RIT | Rochester Institute of Technology

Transformative General Education Models

GE Revision Task Force

April 2025

Components of a Transformative RIT GE Experience

EXPLORE: A cohesive interdisciplinary first year experience that exposes students to ideas from across the university and showcases what makes RIT unique

SHARED CORE: A core curriculum that ensures that all students develop competency in key areas associated with flourishing lives and careers

UNIQUE PATHWAYS: Clusters of courses that students can use to navigate the curriculum in meaningful and relevant ways.

INTEGRATE: Opportunities for students to integrate GE and program content in multi-, cross-, and interdisciplinary ways.

***BADGES and 1 CREDIT COURSES**: Flexible courses that fulfill either GE, free or program electives (based on the course and their program). Some of these courses can build toward badges students can include on LinkedIn.

EXPLORE: The First Year Experience

The Model: Students orient themselves to college and learn what is unique about RIT. Supports retention, showcases the best of RIT, and invites exploration across curricular and co-curricular spaces.

Themes:

1) **Inquiry based:** big questions, grand challenges and wicked problems
2) **Information/digital literacy and communication**: focused critical skills
3) **Interdisciplinary:** connections across campus and across disciplines
4) **Being Human**: preparing students as whole human beings

Options:

- First Year Course (3 credits)
- Combined First Year Course and Writing Seminar (6 credits)
- Clustered 1 Credit Courses

SHARED CORE: Critical Knowledge and Skills

Shared Core: What should all RIT students know and be able to do after progressing through the core curriculum? The knowledge and skills that we guarantee for all students.

***Potential* knowledge and skills**

1) Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
2) Scientific Literacy/Natural Sciences
3) Quantitative Reasoning
4) Navigating Pluralism
5) Creative and Artistic Expression
6) Assessing Social Impact (Ethical, Social, and Political Reasoning)

Options:

- Standard set of knowledge/skills for all
- Standard set of knowledge/skills PLUS program choice
- Rebranded perspectives

PATHWAYS: Clusters of Courses or Experiences

Pathways: Students follow their interests and goals to build towards credentials, double majors, or exciting experiences.

Potential pathways:

1) *Disciplinary:* Set of courses in one discipline
2) *Experiential:* Study abroad, student research, VIP, service-learning
3) *Interdisciplinary Themes:* Help students see connections and work on systems thinking with big questions, wicked problems, and grand challenges

Options:

- Flexible pathways, themed pathways, immersions, no pathways

INTEGRATE: The Culminating Bookend

Culminating Experience: Students have the opportunity to identify connections across GE and program courses as well as the real world.

Potential courses/experiences:

1) GE Integration Course
2) Portfolio (built over time)
3) Integrated with Program Capstone
4) Significant Project (ImagineRIT, Undergrad Capstone Conference)
5) Combination of the above

Options:

- Common GE Capstone
- Integrated Capstone
- Portfolio
- Significant Project

BADGES and 1 CREDIT COURSES

The Model: Students can select 1 credit offerings and credentialing to tailor the GE experience. Courses can supplement, complement or stack.

Examples of courses or credentials:

1) Responsible Innovation in an Age of AI
2) AI prompts for World building
3) TAD for Accessibility
4) Engineering for Humans (open to all RIT students)

Options:

- GE Courses that build/supplement skills
- GE courses the fulfil requirements
- Seminar series (combination of 1 credit courses)
- Badges

Four Conceptual RIT GE Models

- **Goal:** To solicit feedback from the RIT community about the strengths and weaknesses of different components and how they might fit together.

- **Note:** The Taskforce is ***not*** asking the community to choose between these models. The Taskforce is hoping these conceptual models will help frame continuing conversations about the strengths and weaknesses of different components and how they might work together.

