UF CORE PROGRAM:

HISTORY & PATH FORWARD

2016

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ABSTRACT

In 2013, the State of Florida established legislation defining pre-eminence status for state research universities that meet specific benchmarks and allowing pre-eminent universities to offer a common educational experience for first-time-in-college (FTIC) students. The University of Florida took advantage of the opportunity to provide a shared experience for its students by initially developing and offering a humanities course, "What Is the Good Life?", IUF1000 (formerly HUM2305), followed by establishing a framework for adding two additional 3-credit-hour courses, one in the Natural Sciences general education category ("The Challenge of Climate Change") and one selected from the Social Sciences general education category ("People and Data" and "Extreme Events"). Concerns about the three-course program shared by faculty, staff, and students include the difficulty in managing the large enrollment over the first two years of a cohort's UF experience, lack of meaningful connection among the three classes, and undue burden on curricula in majors that have few elective options. To address these concerns, a new model for the UF Core Program is proposed.

This proposed model consists of 6-9 credit hours of a combination of coursework, experiential learning, and e-portfolio development that will thread the themes of meaning-making and purpose exploration throughout the program. In the next two years, the entire campus will engage in dialogue and planning for a Spring 2018 full pilot of this program prior to a full launch for the incoming Fall 2018 FTIC students.

Anticipated benefits and outcomes of this proposed UF Core Program include a deeper appreciation of a liberal education for life-long learning, increased persistence to degree, graduates who are confident in their life's purpose and prepared for successful careers, and a distinguishing University of Florida "maker's mark" on all undergraduates, thus consistent with the institution's pre-eminent status.

HISTORY OF UF CORE PROGRAM

As of July 1, 2013, any state research university in Florida meeting academic and research excellence standards outlined in Florida Statute 1001.7065 is designated as a "pre-eminent state research university." The University of Florida has earned pre-eminent status each year since the inception of this statute. Among the various privileges afforded pre-eminent state research universities is the opportunity to provide a jointly shared educational experience for its FTIC students (Florida Statute 1001.7065, 2015). The university may "stipulate that credit for such courses may not be earned through any acceleration mechanism," thus requiring that all incoming FTIC students share this unique experience that ideally reflects the mission and values of the institution.

In the Fall 2012, the University of Florida established a Humanities course, "What Is the Good Life?" (then HUM2305; currently

IUF1000), as the corner stone for its shared signature experience for FTIC students. This course was crafted as a response to earlier discussions that led to the aforementioned Florida legislation, and, in part, to recommendations prepared by the 2010 UF Task Force on Undergraduate Education (Appendix 1, http://www.aa.ufl.edu/Data/Sites/18/media/reports/ug_task_force_report.pdf).

This course was developed through collaboration among the Colleges of Design, Construction and Planning (DCP), Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), and the Arts (COTA) and first offered as a common experience in the Fall of 2010 (IUF1000, 2015). In November 2013, to complement this signature course, then Associate Provost of Undergraduate Affairs, Dr. Bernard Mair, disseminated a guiding document on "The Grand Challenges Core," describing a structure for the addition of two 3-credit hour signature courses in the Social Sciences and Natural Sciences general education categories, respectively (Appendix 2). The stated goals of the Grand Challenges Core Program, anticipated at that time to launch in the Fall 2016, are the following:

➢ A program that is cohesive with a clearly identifiable focus and having a systematic approach to achieving the goals of a liberal education;
➢ A program that creates common experiences for all undergraduates, unique to UF;
➢ A program that develops an intellectual community through the study of important, timely issues;
➢ A program that engages students in the search for knowledge: changing their attitudes from that of a knowledge consumer to a knowledge producer;
➢ A program that enables students to transfer knowledge between disciplines—to see how different disciplines interact in complex problem-solving;
➢ A program that links with the research mission and faculty of the university, encouraging students to pursue research opportunities;
➢ A program that provides the foundations of a liberal education for life-long learning and meaningful careers and lives.

Thus, the combination of IUF1000 with the two other courses would provide all FTIC students with an intentional and focused general education experience. Coinciding with the release of "The Grand Challenges Core" document, Dr. Mair released a call for proposals to all undergraduate-degree-granting colleges for new courses in either the Social Sciences or Natural Sciences general education category (Appendix 3). Successful proposals would shape courses that are interdisciplinary in nature, involving participation from faculty in at least three undergraduate, degree-granting, colleges in three different disciplines.

Proposed courses had to meet the objectives for the Social Sciences (S) or Natural Sciences (B or P) general education designation (GE) and focus on a topic/problem of major current global interest. Proposals were due on March 31, 2014, and selections were announced in April 2014 in anticipation of course development in the Summer 2014 and full launch in the Fall 2016.

Two courses, one from each category of proposals submitted, were selected to move forward in the course development stage: "The Challenge of Climate Change" in the Natural Sciences category and "An Informed Life: People and Data" in the Social Sciences category. The Colleges of Agricultural and Life Sciences, Design Construction and Planning, and Liberal Arts and Sciences collaborated in preparing the proposal for the Climate Change course (Appendix 4), while the Colleges of Agricultural and Life Sciences, Education, and Journalism and Communications prepared the People and Data course proposal (Appendix 5).

The Climate Change course objectives include exploration of the process of scientific inquiry, application of the scientific method to embrace uncertainty, development of hypothesis-driven solutions, and communication of scientific outcomes through teamwork and community building. The People and Data course's overarching objectives are to provide students with a data literacy foundation for lifelong learning and citizenship and to engage students in the search for knowledge to understand the data and claims about data from multiple sources of information, to challenge claims, and to transfer this knowledge among disciplines. Both courses have been piloted. While the Climate Change course will be piloted again in the Spring 2016 term, the People and Data course will be redesigned for re-launch in a future

semester to address identified challenges in attracting student interest.

