UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC

RENOVATING PACIFIC’S
FULL FIRST-YEAR MENTOR PROGRAM

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER’S 25TH ANNUAL
CONFERENCE ON THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE

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CURRENT MENTOR SEMINAR PROGRAM

Mentor Seminar I: Timeless Questions
(First Semester)

A shared intellectual experience. A discussion-oriented course with a uniform syllabus and common course reader that has historical and contemporary material from the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Course reader contains five chapters: **What are knowledge and its value? Where do humans come from? How do humans differ from one another? How should humans live? What is a good life?** 40 sections offered with average class size of 22. **Skills:** critical thinking about timeless questions; extensive writing; and oral presentations. Some sections are linked with a breadth program course.

Mentor Seminar II: Today’s Decisions
(Second Semester)

Discussion-oriented course with uniform syllabus throughout much of the course. Focus is on contemporary social issues and the role that citizens can play in shaping social policies. Students work in groups to choose and write a public policy paper on topics such as poverty, immigration, crime, racism and sexism, and environmental issues. About 40% of the sections include a service learning component that is to connect to students’ policy papers. 40 sections offered each spring with average class size of 22. **Skills:** critical thinking about social issues; writing; retrieving, evaluating, and documenting sources; working in small groups; and oral presentations.
Chronology of Process to Improve the First-Year Program

Step 1: Creation of Self-Study Teams to Examine All Aspects of GE Program for Program Review, fall-summer 2003

Step 2: Reaction to Self-Study Report by Jerry Gaff, External Reviewer, November 25, 2003

“My overall assessment is that although the University has an adequate general education program, it appears to be tired and needs to be re-vitalized. The evidence is widespread…the program was designed and implemented largely by an older generation of faculty, many of whom are retiring; and the faculty who have been hired since the program was initiated do not seem intellectually excited by it … Although the syllabi are impressive as courses and the faculty meet regularly to plan them and to coordinate the teaching of them, these seminars seem to have lost the commitment of the faculty—and probably students—across the University…My recommendation is that the University take a fresh look at its general education curriculum with the aim of devising a more distinctive program that—along with a major—could become the centerpiece of the education of all students and a ‘signature program’ for the University.”

Step 3: Agreement by GE Review Monitoring Team to Reexamine First-Year Program, June 2004

Step 4: Formation of Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on First-Year, September 2004

Step 5: Distribution of Faculty Survey and Results, September-October 2004

Question: Currently, both Mentor I and Mentor II have a common syllabus. Rank the following possible reconfigurations of the first-year experience based on what would be the most desirable in which to teach.

Keep both courses basically as they are with minor modifications. Mean Score = 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = most desirable</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 = next desirable</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = least desirable</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
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Allow much more faculty autonomy in one or both courses but retain some common content. Mean Score = 1.85

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<td>No response</td>
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Keep one course as a “common” course and make one course into a discipline-based course in which faculty choose the content yet there is a common skill set across sections. Mean score: 1.7

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<td>2 = next desirable</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = least desirable</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
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**Step 6: Recommendations of Ad Hoc Faculty Committee, January 2005**

**MENTOR SEMINARS I & II: WHAT IS A GOOD SOCIETY?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Seminar I: What is a Good Society?</th>
<th>Mentor Seminar II: Topical Seminars on a Good Society</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uniform syllabus and shared intellectual experience. Interdisciplinary reader with material from natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. <strong>Possible sub-themes:</strong> ‘The Importance of Education and Self-Reflection,’ ‘Ethics and Citizenship,’ ‘Understanding Identity and Difference’ ‘Religion in Public Life,’ and ‘Human Relationship to the Natural Environment.’ <strong>Skills:</strong> writing, critical reading and thinking, speaking, group work.</td>
<td>Innovative seminars specifically designed for first-year students connected to the theme of a Good Society. Students list top five preferences during spring registration. <strong>Skills:</strong> writing, critical reading and thinking, learning to do scholarly research, speaking, and group work. Faculty will be encouraged to offer service learning opportunities.</td>
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**Assessment of Mentor I and II: Portfolio Assessment of Content and Skills**

**Improvements on current program:**

- a direct thematic connection between Mentor I and Mentor II based on the question, “What is a Good Society?,” an issue that is central to the liberal arts and general education.
- a program that fosters more interdisciplinary contact among faculty due to the direct thematic connection between the two semesters.
- a revitalization of the Mentor program that will garner wider faculty support, as evidenced by the results of the GE faculty survey.
- a program that makes it possible to have course assignments in the second semester that incorporate material or content from the first semester as well as a program that makes thematic content assessment of the entire first-year experience possible.
- a stronger thematic connection to Mentor Seminar III, which has been reframed around the three ethical contexts of family/friends, work, and citizenship, contexts that are basic to a Good Society.
- a structure to the first-year experience that is nationally distinctive based on data from the National Research Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, which tracks first-year programs.
Goals of New Program:

