The General Education Task Force was organized in 2009 to consider and develop an innovative program that would contribute to the first year experience of our students. The task force was charged with designing a pilot study that would incorporate interdisciplinary teaching with topics of global relevance. The pilot study would also provide some models for a revised general education program consistent with the Academic Plan. To this end the Task Force developed the Grand Challenge Initiative.

Grand Challenge Pilot - Iteration 1

The Grand Challenge (GC) Initiative (Iteration I) focused on three goals: (1) designing a creative general education pilot program, (2) developing an expedited approval process for experimental general education courses, and (3) implementing and assessing the pilot program.

Designing the Pilot Program, Fall 2009

The initiative was designed to:

(1) Supplement our current conventional general education program. Grand Challenge courses (GCH) are the focal point of the pilot program and arrange around contemporary themes of global concern.

(2) Enrich the first year experience by giving students the opportunity to learn through an interdisciplinary lens. GCH courses are paired with COM100 or WRT104/106 courses to create collaborative teams.

(3) Attract the interest and participation of full time and senior faculty to deliver seminar style GCH courses. The GC Initiative provided workshops to support faculty in developing courses.

Developing an Expedited Approval Process, Spring 2010

The current general education program did not allow for any experimentation with trial/temporary courses. To handle this obstacle, the GC Initiative developed an expedited process based on interdisciplinary GCH shells that are managed by the University College and General Education Committee (UCGE).

Modeled after the 100 level honors course shells, GCH shells allow for the introduction of experimental open-ended topics courses with general education credit. GCH shells were created for each of the general education content areas:
GCH 101 – Fine Arts
GCH 102 – Letters
GCH 103 – Social Science
GCH 104 – Natural Science

Particular topics within a GCH content area can be offered up to three times before the topic must be submitted with appropriate documentation and support through the designated channels for approval as a permanent course in accordance with the University Manual. The expedited process reduces the timeframe of the full process that requires approval from the college curricular committee, the UCGE Committee, the Curricular Affairs Committee (CAC), and the Faculty Senate.

Instructors interested in creating a GCH course submitted a course proposal (with support from their department chair and their academic dean) to the General Education Task Force. The Task Force evaluated proposals and approved them as temporary GCH topics if the proposed course fit the respective General Education content areas and included at least three of the required integrated skill areas. Before the GCH course was scheduled, the General Education Task Force submitted to the UCGE Committee a list of the proposed topics for approval.

This expedited approval process was passed by the Faculty Senate on January 28, 2010.

**Implementing the Pilot Program, Spring 2010 – Fall 2010**

The Request for Proposals (RFP) was distributed to the University on December 11, 2009. It articulated the goals of the GC Initiative and outlined the two-phase application and proposal process.

**Phase 1** –

Instructors submitted applications stating the GCH concept/issue to be taught and approval from their department chair and academic dean.

The Task Force received 28 applications; accepted 25 / rejected 3.

The Task Force invited COM, WRT, and LIB to participate to create the GC interdisciplinary teams.

- COM100 = 9 instructors teaching 15 paired sections
- WRT104/106 = 12 instructors teaching 12 paired sections
- LIB120 = 1 instructor teaching 1 paired section

The Task Force accepted 1 proposal for a large lecture GCH and chose to include 4 courses already approved for the previous year’s *Strategic Teaching*
Initiative for a total of 30 GCH courses. The Task Force provided three workshops throughout the spring semester to help GC teams (GCH instructors and paired COM, WRT, and LIB instructors) develop course syllabi, identify integrated skills and cognitive learning outcomes, and integrate course assignments.

Phase 2 –

GCH instructors submitted a final proposal and course syllabus articulating how the course design, learning objectives, and integrated skills met the general education requirements.

The Task Force received and accepted 28 proposals (2 participants dropped out of the program due to departmental constraints). The 38 faculty participating developed courses on global issues such as health and disease, poverty, obesity, and nano-technology and these courses came from across the University:

- Writing and Rhetoric
- Human Development and Family
- Business
- Communication Studies
- Plant Science
- Kinesiology
- Music
- English
- Languages
- Pharmacy
- Student Leadership Program
- Journalism
- Math
- Film
- University College
- University Library
- Nursing
- CELS
- History
- Physics
- GSO
- Chemical Engineering
- Geology

Over 60% of the GCH courses were taught by senior faculty.

- 23 Senior faculty (Associate & Full)
- 9 Assistant Professors
- 3 Full-time Lecturers
- 2 Non-faculty Instructors
- 1 Graduate Student

The Task Force provided a summer workshop for GC instructors to assist them with rubric and assignment development and encourage further collaboration between instructors.