In the Summer of 2015, an additional Social Science course, entitled "Extreme Events," proposed in 2014 by the Colleges of the Arts, Design Construction and Planning, Engineering, Health and Human Performance, Journalism and Communications, and Liberal Arts and Sciences, was selected for development and launch (Appendix 6). With the backdrop of an extreme event on a community (e.g., 2010 earthquake in Haiti), this course will introduce to students the value and importance of the social sciences interwoven with other participating disciplines in applying human-centered design to heal the impacted community towards resilience. Currently, this course is in the development stage with an anticipated pilot in Summer 2016 or Fall 2016.*

Because of transition in the Associate Provost of Undergraduate Affairs office, the UF Office of the Provost announced in the Summer of 2015 that the launch of the full UF Core General Education Program would be postponed from Fall 2016 to Fall 2017. This postponement would allow the new Associate Provost to engage in campus-wide conversation and gain insights towards determining the optimal path forward for this pre-eminent signature experience.

At the time of this publication, UFIC Director, Dr. Leo Vilallòn, is developing a concept for an international-based course to also be included in the Social Science category.

FALL 2015 FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION OF CURRENT MODEL

Since accepting the role of Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs in September 2015, Dr. Angela Lindner has engaged many students, staff, faculty, and administrators from across campus in conversation about the UF Core. While these stakeholders expressed general support of a shared experience for each incoming class of students, widespread concern regarding the current model of the UF Core was expressed based on a variety of reasons.

First, a popular perception is that IUF1000 (What Is the Good Life?) does not serve all students well because of inconsistency in student experience, numerous negative reports from students themselves, and general lack of information about the course content, learning outcomes, and success in meeting the learning outcomes. Despite criticism of the course, many with whom Dr. Lindner spoke also admitted that some students have reported to them a positive experience, thus reinforcing their belief that the quality of instruction is inconsistent across all sections.

Evident in these discussions is the lack of information the campus now has concerning IUF1000's outcomes to date. For example, course director, Dr. Andy Wolpert, recently reported results of strong student satisfaction in the course, yet negative perceptions of the course linger on campus. In moving forward, the UF Office of Undergraduate Affairs will commit to providing status reports of the UF Core experiences to the greater UF community.

In addition, dissatisfaction was expressed in the Social Sciences and Natural Sciences courses currently selected for the UF Core. This dissatisfaction was less because of content and more because each is disconnected from the others with no meaningful common thread woven through them to unite and make meaning of the total experience for students. Concerns were expressed about the paucity of resources and lack of incentive to deliver these courses, and evidence to this fact bears out with IUF1000 in the struggle its director experiences in recruiting and retaining instructors.

In addition, those interviewed expressed skepticism in smoothly coordinating and delivering the three-course model, given the number of students required to pursue this core experience and the added burden on advisors in ensuring that students enroll in these courses prior to the completion of their second year.

Finally, those from programs with restrictive curricula requiring "lock-step" coursework (e.g., majors in engineering, architecture, the arts) expressed deep concern about the negative impacts that an additional nine credit hours would have on students and on the major-specific content of the curriculum. Adding the nine credit hours to the students' plans of study may leave students vulnerable to excess hours charges. Other programs are considering removing upper division technical electives from their curricula to accommodate the additional courses, thus threatening the quality of the degree and, not to mention, the level of preparation of the student for

her or his career, a concern echoed by various employers as well. Many recommended that all courses included in the core program incorporate the international (N) and/or diversity (D) content required by the university, thus providing some relief to those programs with "lock-step" coursework and already large total credit-hour requirements.

Despite the anxiety expressed about the UF Core Program as it currently is shaped, an overwhelming opinion of those interviewed embodied a hope that a core program could serve as a foundation for a unique, pre-eminent undergraduate experience at the University of Florida. The consensus is that the common core experience should have a clear and compelling purpose for the students, should promise to be transformational, not only for the students but also the institution as a whole, and should support the existing goals of the university.

Higher education institutions today are increasingly challenged to administer intentional and systematic support for students to identify their strengths, clarify their values, and develop a level of "grit" that will ensure persistence in their journey towards productive global citizenship. Recent studies in this area state that true higher learning is transformative, developmentally keyed, best understood as an apprenticeship, and requires as much intentionality about learning outside of the classrooms as within them (Clydesdale, 2015; Keeling and Hirsch, 2011; Nash and Murray, 2010). To this end and in light of the concerns expressed by multiple UF stakeholders across campus about the current model, a new model for the UF Core is proposed and presented in the following sections.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED MODEL AND ITS OUTCOMES

THE BASIS FOR THE MODEL AND ITS ADDITIONAL GOALS

The basis for the proposed UF Core experience is to equip students with a meaningful and interconnected series of general education experiences that guide them toward self-knowledge and a better understanding of their place in the greater world. The new model combines in-class and out-of-class components. In part, this new model is proposed to alleviate burdens that the existing three-course model imposes on programs with already large total credit hour requirements. However, more importantly, this new model is

designed to accomplish the original desire to eliminate the unfocused general education experience of UF students by providing a shared experience that accomplishes the original seven goals of the UF Grand Challenges Core Program with the following additional provisions:

➢ Learning outcomes shared by all students,

➢ Interwoven content throughout the courses so that students understand the

objectives and the value of this shared experience,

➢ Demonstration of the relevance of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences to all academic disciplines outside of these areas,

➢ Core experiences (ideally taken in sequence) to allow students to build upon their increasing knowledge of themselves, the world, and how they can best serve the world, and

➢ Engagement of students in meaning-making and purpose exploration in order for them to discover the major and career (i.e., vocation) best suited for their strengths and passions.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Figure 1 provides a visual overview of the proposed UF Core. This Core consists of three experiences intended to be sequential (but not entirely necessary). First, all FTIC students will enroll in IUF1000, "What Is the Good Life?", as this 3-credit-hour course currently serves the students. In the students' second year, they will select one 3-credit-hour course from an offering of no more than a total of eight courses in *either* the Social Sciences or Natural Sciences category, making their decision based on their interests, likely guided by their intended choice of major. Subsequently, rounding out their UF Core experience, either during the summer between their second and third year or during their third year, all students will engage in some form of experiential learning, opting for 0-3 credit hours.

