

GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

MISSION STATEMENT

General education at Appalachian is anchored in the ideals and practices of liberal education and is designed to prepare students to fulfill the responsibilities and meet the challenges presented by a changing world. By engaging in the discovery, interpretation, and creation of knowledge throughout the undergraduate curriculum and becoming involved in educationally focused co-curricular activities, students learn to adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from diverse sources, and continue learning throughout their lives. Recognizing the growing significance of an interconnected world, Appalachian's general education program also encourages meaningful connections between local regions, especially in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, and global contexts.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Appalachian's general education program prepares students for

- I. Thinking critically and creatively**
- II. Communicating effectively**
- III. Making local to global connections**
- IV. Understanding responsibilities of community membership**

I. Thinking critically and creatively

RATIONALE:

Appalachian's general education program seeks to cultivate lifelong learners who can understand, question, revise, and generate knowledge through thinking that is both *critical* in its analysis and evaluation of knowledge and *creative* in its integration and generation of knowledge. Critical and creative thinkers are conscious of how their own positions as well as the history of ideas influence their thought, and they also adjust their thinking as they interpret, evaluate, and reflect based on increasingly sophisticated intellectual values. Critical and creative thought requires the ability to integrate knowledge from a variety of domains and to transfer knowledge from one domain to another, while at the same time recognizing the distinctiveness and limitations of different methodologies and theoretical paradigms. This ability is best fostered by a combination of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to learning and by the employment of a variety of critical and creative strategies, including reading, writing, observing, quantifying, using the scientific method, translating, creating, and performing.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will

- A. Recognize, differentiate, and effectively employ appropriate and increasingly sophisticated strategies to collect and interpret information;
- B. Successfully integrate disparate concepts and information when interpreting, solving problems, evaluating, creating, and making decisions;
- C. Examine and evaluate how their own personal, historical, and cultural perspectives affect the discovery and generation of knowledge;
- D. Construct persuasive arguments in increasingly complex contexts;
- E. Apply theories from a variety of disciplines and advance convincing reasons to connect as well as differentiate theories from different domains of knowledge.

II. Communicating effectively

RATIONALE:

The general education program prepares students to employ modes of communication that can help communities reach both authentic consensus and respectful disagreement. In a two-way interaction, communicating effectively leads to discovery and productive changes in the sender, who may be a writer, speaker, dancer, musician, visual artist, or actor, as well as in the receiver, who may be listening, reading, or watching. As both senders and receivers, successful communicators interact effectively with people of both similar and different experiences and values. They adapt their communication skills with increasing fluency and sophistication to new and increasingly complex situations. Communicating effectively requires sophisticated reading skills in conjunction with a high level of quantitative, technological, and information literacy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will

- A. Articulate and comprehend effectively, using verbal or non-verbal communication suitable to topic, purpose, and audience;
- B. Use writing effectively to discover and develop ideas and to articulate positions in contexts of increasing complexity;
- C. Make rhetorical decisions appropriate to topic, purpose, and audience while correctly using the conventions of standard written English;
- D. Determine the scope of information needed in specific research contexts and successfully identify, locate, evaluate, use, and communicate information from various media;
- E. Read actively and analytically at the college level and synthesize and apply information and ideas from their reading across disciplines;
- F. Know, apply, and communicate college-level quantitative concepts and methods;
- G. Select and use hardware, software applications, databases, and other technologies effectively for both inquiry and communication.

III. Making local to global connections

RATIONALE:

Appalachian State University is both in and of the southern Appalachian region, and it is also part of a world that is globally connected. Life in the twenty-first century requires an understanding of the connections and multi-layered interactions among diverse local and global human cultures, as well as between humans and the natural and physical environments. In this context, the general education program helps to cultivate an active understanding of global change and the effect of human agency on both natural and cultural environments. Students should understand the importance of biodiversity, ecological integrity, and the need to achieve sustainable benefits for communities. Knowledge of other cultures, diverse cultural frames of reference, and alternative perspectives are essential to thinking critically and creatively and to understanding the responsibilities of membership in local, regional, and global communities. The cultivation and maintenance of intercultural relationships require active cultural understanding, which is achieved by exploring multiple strategies for interacting with other peoples and cultures.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will

- A. Analyze past and present relationships between humans and the natural and physical environment;
- B. Evaluate community, natural, and global change through the lens of sustainability;
- C. Demonstrate the ability to think critically and creatively about the relationship between local regions and global issues, processes, trends, and systems;
- D. Demonstrate knowledge of contemporary issues related to cultural diversity in the United States and other areas of the world;
- E. Employ appropriate and increasingly sophisticated means for communicating with people of other cultures.

IV. Understanding responsibilities of community membership

RATIONALE:

General education prepares academically skilled and engaged citizens capable of contributing to the betterment of society and taking responsibility for the common good. Responsible contribution to a vibrant democracy governed by the rule of law requires a basic understanding of the ways in which governments, economies, and societies function. Moral reasoning skills, necessary in a world characterized by often conflicting beliefs and attitudes, enable students to reflect critically on ethical issues and to make reasoned, intelligent judgments about complex moral problems. Effective moral reasoning includes questioning one's own assumptions and beliefs, understanding the reasoning of others, and accepting disagreement about important matters. An understanding of the broad range of past and present moral positions should be accompanied by shared beliefs regarding honesty, integrity, and obligation to others. In addition, fostering the well-being and personal development of students will help them lead thoughtful and purposeful lives in their communities.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will

- A. Identify potential consequences that personal choices as well as political, economic, and other social forces may have on individual, societal, and environmental health;
- B. Apply moral reasoning skills to an array of ethical issues confronted by individuals, groups, and communities;
- C. Collaborate effectively with others in shared processes of inquiry and problem-solving;
- D. Apply principles of responsible community membership within and beyond the campus community.