Summer Registration –

At the start of orientation we introduced:

- 26 GC Teams and 1 Honors GC Team at 23 seats each
- 1 large lecture GCH section of 80 seats.

Over the course of the six week orientation period, we experienced several registration challenges that prevented teams from reaching the necessary enrollment we anticipated. These challenges included: general education restrictions of some majors, the exclusion of students due to specific pairing of courses, and scheduling conflicts.
In order to ensure that both the GCH and paired COM, WRT, or LIB course would be able to gain the enrollment necessary to run in the fall, we needed to de-pair 5 teams. A 6th cluster was de-paired because the instructor left the University.

At the end for summer orientation we had registered students in:
- 21 GC Teams
  - 12 paired with COM100
  - 9 paired with WRT104/106
- 6 de-paired GCH courses
- 1 large lecture GCH.

The total number of students registered at the start of Fall 2010 was 563. The end-of-the-term enrollment for Fall 2010 was 538, yielding a 95% retention rate.

Assessing the Pilot Program, Spring 2011

There was a variety of data collected to assess the pilot program (See SAGE Assessment Report for Fall 2010).

- End-of-summer reports: including final course syllabi and description of the coordination between the two courses in each team.
- Two facilitated faculty discussions that shared what was working and what was not. The intention was to develop best practices and learn from faculty experience in the GC Initiative.
- Assessment of course products (assignments, rubrics, student products) for the purpose of assessing the GC Initiative and General Education.
- Self-report surveys of students to assess perceptions of the experience, aggregated across all courses to examine the program level effects.

Grand Challenge Pilot - Iteration 2

The GC Initiative (Iteration 2) maintained the three objectives of the initiative and focused on two goals: (1) strengthening support for faculty to develop GCH courses and create collaborative teams and (2) implementing and assessing the second iteration of the pilot program.

Implementing the Pilot Program, Spring 2011 – Fall 2011

The Request for Proposals (RFP) was distributed to the University on October 30, 2010. It articulated the goals of the GC Initiative and outlined the two-phase application and proposal process.
**Phase 1 –**

The Task Force received and accepted 10 new applications. We also have 20 GCH seminars returning from Iteration 1 for a total of 30 GCH courses offered in Fall 2011.

The Task Force invited COM and WRT to participate to create the GC interdisciplinary teams. The Task Force expanded the option for delivering interdisciplinary teams to also include team-taught GCH courses taught by two or more faculty from different disciplines.

- COM100 = 11 instructors teaching 21 paired sections
- WRT104/106 = 4 instructors teaching 4 paired sections
- 5 Team-taught GCH seminars

With the support of the Davis Educational Foundation grant, we established a mentor program that is playing a vital role in the continued growth of the GC Initiative and in the redesign of the general education program. Seventeen participants from Iteration 1 agreed to serve as mentors to new GC faculty in Iteration 2 to create a community of practice around the issues of first-year student instruction, learning assessment, and integrated and interdisciplinary teaching. The faculty mentors have agreed to:

1. Mentor new GC teams, including:
   a. Facilitating and sharing experiences as a GC team member;
   b. Helping the new GCH Fellows complete the general education proposal;
   c. Being available in the Fall semester to assist/share/check-in/touch base with assigned teams through phone calls, electronic communication, and face-to-face meetings;
2. Attend and contribute to spring and summer GC workshops;
3. Contribute to the assessment of the GC Program

**Phase 2 –**

The Task Force received and accepted 10 final GCH proposals. The 41 faculty participating in Iteration 2 developed courses on global issues such as climate change, multicultural health competence, coastal erosion, consumerism, and social justice. They represent the following departments:

Writing and Rhetoric, Education, Business, Communication Studies, Plant Science, Kinesiology, Music, English, University Library, Pharmacy, Student Leadership Program, Journalism, Film, University College, Nursing, CELS, History, GSO, Chemical Engineering, Geology, Art History, Sociology and Anthropology.

Over 50% of the GCH courses will be taught by senior faculty.

- 22 Senior faculty (Associate & Full)
- 7 Assistant Professors
- 9 Full-time Lecturers
- 1 Associate Research Scientist
- 2 Non-faculty Instructors

The Task Force provided one workshop during the Spring semester and will be conducting 2 summer workshops for GC instructors to assist them with the collaboration process, rubric and assignment development, and understanding the first year student.

Summer Registration –

At the start of orientation we will introduce:
   23 GC Teams and 3 Honors GC Team at 23 seats each
   4 GCH Team-taught seminars at 23 seats each