Throughout the core experience, students will be guided toward deeper meaning-making and purpose exploration. First, IUF1000 will encourage students to learn about themselves, who they are, their strengths and weaknesses, and how their values and beliefs are aligned with the greater world and with how others define and strive for a "good life." Students will then thoughtfully select the second class from a list of no more than eight courses,

four in the Social Sciences category and four in the Natural Sciences category. Each course will introduce them to national and global issues they are likely to confront after graduation in the context of the course theme, whether it is the impacts of climate change, use of big data, or the damaging effects of natural events on communities in the world. Regardless of the second-year class selected, each student will learn how s/he might be able to contribute to the healing of the damage or possible harm associated with the focus of the class.

Finally, knowing who they are and having a better understanding of the world, students will then pursue the third experience in the UF Core, experiential learning, or getting out into the world to apply their strengths and solidify their choice of profession. While not required, the university will encourage this third experience for transfer students as well, providing an additional module with content from the first two experiences for preparation for their experiential learning project. Allowing transfer students to participate in the UF Core Program will provide them the anticipated enrichment of the program as well as a means of uniting with the entire campus in this purpose exploration effort.

A broad range of experiential learning opportunities will be available to students, including, but not limited to the following: study abroad, internships and co-ops, on- or off-campus research, community service, public service, interdisciplinary on-campus projects, and existing or new courses requiring experiential learning.
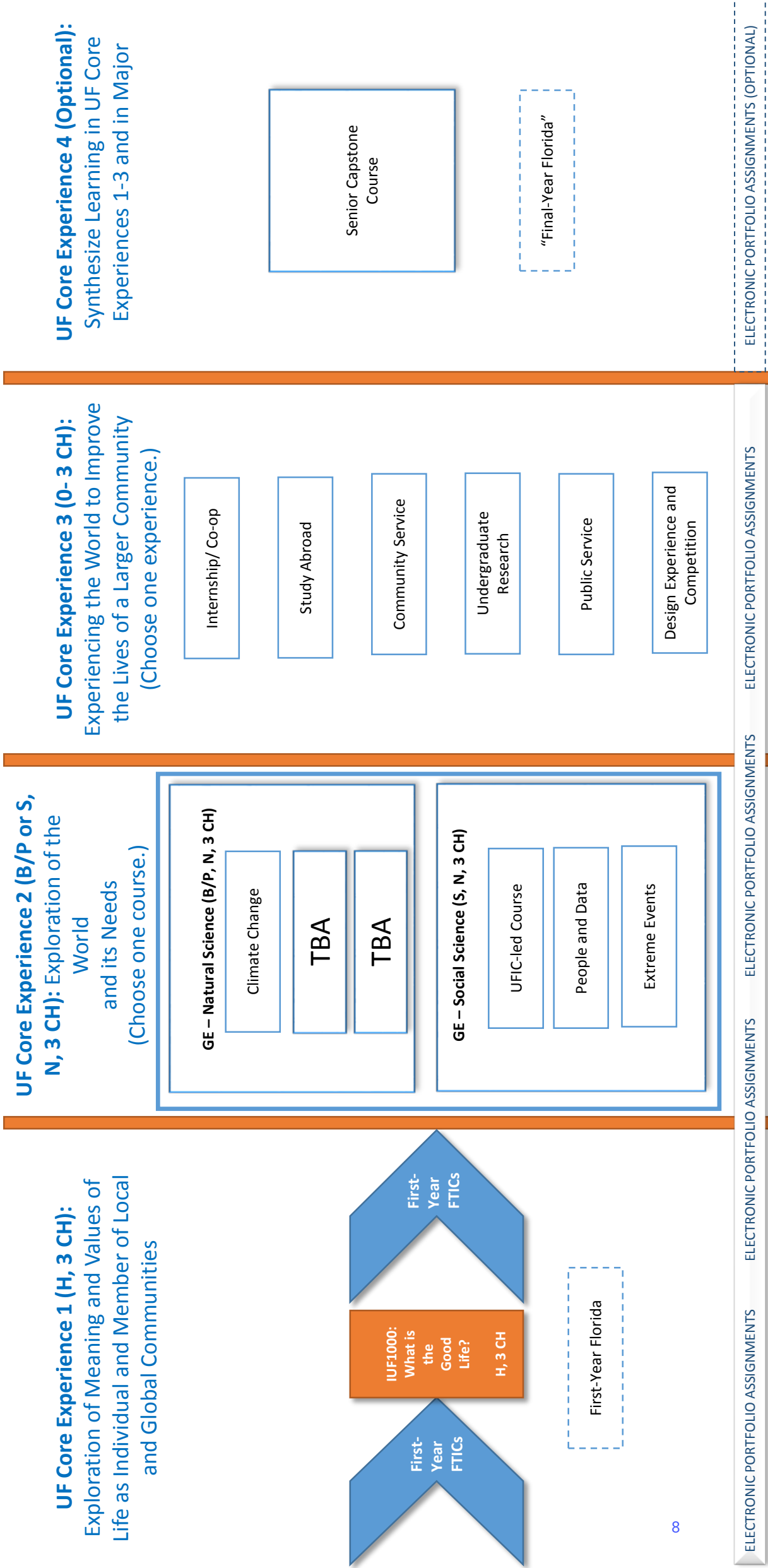
Throughout the three experiences, students will be required to maintain an e-portfolio (possibly through Canvas). Students will prepare assignments in their e-portfolios that will encourage their reflections and descriptions of their transformation in perceptions of themselves and the world throughout each stage of the Core experience. The e-portfolio component will ensure a seamless, honest, and personal self-examination and continual reexamination of what is important and what is not important in their ongoing search for meaning as they engage in learning inside and outside of the classroom. An added advantage of the e-portfolio component is provision of a built-in mechanism for assessing the individual courses and entire UF Core program.

