numeracy prior to graduation
- Make engaged scholarship opportunities available, although they should not be required.
- Place a limit on curricular overlap between general education and major degree coursework.

The Task Force affirmed that:

Teaching general education is important. Faculty teaching in the general education curriculum should be supported and encouraged to create and deliver outstanding general education courses.

Assessment of student learning and the curriculum are essential.
The “Ideal” General Education Curriculum

While many logistical, budgetary, and communication challenges remain to be explored, the Task Force agreed to start from a curricular ideal informed by national research on General Education and constructed around the intended student learning outcomes.

The Curricular Model
To enable students to meet these learning objectives, the curriculum will consist of three components: skills, themes and exploration:

Skills
• The first year of the General Education curriculum will be an introductory experience in which the learning objectives focus on cultivating foundational abilities in speaking, writing, visual and digital communication, and on developing the habits of public deliberation necessary for the engaged citizens of the twenty-first century.
• All students should demonstrate a minimum level of numeracy.

Themes
• To provide opportunities for integration of disciplinary perspectives and for increasing depth of learning in general education, themes will be a collection of courses, spanning multiple knowledge domains, taught around a central, unifying topic.
• Themes will be developed and proposed by faculty working in collaboration. The faculty of a campus will propose the themes available at that campus.
• No course in a theme may also be counted for a student’s primary major.

Explorations
• Any General Education course can be taken for exploration. Exploration courses provide students flexibility, and the opportunity to further broaden their range of disciplinary perspectives.