To create a thematically connected two-semester intellectual experience for students and faculty.
To expose students to the different disciplines at the university as a “living university catalog.”
To introduce students to the different theoretical frameworks and methodologies that can be used to analyze issues that are central to the theme of a good society, a theme at the core of the liberal arts and general education.
To develop the skills that are essential to understanding the issues of a good society and that are transferable to later study at the university, such as writing, critical thinking, doing scholarly research, speaking well, and working in groups.
To promote the excitement for learning at the university and afterward.

Monitoring of Topical Seminars:

Topical seminar syllabi must be approved by the GE Committee.
Faculty must submit some student portfolios to verify assignment of required work and to serve as means of assessment.

Step 7: GE Committee Approval of Ad Hoc Faculty Committee Recommendations, January 2005

Step 8: Approval by Academic Affairs, April 2005


REVISED MENTOR PROGRAM

Pacific Seminar I: What is a Good Society?  
(First Semester)

A shared intellectual experience. Discussion-oriented course with a uniform syllabus and common course reader that has historical and contemporary material from the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Reader contains four chapters: **Education; Private Life and Civil Society; Politics, Law & Citizenship; Human Relationship to the Natural World.** 40 sections offered with average class size of 20. **Skills:** critical thinking about what a good society is; extensive writing; and oral presentations. Some sections will be linked with a breadth program course.

Pacific Seminar II: Seminars on a Good Society  
(Second Semester)

Discussion-oriented seminars specifically designed for first-year students that examine in depth a theme or themes from Pacific Seminar I. Students will identify top 8 choices of seminars during registration. Examples of seminars are ‘The Value of Truth,’ ‘The Good City,’ ‘What is Good Food?’, and ‘Energy Resources for a Good Society.’ 40 sections offered each spring with average class size of 20. **Skills:** critical thinking about issues of a good society; writing (minimum of 20 formal pages); retrieving, evaluating, and documenting sources; a required oral presentation. Some sections might incorporate service-learning.
Chapter One: Education

(1) Ends of Education
(2) Theories of Education
(3) Education and Class/Politics

Chapter Two: Family and Civil Society

(1) Family
(2) Work and the Economy
(3) Cultural Life

Chapter Three: Politics, Law, Citizenship

(1) Purpose of Law and Government
(2) Rights and Duties of Citizens
(3) Nations in a Global Society

Chapter Four: Human Relationship to the Natural World

(1) Place of Humans in the Natural World
(2) Sustainable Use of Natural Resources
(3) Environmental Engagement
PACIFIC SEMINAR II
SAMPLE SEMINARS

The Value of Truth (Philosophy)

The Good City (Political Science)

Pseudoscience, Voodoo Science, and Junk Science (Psychology)

Energy Resources for a Good Society (Geosciences)

You Got Class: Exploring the U.S. Education System (Sociology)

Divided by Faith: Living with our Deepest Differences (Religious Studies)

What is Good Food? (History)

The Pursuit of Happiness (General Education)

Business, Government, and Society (Business)

Technology and Society (Engineering)

Avant-garde Art & Politics (Visual Arts)

Indian Lifeways for a Changing World (Education)

The Value and Limits of Free Speech (English)

What’s the Verdict? Responsibility and Punishment (Philosophy)
PACIFIC SEMINAR II
GUIDELINES

Topical Seminars must directly address the fundamental question of Pacific Seminar I, “What is a Good Society?” Seminars will develop some aspect of one of the broad four themes of Pacific Seminar I.

Topical Seminars must be designed for a general audience and not for majors. They will not satisfy any major or minor requirement. The seminars will be open to all students regardless of major.

Topical Seminars must include formal writing assignments. One of these assignments must be a scholarly research paper that demonstrates critical thinking and that develops students’ ability to identify, evaluate, and document sources. The total amount of typed, formal written work must at least be 20 pages per student. There must also be enough assignments to give students regular feedback, either through several separate assignments or through a cumulative project with regular feedback throughout the term.

Students must deliver at least one formal oral presentation in the topical seminar.

There are different ways that faculty can create topical seminars. They might collaborate with their departmental colleagues to create a seminar or two that several people in their department could teach. They might collaborate with colleagues from different departments and/or units to create a seminar. Or they might work independently to create the seminar that reflects their personal interests.