As noted in Figure 1, two optional transitional experiences, First-Year Florida and "Final-Year Florida," are recommended as complementary to the proposed core experiences. First-Year Florida is an existing one-credit-hour course that aims to transition students into the university,

acclimating her to the academic and social campus environment. Final-Year Florida is proposed for development in a partnership between colleges and UF CRC as a "bookend" to First-Year Florida. Final-Year Florida is envisioned to also be a one-credit-hour course, intended to transition students out into the world. Possible sections could separately target students who will enter graduate school, law or medical school, work in industry, government, or non-profit sectors, etc. Each section may offer specialized preparation for the individual groups of students in their majors, while also offering common content, such as money management. Both courses (First-Year Florida and Final-Year Florida) should be designed to echo the meaning-making and purpose exploration content of the core experiences and provide continuity for the student in this regard throughout their time at UF.

While more of a focus in previous generations and in smaller, religious colleges, most institutions of higher education today do not emphasize intentional, cohesive programs to encourage students to seek the meaning of their lives and their purpose in life. The following section provides a brief overview of the value of meaning-making programs to a modern public research university like the University of Florida.

Figure 1: Proposed Model for the UF Core Program

UF Core Experience 1 (H, 3 CH): Exploration of Meaning and Values of Life as Individual and Member of Local and Global Communities

UF Core Experience 2 (B/P or S, N, 3 CH): Exploration of the World and its Needs (Choose one course.)

UF Core Experience 3 (0- 3 CH): Experiencing the World to Improve the Lives of a Larger Community (Choose one experience.)

UF Core Experience 4 (Optional): Synthesize Learning in UF Core Experiences 1-3 and in Major

UF Core Experience 1:

First-Year FTICs

IUF1000: What is the Good Life? H, 3 CH

First-Year FTICs

First-Year Florida

UF Core Experience 2:

GE – Natural Science (B/P, N, 3 CH)
- Climate Change
- TBA
- TBA

GE – Social Science (S, N, 3 CH)
- UFIC-led Course
- People and Data
- Extreme Events

UF Core Experience 3:
- Internship/ Co-op
- Study Abroad
- Community Service
- Undergraduate Research
- Public Service
- Design Experience and Competition

UF Core Experience 4:
- Senior Capstone Course
- "Final-Year Florida"

ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENTS   ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENTS   ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENTS   ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENTS (OPTIONAL)

CREATING PURPOSEFUL GRADUATES

The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.
 –Pablo Picasso

As stated previously, two focal points threaded throughout this shared experience are meaning-making and purpose exploration. While the general education courses that provide the framework of this experience will have unique learning outcomes to match their individual overarching themes, they will share learning outcomes that will sustain the meaning-making and purpose exploration inquiry by the students.

The quote above attributed to Pablo Picasso summarizes the end goals of meaning-making and purpose exploration by students in the university.   As Picasso was leading in his statement, the meaning of our life is the "why," and the purpose of our life is the "how." "Meaning," states L. Marinoff (1999), "is how one understands one's life on an on-going basis," whereas purpose is the end to be attained. Meaning embraces interpretations, narrative frameworks, philosophical rationales and perspectives, and faith or belief systems that every one of us brings to the worlds in which we live, work, play, love, worship, and learn, and, according to many recent publications, no liberal education is complete without including the quest for meaning (e.g., Root, 2015).

At best, higher education institutions today encourage students to pursue purpose exploration in the form of career searching, typically in their final year of study. Indeed, purpose exploration is intended to pursue

goals, to reach resolutions, to seek results, and realize particular objectives and ends, such as a fulfilling job upon graduation as so well accomplished by our University of Florida Career Resource Center.   However, as described by Nash and Murray (2010) in paraphrasing Kant, "purpose with no meaning is empty, and meaning with no purpose goes nowhere." Universities and colleges typically encourage students to achieve a multitude of academic and career purposes without ever guiding them to create a structure of meaning that will inform their purposes. Echoing Viktor Frankl, psychotherapist and survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, the university void of meaning-making programs often aids students in discovering a "means to live" but no "meaning to live for" (Frankl, 1979).

Today, college campuses report an increasing and, in many cases, an overwhelming number of students suffering from anguish, anxiety, and other mental health problems (Scelfo, 2015; Wilson, 2015). "Meaninglessness" is most often reported by students in this condition. A recent Pew Research Center poll (2007) asked twenty-year-olds about their top goals in life. Eighty-one percent of the respondents stated that being rich was a top goal, whereas 51% desired fame. When college students are given liberty to search for meaning while learning towards a degree, they bind their core values (beliefs, connections, commitments, joys, and loves) within their course content, rather than separate from it (Yalom, 1980; Murray and Nash, 2010). These core values in turn provide them with a life-long

emollient for their anxieties, arming them with what is called "holy grit" (Clydesdale, 2015).

Inclusion of meaning-making and purpose exploration in the academic pursuit of knowledge, faculty and staff then become "meaning mentors" who have strong positive influence on the resiliency of students in success towards attainment of a degree and after. Institutions that have adopted meaning-making and purpose exploration on their campuses report a number of benefits for students, which include the following (Clydesdale 2015):

➢ Increased retention to degree,

➢ Higher confidence in choice of major,

➢ Heightened awareness of individual gifts,

➢ Greater global awareness and the needs of the world,

➢ Equally engaged mind and heart that leads to wholehearted dedication to a purpose, and

➢ Increased post-graduation resiliency to life's challenges.

Another observation from campuses with meaning-making and purpose exploration activities is an increased sense of well-being among faculty and staff who deliver the content of these programs, born from the reconnection to the purposes that drew them to higher education in the first place.