BIG QUESTIONS MODEL

- Orients the GE curriculum around **interdisciplinary "big questions"** based on RIT strengths, positioning students as "doers and makers." Emphasizes critical skills, Big Questions (developed in conjunction with RIT community), and problem solving.
- **One Credit Add-Ons:** A suite of 1 credit courses can supplement learning in 3 credit courses, adding skills or stacking up to credentials in public speaking, team building, and other skills

First Year: Digital Literacy and Communication (6 credits)	**Core:** SLOs (15 credits+)	**Pathways:** (9 credits)	**Integration:** (1-3 credits)
Two course sequence: **Interdisciplinary TED-style courses** (co-taught, exploration of Big Questions, RIT-style) - 2 credits? (OSU model) + **Writing Seminar** Oriented toward Big Questions	**Big Questions Courses branded on RIT themes** Each course addresses one or more primary knowledge/critical skill area (see slide 4 for possible skills – five courses total)	**Students choose 9 credits from one of the pathways:** **Disciplinary:** Students can build toward minor or double major **Interdisciplinary (Wicked Problems, etc.):** Students take a cluster of courses on a theme or across themes **Experiential:** VIP, study abroad, service learning	**All RIT Students Encouraged to Create an Integrative Experience** Students demonstrate integration with Assessment Module for program capstone, Big Questions Project, portfolio, or participation as TA for Big Questions 1st year course

STUDENT CHOICE MODEL

- Emphasizes **student choice**, allowing maximum freedom to create their own curriculum
- **One Credit Add-Ons:** A suite of 1 credit courses can supplement learning in 3 credit courses, adding skills or stacking up to credentials in public speaking, team building, and other skills

First Year: Digital Literacy and Communication (6 credits)	**Core:** SLOs (15 credits)	**Pathways:** (6-9 credits)	**Integration:** (0-3 credits)
Writing Seminar + Students take **3 credits of one-credit courses** to explore curriculum and ideas outside their major	**Students Choose One Course Each from Critical Skills** Each course addresses one or more primary knowledge/critical skill area (see slide 4 for possible skills – five courses total)	**Flexible Pathways allow students to choose their focus:** Students can choose from existing immersions and minors or can *create their own curriculum* based on interest, as long as all courses carry GE status	**Students Choose How to Demonstrate Integration of GE and Program Curriculum** • Capstone “add-on” module • Interdisciplinary Capstone • VIP Project • ImagineRIT • Service Learning Project • Community Engagement/ Exhibit, etc.

PROGRAM CHOICE MODEL

- Incorporates program selection of core classes, while leaving open 9 credits of GE coursework for students to engage more deeply in exploration; least flexible model for students
- **One Credit Add-Ons:** A suite of 1 credit courses can supplement learning in 3 credit courses, adding skills or stacking up to credentials in public speaking, team building, and other skills

First Year: Digital Literacy and Communication (6 credits)	**Core:** SLOs (program choice credits, up to 21)	**Pathways:** (9 credits)	**Integration:** (0-3 credits)
Two course sequence: • **Program choice communication or digital literacy course** • **Writing Seminar** oriented toward Big Questions	**Critical Skills:** Each course addresses one or more primary knowledge/critical skill area (standard core) Programs can add two more courses (program selected core)	**Student Choice:** Keep existing immersions or allow total student choice for these 9 credits	**Program Capstones:** May incorporate integration of GE knowledge and skills, but integration is not directly assessed

REBRANDED MODEL

- Rebrand existing model and streamline it (one fewer perspective) to allow for first year experience and more flexibility for students and programs
- **One Credit Add-Ons:** A suite of 1 credit courses can supplement learning in 3 credit courses, adding skills or stacking up to credentials in public speaking, team building, and other skills

First Year: Digital Literacy and Communication (6 credits)	**Core:** Perspectives	**Pathways:** Existing Immersions	**Integration:** Optional
Two course sequence: • **First Year Course** • **Writing Seminar** oriented toward Big Questions	**Artistic and Creative Exploration** **Ethical and Social Impacts** **Global Connections and Citizenship** **Scientific Literacy and Methods** **Mathematical Literacy**	**Student Choice:** Students choose from existing immersions with additional immersions added to update the curriculum	**Program Capstones:** May incorporate integration of GE knowledge and skills, but integration is not directly assessed

ALL MODELS SHARE:

