American Institutions and Civic Learning in General Education

Overall Summary (prepared by JV, as of 12/3/2023)

Learning Outcomes

The American Institutions Task Force, with representation from faculty in multiple academic units, worked through the spring of 2023 to produce the following 7 draft student learning outcomes, one associated with each of the 7 areas identified by ABOR to be part of this requirement (each was also linked to a longer set of interpretative notes, which are included in a separate document):

**I. Identify key events, processes, and periods in United States history, examine conflicting perspectives on those topics, and analyze how those parts of United States history continue to shape the present.**

**II. Identify and assess different perspectives on the basic principles of United States constitutional democracy, including its structure, rights, and fundamental protections, and analyze how these principles have been applied under a republican form of government as it evolved over time.**

**III. Examine the United States Constitution, including one or more amendments, major constitutional debates, and theories of constitutional interpretation, and analyze their impact on subsequent historical developments.**

**IV. Analyze primary philosophical, historical, and political documents that influenced the founding of the U.S. government and its structure, and evaluate the role these documents played in shaping U.S. institutions.**

**V. Evaluate landmark Supreme Court cases and assess the court’s role in shaping law and society.**

**VI. Demonstrate and apply the skills necessary for effective citizenship, including civil dialogue and civic participation, shaped by effective problem-solving and information literacy, by employing active learning opportunities, community-engaged learning, service learning, or experiential learning.**

**VII. Explain and assess how economic data, tools, and theories are applied to compare and**

**evaluate current or historical public policies, as well as professional and personal decisions.**

A preliminary draft version (not yet discussed or approved by any committee) of an overarching learning outcome that combines all 7 ABOR areas into one student learning outcome, which is close to the same length as the longer of the existing GE attributes, might look something like this:

**Students will analyze and evaluate multiple perspectives on American institutions, focusing on how U.S. history has shaped the present, principles of constitutional democracy and how they have been applied under a republican form of government, debates over the U.S. Constitution and other founding documents, Supreme Court cases and their effects on law and society, civic participation and civil dialogue, and economic knowledge for public policy and personal or professional decisions.**

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Different Models

There are a variety of different models that have been discussed for implementing the American Institutions requirement in General Education, especially by the American Institutions Task Force, the General Faculty Ad Hoc Committee on General Education, and Office of General Education. Very brief discussions about some of the options have occurred at other shared faculty governance meetings, such as UWGEC and Undergraduate Council.

Most of these models discussed have involved adding a GE Attribute for this area, although other ideas have also been discussed that are more akin to an additional Foundations requirement or something else outside the Attribute system for EP and BC courses. These models below are not the only models that could be implemented and a different model for implementation could emerge from further reflection and careful consideration of responses across campus, but these are some of the most frequently discussed ideas:

* Two-Course Option with a Breadth and Depth Course – comprehensive course would cover all 7 learning outcomes, and students would choose a second course to go more deeply into at least one of the areas
* Two-Course Option with One Chosen from Each of Two Lists (A&B) – the 7 learning outcomes would be divided into two groupings with differentiated approval of courses that address each list, and students would complete some of the outcomes in the course on list A and the others from the course on list B
* One-Course Option – students would take a single comprehensive course covering all 7 learning outcomes
* Sub-Attribute Model – the 7 learning outcomes, or clusters of them (~3?) if they can be effectively grouped together, would be attached to courses as sub-attributes (much like the U.S. focus option within D&E), and students would choose courses that address each of the 7 areas (or ~3 groupings) at least once
* Foundations Model – rather than addressing this requirement through an additional attribute attached to BC or EP courses, it would be addressed separately by students choosing single comprehensive courses or pairings (or even triples?) of courses from an approved list, where each set would address all 7 outcomes

Each of the above models has its own file that indicates how the policy language and learning outcomes might hypothetically look for that model, along with an initial, but by no means exhaustive, list of pros and cons. We can seek further input on the pros and cons of each model, and how we should weigh them and perhaps revise them.

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Civic Engagement Practicum

In addition to the required coursework in American Institutions and Civic Learning, students will be encouraged to enroll in a 1-3 unit optional civic engagement practicum, which could result in a badge or other academic notation for those who complete it. (Some may wish to discuss whether to make such a civic engagement practicum a requirement for all students.) These courses could potentially be offered within all academic units across campus in connection with work for majors, or certain academic units with expertise in civic engagement might choose to offer civic engagement practicum courses for students across the University, or for students in a wider area such as STEM. Options might include, but are not limited to, such activities as public debate, writing opinion columns, formulating policy papers, working with community groups, or other options tailored to particular academic fields.

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Three-Course Alternative (Credit-by-Exam / Transfer)

Especially for those students who already have credit for two or three of the following exams or courses before entering the University of Arizona, whether through AP or other credit-by-exam, or through transfer course work, we may need to have a three-course alternative option for the related course equivalencies that address the American Institutions and Civic Learning requirement. Students who complete all three AP or other equivalent exams, or transfer course equivalencies, prior to arriving at the University, could be deemed to satisfy the requirement, and those who completed two of them could take a University of Arizona version of the third one to complete the requirement (a longer list of equivalent University of Arizona course options could be approved for each of these three commonly taught/examined areas; those listed below are simply closest existing equivalents):

AP U.S. History / Course Equivalency / HIST 160C1 (EP-Humanist) – I, IV, V

AP U.S. Government and Politics / Course Equivalency / POL 201 (TBD) – II, III, VI

AP Microeconomics or Macroeconomics / Course Equivalency / ECON 200, 201A, or 201B (EP-Social Scientist) – VII

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Interpretative Notes

Interpretative notes written by the American Institutions task force for each of the seven items above will be incorporated, with such modifications and revisions as may be necessary, into the explanatory materials in the QuickStart course for General Education and other places where the attribute is described. These interpretative notes can be found in a separate file.