Meaning-making and purpose exploration activities must make sense to each individual campus. Examples of meaning-making programs other institutions have developed for students include curriculum,

internships, service-learning, mentorships, living/learning communities, campus events, and more. Programs developed for faculty and staff include development workshops, reading groups, discussion groups, spirituality programs, religious diversity programs, progressive service activities, mini-grants, and more. Successful programs were intentional and deliberate in development, engaged entire campuses to consensus, were always developed with the student at the center, connected to existing institutionalized programs, incentivized engagement of the best teaching faculty, and incorporated effective public relations in marketing to all stakeholders (Clydesdale, 2015).

More specifically, examples of meaning-making and purpose exploration activities include but are not limited to the following:

➢ Recognizing the strong influence of the teacher on the student, the teacher can adopt pedagogical techniques that encourage students to take initiative in their deep-meaning learning inside and outside the classroom, on and off campus.

Examples of techniques are story-telling (instructors sharing their own story and guiding students to tell theirs); asking students open-ended, evocative, problem-based questions; leading students to understanding the practical implications of the course content in their everyday lives (personalized learning); allowing silence in lecture to give students time to grasp the course material and make it their own; etc.

➢ Small and large group conversations

➢ Colloquia sessions

- ➤ Service learning
- ➤ Internet chat rooms, discussion groups, blogs, etc.
- ➤ Meaning Mentor Program that partners students with faculty and staff guides

The envisioned UF Core Program will incorporate meaning-making and purpose exploration in each of the three components. The e-portfolio will serve as the uniting thread. Assignments requested of the students in the e-portfolio will engage them in reflection exercises and narrative writing within the context of their current stage of the program. Instructors,

teaching assistants, supervisors, peer mentors, and advisors will engage students in these exercises in their respective interactions with the students.

While the student must serve as the center of the envisioned UF Core Program, it must echo the mission of the university. All faculty, staff, and students engaged in the UF Core content must be confident that engagement in this program must resonate with the greater goals of the university. The next section presents the relevance of this envisioned UF Core Program to President Fuchs' Goal-Setting Task Force's Seven Goals for University of Florida.

RELEVANCE TO THE PRESIDENT'S GOAL-SETTING TASK FORCE'S SEVEN GOALS

In his first year of service at the University of Florida, President Kent Fuchs launched a Goal-Setting Task Force to engage the campus in a broader conversation about the desired aspirations and goals for the university as it embraces its status of pre-eminence. The outcome of the year-long campus engagement is a list of seven goals with specific objectives and metrics (Appendix 7), guiding administrators, faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders to attain the University's overarching aspiration: *The University of Florida will be a premier university that the state, nation, and world look to for leadership*. The proposed UF Core Program goals are well aligned with UF's Seven Goals and is poised to assist the University in attaining these goals. The discussion below provides a description of how the objectives of the core program interweave with and enhance those of UF's Seven Goals.

Goal 1: An exceptional academic environment that reflects the breadth of thought essential for preeminence, achieved by a community of students, faculty, and staff who have diverse experiences and backgrounds.
Objective 1: UF students, faculty, and staff with increasingly diverse demographic and geographic characteristics.
Objective 2: A university climate that is inclusive, supportive and respectful to all.
Objective 3: Diverse, robust educational and interdisciplinary areas of excellence.

The UF Core Program engages Goal 1 and its objectives in the following ways:
- ➤ Creation of a unique academic environment that will nourish a sense of community in its universal approach of participation by administrators, faculty, staff, all students, and off-campus partners

➢ Requirement of all students to "get out into the world" to be sensitized to and bonded with the lives and needs of the "other" and to better understand how they fit in and can meaningfully contribute to the greater world.

Goal 2: An outstanding and accessible education that prepares students for work, citizenship, and life.

Objective 1: A high quality, widely recognized financially accessible undergraduate, graduate, and professional education and experience.

Objective 2: Services that are accessible and available in a timely fashion that support student health, development, and well-being, thereby improving their academic and personal growth and success.

Objective 3: Academic programs that promote effective and accessible learning through innovation.

Objective 4: High quality student-faculty interactions in mentored research.

The UF Core Program engages Goal 2 and its objectives in the following ways:

➢ A vision of a program accessible to all FTIC students

➢ Preparation of students for post-graduation by engaging them in purpose exploration and deeper meaning learning about themselves and off campus in the world

➢ Promise of increased retention of students by personalized activities that solidify their choice of major and by decreasing anxiety surrounding their feeling a lack of purpose in their education and their lives

➢ Promise of increased quality of instruction on campus by crystallizing a

core of instructors, emeritus faculty, student assistants who will serve as meaning mentors for students and a source of pedagogical expertise for the UF campus

➢ Establishment of a model for innovation in general education

➢ Meaningful faculty-student interaction through its basis of purpose exploration activities and experiential learning component

Goal 3: Faculty recognized as preeminent by their students and peers.

Objective 1: An increased number of faculty recognized by distinguished awards, fellowships, and memberships.

Objective 2: An increased number of high-impact scholarly publications and creative works.

Objective 3: An increased professional and public visibility of UF faculty.

Objective 4: An increased faculty participation in professional service and leadership.

Objective 5: A nurturing and invigorating academic and professional environment for all faculty across the research, teaching, and service missions of the university.

Goal 4: Growth in research and scholarship that enhances fundamental knowledge and improves the lives of the world's citizens.

Objective 1: Documented advances in productivity and recognition of UF research programs.

Objective 2: Exceptional graduate and postdoctoral scholars who will contribute to influential research and scholarship.

Objective 3: Increased extramural and intramural funding that enhance both basic and translational research.

Objective 4: Processes and systems that facilitate excellence in research and scholarship.

The UF Core Program engages Goals 3 and 4 and their objectives in the following ways:

➤ Nourishment of a community of educational expertise among participating faculty, staff, and student assistants

➤ Increased knowledge of modern, effective pedagogical techniques not only among instructors but also graduate student assistants

➤ Increased research and scholarly activity in interdisciplinary areas of education, including ways to build purpose discovery into the curriculum, state-of-the-art methods in delivering effective general education programs, etc.