- **Interdisciplinary Exploration Experience and Writing Course:** Emphasis on digital literacy, information literacy, and communication
- **Shared Core Devoted to Critical Knowledge and Skills**
- **Pathways/Options for Student Choice, Exploration, and Curiosity**
- **Opportunities (not guaranteed in all models) for integration of GE and Program Knowledge and Skills**
- **1 Credit Options Building to Tiger Badges (Optional)**
- **A Fundamental Rebranding, Renaming, and Refocusing of GE around RIT's Strengths and Unique Character, Aligned with Strategic Plan**

EXPLORE: Options, Benefits, Considerations

OPTION	BENEFITS	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Common Course	• Scalable • Interdisciplinary setting • Streamline advising • Brand as uniquely RIT • Integrate library expertise	• Coordination • Classroom resources • Large sections • Peer mentoring/TA model
Combine FYW with FY Course	Same as above, plus: • Immersive experience • Retention/success benefits • Year-long focus	Same as above, plus: • FYW workloads and teaching • NTID and transfer students
Clustered 1 Credit Courses	• Student choice/flexibility • Work closely with faculty; get to know other students; Explore a range of topics. • Students can take risks	• Scalability • Advisement • Assessment/common outcomes • Coordination • Quality control

EXPLORE: Benchmark Models

WPI Great Problems Course

- Solving complex global problems (Climate change, AI, Design & Society)
- two terms / two linked courses
- Interdisciplinary: two faculty from different disciplines
- Project-based, university-level research
- Culminating poster presentation
- Skills: Creative/innovative thinking, communication, entrepreneurship, digital literacy

Georgia Tech: Grand Challenges Living & Learning Community

- "Live, Learn, Lead"
- Interdisciplinary Exploration, team collaboration
- Tackle real-world problems in a community
- Co-taught by two faculty
- Coaching from upperclassmen and graduate students
- Culminating poster session
- Skills: Innovation, problem-solving, collaboration, research, assessing social impact, communication

SHARED CORE: Critical Knowledge and Skills

The Case for Critical Knowledge and Skills:

- *RIT General Education Assessment:* Below benchmark for communication skills, information literacy, scientific inquiry
- *Employer Feedback:* Top skills include communication, teamwork
- *Alumni Feedback:* We do well on technical training but need to emphasize ”soft skills”
- *National Survey of Student Engagement:* Less public speaking, writing, reading quantitative reasoning information evaluation, synthesis than students at peer institutions
- *Broader Trends*: Post-COVID, students are entering college with increasing deficits in critical skills like reading, communication (writing, speaking, presentations), and teamwork

SHARED CORE: Options, Benefits, Considerations

OPTION	BENEFITS	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Standard Knowledge/ Skills for All	• Guarantee common outcomes • Focused assessment • Simple	• Balance skills with importance of the content • Requires gatekeeping for what qualifies and how these courses should be taught
Standard Knowledge/ Skills for All Plus	Same as above, plus: • Allows colleges to decide on **SOME** skills • Allow more predictable scheduling	• Not all students acquire the same set of knowledge/skills • May create resource strains in certain content or skills areas
Rebrand Perspectives, Reduce SLOs	• Provides stability for programs • Improve relevance • Less disruptive	• Social and global perspectives overlap • Difficulty providing enough seats for some perspectives • Students do not see clear value

PATHWAYS: Options, Benefits, Considerations

OPTION	BENEFITS	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Flexible Pathways	• Strengths of immersions with more flexibility and focus • Student choice	• Decision paralysis • Assessment
Themed Pathways	• Relevant to current issues • Alignment to RIT Mission	• Challenges with fitting choices into “buckets” or themes • Scheduling demand not predictable • Themes not relevant or exciting for all students
Immersions	• Stability for existing programs and students • Pathway to minor/double major	• Lack of coherence • Overlap • Low enrollment in some immersions
No Pathways or Immersions	• Maximizes student choice and flexibility • “Free” curriculum	• Advising • Course demand • Lack of coherence • Guided choices