In order to assess whether the course learning objectives are being met, those teaching topical seminars must submit to the Associate Dean of General Education a few complete portfolios of student work at the end of course.

Topical Seminars must be approved by the GE Committee in the spring prior to the year the course is offered in order to ensure that the course conforms to general expectations. The GE Committee retains the authority to approve GE courses.
PACIFIC’S GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM
MISSION

Pacific’s general education program balances the depth of study in a major with a broad introduction to different academic areas and disciplines. Students are exposed to various ways critical thought is organized, and they develop fundamental skills—such as writing, analytical thinking, critical reading, quantitative analysis, and oral presentation skills—that are transferable to any kind of study. The exposure to different areas of study and the development of intellectual and practical skills promote the mission of Pacific’s general education: self-understanding, citizenship, and career development.

Self-Understanding

One goal of Pacific’s general education program is fundamentally personal: to enrich students’ self-understanding and expand their interests in preparation for a fulfilling life. Students are exposed to new intellectual, moral, spiritual, and aesthetic possibilities. Through the interaction with others from different backgrounds and the study of different disciplines, students come to understand who they are and the sources of their beliefs. They thus gain the skills to identify, express and analyze their beliefs and to fashion a philosophy of life that can guide them in their future endeavors. Students may also find life-long pleasure in learning, self-reflection, and conversation.

Citizenship

Another goal is to produce engaged and informed citizens who advance a democratic society by contributing to political and civil life and by committing themselves to the service of others. General education fosters the skills to evaluate complex social and political issues and teaches the moral and political grounds that inform political action and service in a democracy. The health of a society depends on informed and active citizens who do what is right and value the public good over narrow self-interest.

Career Development

Finally, the general education program prepares students to enter professional life by developing practical skills that are valuable to employers and essential to civil society. These skills include the abilities to express oneself clearly and cogently in writing and orally, to be diligent and careful in the preparation of one’s work, to interpret and evaluate information, to think creatively in order to solve problems, to work independently as well as collegially in groups with a sensitivity toward cultural differences, to use technology, and to treat others ethically in their professional interactions.
PACIFIC’S GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Pacific’s general education mission of fostering self-understanding, citizenship and career development are produced by the completion of three Pacific Seminars and the breadth program courses, which produce the following base of knowledge and intellectual and practical skills:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Intellectual and Practical Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological or physical science</td>
<td>Written communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social science</td>
<td>Oral communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Critical and creative thinking</td>
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<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Quantitative literacy</td>
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<td>Arts</td>
<td>Research skills</td>
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<td>Cross-cultural Awareness</td>
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<td>Ethical reasoning</td>
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<td>Civic responsibility</td>
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<td>Aesthetic judgment</td>
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I. The Portfolio Proposal

Beginning fall 2006, new students will create and maintain a portfolio of their work and accomplishments from selected courses in the program. Freshmen will begin to develop their portfolios during Pacific Seminars I and II with the assistance of faculty and a sequence of labs/workshops on portfolio development and navigation. Transfer students will develop their portfolios with work from any remaining general education requirements at Pacific and a selection of courses from their majors, but, most importantly, with recovered items/reflections from general education course work taken at other institutions prior to attending Pacific. Reflective pieces of writing to accompany deposited material in the portfolio will provide opportunities for students to demonstrate integrative learning outcomes to their participation in our general education program.

All students—freshmen and transfers alike—will be required to have a completed, well-developed portfolio stored electronically on campus prior to enrollment in Pacific Seminar III in their senior year. As a key component of this culminating course in Pacific’s general education program, students will re-visit and draw upon the material and documents in The Pacific Portfolio to compose an extended essay that will describe, analyze, and synthesize their intellectual growth and ethical development in courses taken to satisfy Pacific’s general education requirements.

The contents of the portfolio itself—whether created as part of Blackboard’s E-Portfolio System or some other electronic, computer-generated data collection system—will allow for use over and above general education: a student’s major, minor, interdisciplinary work, career and professional development, alumni networking, etc. Ideally, 24/7 access will be available for the student, faculty and faculty advisors, general education program coordinators and administrators, and other individuals designated by the student as having rights of access to all, or parts of, a given portfolio.

II. Possible Portfolio Components

1. Written documents selected by students and/or faculty

2. Reflective/Self-Assessment pieces of writing associated with written work, class presentations, and group projects

3. Selected exams, tests, quizzes of particular relevance to a student’s intellectual growth and ethical development

4. Written, visual, or graphic evidence of any one or more of the following:
   a. independent research
   b. creative art or performance
   c. development of specific talents, skills, or expertise within a given course or sequence of related courses