Goal 5: A strengthened public engagement of the university's programs with local, national, and international communities.

Objective 1: Increased engagement and outreach of UF programs leading to positive impacts in such areas as health, the economy, environment and community.

Objective 2: Improved communication leading to increase public awareness of and value placed on UF programs and their impact on society.

Objective 3: Increased technology translation and entrepreneurial activities.

The UF Core Program engages Goal 5 and its objectives in the following ways:

➤ Partnering with local organizations, including the government, religious, business, and non-profit sectors in not only the task force phase of program development but also in implementation and delivery of the program

➤ Provision of a means for the surrounding community to contribute positively to and gaining a sense of "ownership" of the educational experience of UF students

Goal 6: Alumni who are successful in their careers and in life and who are proud to be graduates of the University of Florida

Objective 1: Alumni who make significant contributions to their professions and society.

Objective 2: Alumni who engage with and support the University's educational, research, and service missions.

The UF Core Program engages Goal 6 and its objectives in the following ways:

➤ Provision of a life-long foundation of mechanisms for students to make meaning of their lives and understand their greater purpose in the world

➤ Creation of a strong bond among students with the "Gator Good" identity and to their roots at UF

Goal 7: A physical infrastructure and efficient administration and support structure that enable preeminence.

Objective 1: A campus with updated facilities, including modern research laboratories, classrooms to support state-of-the art teaching and learning, contemporary residence halls, and high-quality technology infrastructure.

Objective 2: An efficient and effective administration that provides superior business services to the campus community, proactively streamlines processes to minimize burden and redundancy, incentivizes excellence through budget appropriations, and attracts and retains talented staff through ongoing professional development opportunities and competitive compensation.

Objective 3: An attractive, sustainable and safe campus that offers a high quality of life to faculty, staff, students, alumni and the community, making UF a desirable place to visit, live, work, and play.

The UF Core Program engages Goal 7 and its objectives in the following ways:

➢ Catalysis of innovative teaching and assessment techniques, including assessing most effective teaching and learning environments

➢ Nourishment of the campus community through meaningful engagement of advisors, staff, faculty, and administrators in the education of students

➢ Encouragement of interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty through both teaching and education research

The University of Florida will take the time needed to ensure that the final form of UF Core Program will be the result of careful consensus-building on and off campus. The following section describes the envisioned process for building consensus and engendering ownership of this program among all administrators, faculty, staff, students, and off-campus partners.

NEXT STEPS: ENSURING FEASIBILITY AND BUILDING CONSENSUS

Upon approval of this proposed model for the UF Core program, the next steps before finalizing the model are to:

➢ Ensure feasibility and engage campus in initial conversation,

➢ Establish task forces for program design,

➢ Engage campus in more in depth conversation to feed the work of the task forces, and

➢ Design and implement an organizational structure for sustained success.

To follow is a description of the fulfillment of the steps and anticipated timing for their completion.

Step 1: Ensuring Feasibility (Spring 2016)

No program, regardless of how noble its objectives, will be successful if the framework of the university is not prepared to accommodate it. Therefore, the essential first step in developing this core program is to work with campus officials who will ultimately be charged with making the parts run smoothly and in unison, since these officials will articulate the concept of the shared experience to prospective and current students. For example,

collaborating with the Registrars' Office prior to finalizing a framework for the UF Core is critical to ensure ample sections and class locations are possible for the projected enrollments each semester. As mentioned previously, many undergraduate programs are highly constrained; therefore, early discussions with the administration and advisors in the relevant departments are critical to avoid interjecting credits that will ultimately result in students penalized for excess hours.

The following are individuals and groups with whom the Associate Provost and task force representatives will meet to discuss feasibility of the proposed framework of this program:

o *Individual Offices:*
These meetings will involve discussions relating to ensuring ample enrollment management in anticipated sections of classes, leveraging existing co-curricular programs, marketing the program to prospective students, evaluating best practices in tracking student participation in the experiential learning phase of the core program.

  ➢ Division of Enrollment Management, Office of Admissions

  ➢ Division of Student Affairs

  ➢ Registrar's Office

  ➢ UF Information Technology

  ➢ UF Libraries

  ➢ UF Preview Leadership from the Division of Student Affairs and Academic Advising Center

o *Existing UF Core Course Development and Implementation Teams:*
These meetings will introduce those involved in the existing core courses to the new framework, requiring each course to incorporate international (N) content for General Education Committee approval and to connect meaningfully to the other two experiences in the UF Core.

  ➢ Director of IUF1000, Dr. Andy Wolpert

  ➢ *Climate Change, People and Data, Extreme Events Teams*

o *Campus-wide Committees:*

  ➢ **Advising Council for Undergraduate Affairs** (Purpose: to request feedback and build consensus surrounding the new framework among the associate deans and other members)

  ➢ **Campus Multi-Faith Cooperative** (Purpose: to engage the students in ways in which the meaning-making exercises can tie into their respective beliefs and traditions)

  ➢ **Faculty Senate's Academic Policy Council** (Purpose: to give the Faculty Senate the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed core model)

  ➢ **General Education Committee** (Purpose: to prepare this group of faculty to assist instructors in working in international (N) credit in the second year courses, to evaluate the overall general education experience this program provides, and to assess the courses and program)

  ➢ **Student Advisory Council for Undergraduate Affairs** (Purpose: to provide students the ability to offer

advice, feedback, and recommendations on the proposed core structure and to develop an undergraduate ambassador program to support students engaged in the UF Core experience)

➢ **University Advising Council (UAC)** (Purpose: to engage campus advisors at the early stage of program development to ensure advisor awareness and to identify critical roles of advising throughout this program)

➢ **UF Academic Assessment Committee** (Purpose: to develop an assessment plan for the individual components and entire program from the beginning of its development)