INTEGRATE: Reflection and Integration Experience

OPTION	BENEFITS	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Common GE Capstone	• Reflect on GE experience • Adds a GE common experience at the end, promoting integration across all four years.	• Challenging for programs with co-ops, full-year capstones, and portfolio requirements.
Integrated Capstone	• Integrate GE knowledge and program knowledge • Many programs have existing requirements that could fulfil some GE credits	• Could work in some programs (like MDSD or Grand Challenges), but same limitations exist as above for others.
Portfolio	• Students build a portfolio of work • Key GE courses can require a portfolio assignment • Scaffolds the curriculum • High quality assessment opportunity • A high-impact practice that includes co-curricular, study abroad, and internship experiences.	• Implementation considerations, including cost and IP • Software requirements • Possible graduation roadblock
Significant Project	• Opportunity for students to work with people from different disciplines • Provides flexibility (ImagineRIT, service learning etc.)	• Implementation considerations, including registration, tracking • Difficult to assess

ONE CREDIT COURSES AND BADGING

ONE CREDIT OPTION	BENEFITS	THINGS TO CONSIDER
GE Courses that Build Concrete Skills	• Build skills • Supplement and complement program • Lower credit commitment (take risks, explore)	• Advising, registration, scheduling • Need to consult stakeholders, including faculty workload considerations • Curricular development
GE Courses that Fulfill Requirements	• Flexibility • Helps students complete coursework and fill out requirements • Exploration	• Concerns about student overload, inability to offer enough seats in these courses • Concerns about lack of rigor given GE needs • Better suited for concrete skill-based work, not content-based learning
Series of Courses Comprising First Year Seminar	• Students sample a number of disciplines • Allows for exploration and “playful” learning • Could be made P/F to allow students to take risks and try new things	• Loses cohesive messaging of First Year Seminar • Logistical concerns, including workload, classroom, and registration complexities • Possible start as pilot?
Badges	• Makes curriculum more relevant • Highlights GE skills to students, employers, and parents • Connect c—curricular and curricular options • Incentivize exploration across campus	• Creates another level of advising that may confuse students and increase advisor workload • Not sure of CourseLeaf and Registrar can support

One Credit Examples: Supplement, Complement, and Stack

ONE CREDIT COURSE	SUPPLEMENT	COMPLEMENT	STACK
1. Adobe Creative Suite (non-GE)	Take for a refresher alongside a technical CAD course	Take alongside a course in visual communication	• Tiger Stripe for Adobe Creative • Tiger Stripe toward badge in Visual Communication • Counts toward degree requirements in CLA, SCB
2. Presentation Skills and Public Speaking (GE)	Take before ImagineRIT	Take alongside a capstone	• Tiger Stripe toward badge in Public Speaking • Tiger Stripe toward badge in Professional Communication • Counts toward degree requirements in CAD, CLA, SCB
3. Project Management Basics (non-GE)	Take before interdisciplinary capstone	Take while participating in Concrete Canoe	• Tiger Stripe toward badge in Project Management • Tiger Stripe toward badge in Leadership • Counts toward degree requirements in CLA, KGCOE, SCB
4. AI Tools for Academic Research: Elicit, Perplexity.ai, DeepSeek (possible GE)	Take with First Year Writing	Take while doing faculty/student research over the summer	• Tiger Stripe toward badge in Research Tools • Tiger Stripe toward badge in AI Tools • Tiger Stripe toward badge in Digital Futures • Counts toward minor in AI in Society
5. Creative AI Prompts for Worldbuilding (GE)	Take in summer before RIT in LA	Take alongside Game Design course	• Tiger Stripe toward badge in Creative Worldbuilding • Tiger Stripe toward badge in AI Tools • Tiger Stripe toward badge in Digital Futures • Counts toward degrees in CLA, GCCIS

A mix of GE and non-GE options provides students maximum flexibility to tailor their curriculum, supplement gaps, and build skills toward badges and credentials and degrees (dependent on program).

FEEDBACK OPTIONS

- Feedback form on GE Revision Taskforce website: https://www.rit.edu/generaleducation/general-education-revision-task-force

- Attend a Campus Town Hall (dates and Zoom links on website)

- Reach out to the Taskforce (co-chairs Leah Bradley, Lauren Hall, and Elizabeth Hane)