➢ **University Curriculum Committee** (Purpose: to receive comments on how each program will be impacted by the new framework and to prepare to evaluate and approve new courses in the UF Core)

o *Meetings with Individuals in Colleges or Units:*
   ➢ College Deans
   ➢ Student Government President, Ms. Jocelyn Padron-Rasines
   ➢ UFIC, Dr. Leonardo Villalon, Dr. Matt Jacobs, Ms. Cindy Tarter
   ➢ UF CLS Director, Mr. Josh Funderburke
   ➢ UF CRC Director, Dr. Heather White
   ➢ UF Graham Center, Dr. David Colburn, Dr. Sheila Dickison
   ➢ UF Center for Undergraduate Research Director, Dr. Anne Donnelly
   ➢ Associate Provost for Distance Learning, Dr. W. Andy McCollough

➢ UF Online Director, Ms. Evangeline Cummings
➢ UF Director of Assessment, Dr. Tim Brophy

o *Meetings with Off-Campus Stakeholders:*
   ➢ Selected Employers (per recommendation from UF CRC)
   ➢ Local Religious Organizations
   ➢ Local Non-profit and Community Service Organizations

Step 2: Task Force Development and Initial Campus-wide Engagement *(starting in early Spring 2016 and continuing through program launch)*

In parallel to the initial conversations in Step 1 and with early confidence that the proposed core framework is feasible and has ample campus energy surrounding the concept, Associate Provost Lindner will shape four task forces, composed of faculty, staff, and students, to design the details of and connect the first-, second-, and third-year experiences, respectively.

The *First-Experience Core Task Force*, led by Dr. Andy Wolpert, will be charged with fully meshing the existing content of IUF1000 with the greater theme of the "meaning-making and purpose exploration." Considered in this effort will be a possible name change of this course, while also adjusting course readings and reflections. As with each task force, this group will collaborate with the E-Portfolio Task Force to develop assignments for students to begin developing the habit of

self-reflection and discernment. Examples of initial questions to launch this Task Force's efforts include the following:

➢ How does IUF1000's existing course objectives mesh with the new vision of the UF Core Program? How can they be more clearly aligned?

➢ In what ways can instructors and student assistants enhance their skills in encouraging students to engage in their own learning and to explore their purpose in life?

➢ What roles can emeritus faculty play in serving as meaning mentors?

➢ How can course assignments be interwoven into the e-portfolio component?

➢ How will the course's student learning outcomes meaningfully connect to the other program components?

➢ How can the wisdom gained in delivering this class be transferred to their other components of the UF Core Program?

The *Second-Experience Core Task Force*, composed of but not limited to faculty and staff who have developed and/or delivered the current Natural Sciences and Social Sciences core courses, will develop learning outcomes to be shared by all courses offered in the Natural Sciences or Social Sciences categories. This task force will also collaborate with the UF General Education Committee to successfully infuse international content to fulfill the UF international (N) requirement. Also, this group will assist the Associate Provost in selecting additional courses for development and inclusion in these

categories, and, as with other task forces, members of this task force will develop ideas for e-portfolio self-reflection assignments. Finally, this task force will ensure development of online sections of these courses with quality and learning outcomes equivalent to the on-campus sections. Initial questions for this Task Force to begin its work include the following:

➢ What are the common student learning outcomes shared by all classes in this stage of the program? How will these common outcomes connect meaningfully with the other components of the program?

➢ Should all the courses in this stage be listed in one broad category of a UF Core list, with some satisfying the B/P content and others, the S content?

➢ Should all courses not only including the N designation but also the D designation?

➢ What evaluation process should be used to determine future offering of a course in this program?

➢ Should UF launch another request for proposals for new courses?

➢ How can content be adjusted to satisfy the UF General Education International requirement?

➢ How can course assignments be interwoven into the e-portfolio component?

➢ How should students be guided to meaningfully select a course?

➢ In what ways can enrollment distribution among the course offerings be ensured?

The **Third-Experience Core Task Force** will be composed of both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs personnel to ensure successful collaboration among the various units that support experiential learning opportunities for students. This task force will assume the critical role of developing classes for public service, community service, internships/co-ops, and other activities that will provide students with 0-3 credit hours for their fulfillment of this third phase of the UF Core. This task force will also assist in striking a vision for the structure for successful implementation of this component of the UF Core and will also collaborate with the E-Portfolio Task Force. This Task Force will begin its work by addressing the following questions:

➢ What criteria need to be met for an activity to be eligible for this stage of the program?

➢ What best practices can be gleaned from UF and external programs that require experiential learning for credit (e.g., Pharmacy)?

➢ What is the best process for ensuring that students can register for 0-3 credit hours of any eligible experiential learning activity?

➢ How can students effectively connect with off campus opportunities for experiential learning?

➢ How can existing experiential learning efforts at UF be incorporated into this program?

➢ What minimum criteria would quality an experience in this stage of UF Core?

➢ How can safety and liability concerns in requiring students to participate in experiential learning of this kind be minimized?

➢ How can e-portfolio assignments be interwoven into the experiential learning component of the program?

➢ Should a zero-credit-hour option be available to students?

➢ Should students be required two experiences "outside" the classroom?

Finally, the **e-Portfolio Core Task Force** will, in collaboration with the other three task forces, develop a platform for students to successfully complete the e—portfolio assignments that are interwoven into all three experiences. These task force members will learn effective methods for e-portfolio assessment and will take a strong role in selecting the platform to be used for this program. Cross-campus collaboration of this task force with not only the other task forces but also with the UF Registrar, UF IT, UF advisors, the UF Assessment Committee, and other groups is essential. Also, collaboration with off-campus partners is essential. This task force must engage local community organizations, employers, etc. in order to ensure development of reflection assignments meaningful and "personalized" for each student. Ultimately, this task force will provide a recommendation for the electronic platform (e.g., Canvas) that meshes with UF's IT infrastructure. Initial questions that this task force must consider include the following:

- What are the best practices reported by other universities in effective e-portfolio use?
- Who at UF has effectively used e-portfolios in their courses and other learning platforms?
- How can the e-portfolio component be established to ensure smooth assessment of each individual experience and the entire program through SACS and other accreditation agencies?
- Should Composition credit be available to students in their writing e-portfolio assignments?
- What is the best choice of platforms for the e-portfolio component?

All of the task forces will be asked to provide guidance to UF Undergraduate Affairs in how to most effectively report to the UF campus and the broader community the impacts of the UF Core experience on students.

Step 3: Broader and Deeper Campus Engagement *(starting at the end of Spring 2016 and extending through Spring 2017)*

Once the task forces are assembled and in action, the Office of Undergraduate Affairs will collaborate with these teams to launch deeper conversations across campus in order to fully engage all stakeholders as the core experiences come to life. Avenues to engage students more deeply include the Student Advisory Council for Undergraduate Affairs, the Campus Multi-faith Cooperative, and UF Student Government. Faculty engagement will be catalyzed through the UF Faculty Senate and Deans and

Associate Deans. Continued conversations among staff and faculty advisors will engage these personnel more in depth in order to develop a necessary partnership prior to the UF Core launch.

Activities envisioned to spark deeper campus-wide conversations, especially among faculty, include common book reading (for an example, see Nash and Murray, 2010 and Clydesdale, 2015 as sample books), invited keynote speakers, town hall meetings, and surveys. The successful outcome of this step is a campus-wide knowledge of and commitment to the vision, value, and details of the UF Core program.

Step 4: Develop Resources to Ensure Sustainability of the UF Core *(starting in Spring 2016 and continuing through program launch)*

Through the filter of the campus conversations engaged in Steps 1-3 and in tandem with the efforts of the task forces, UF Office of Undergraduate Affairs will lead larger initiatives in developing resources that will institutionalize the UF Core program. Examples of such resources may include an undergraduate ambassador/teaching corps program, an emeritus faculty corps of meaning mentors, a marketing and media campaign to target prospective and current students, and funding support from grants from federal, state, and non-profit organizations and UF Foundation-led employer and individual donor prospects.

In addition, a critical necessity is development of a centralized process for the following desired outcomes:

➢ Communication among all instructors to provide common threads running through and connecting each experience and to share best practices,

➢ Consistently well-trained instructors, graduate TA's, and undergraduate assistants,

➢ Guarantee of a seamless operation of all experiences for a cohesive, meaningful experience for every student,

➢ Regular evaluation of each course and reporting of the status of the UF Core to on- and off-campus stakeholders.

Ultimately, for this effort to deploy successfully and be sustained over the long term, ample resources and overwhelming campus-wide engagement are necessary. While daunting at the onset, the hope of fulfillment of the vision of this program (to transform every UF student in their awareness of the value of general education in guiding them to find their life's purpose) and the promised increased student persistence should provide the university needed confidence to move forward in this important task.

ANTICIPATED TIMELINE FOR UF CORE PROGRAM

Table 1 shows the timeline of anticipated activities leading up to the launch of the UF Core Program in its entirety. Because of the extensive campus engagement and consensus-building required to launch a successful program, the full launch of the program will be deferred from the Fall 2017 to the Fall 2018 incoming class. Piloting the full program will occur in the Spring 2018 semester to allow adjustments and preparation for the following fall launch.

As described in the previous section, activities leading up to the full launch of the program will involve campus engagement efforts; design, course approvals, and piloting of the experiences by the task

Activity	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Fall 2018
Associate Provost of the Office of Undergraduate Affairs (APOUA) collects information from numerous campus stakeholders.	▓						
APOUA prepares proposed new UF Core framework.	▓						
Pursue external sources of funding	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
APOUA engages campus in initial conversations to ensure feasibility and receive feedback on proposed UF Core.		▓					
APOUA deploys three Task Forces to begin developing each core experience.		▓					
Task Forces engage within and among each other to finalize the UF Core framework.		▓	▓				
OUA engages campus in broader conversation about the UF Core.		▓	▓	▓			
Call for proposals for new second-experience courses			▓				
Completion of necessary course approvals				▓	▓		
Development of marketing campaign and media support				▓	▓		
Prepare UF Preview staff and campus advisors					▓	▓	
Pilot each experience					▓		
Pilot the entire UF Core program						▓	
Launch the UF Core program							▓

Table 1 Timeline for Development and Launch of the UF Core Program

forces and relevant campus committees; seeking external support of the program; establishing a process for communication among all stakeholders of the program; and development of a marketing and media effort that communicates the significance and value of this program to prospective and current students. Successful implementation of the development phase of this program will result in distributed responsibilities for these milestones among various campus personnel, thus reflecting the necessary campus-wide engagement in the program.

CONCLUSIONS: THE UF "MAKER'S MARK"

Given a strong campus-wide commitment towards pre-eminence and the commitment to achieving the seven goals put forward by President Fuchs' Goal-Setting Task Force, University of Florida is at a time of unprecedented opportunity for enhancement of the experience and quality of life it offers undergraduate students. With its shared general education foundation infused with pillars of purpose exploration, international focus, and experiential learning, the proposed UF Core Program promises to distinguish all undergraduate students at the University of Florida. This three-part shared experience that includes UF International (N) general education credit resolves concerns of possible excess hours charges and no interconnectivity of the core experiences.

Development of this program will require deep engagement and conversation of administrators, faculty, staff and students, along with many off-campus partners. In the course of this two-year development effort focused on the themes of making meaning of life and exploring one's purpose, this general education program promises transformation and renewal of all participants as we together answer the very personal questions of "Why am I here?" and "How can my gifts contribute to fulfilling the needs of the world?" The successful outcome of this effort is that every participant in development and implementation and every on-campus and online FTIC student and transfer student who elects to participate will, through engagement in this program, have stronger sense of meaning in their lives and purpose in their life's work. Students, through a combination of course work, practical experience, and encouraging mentorships, will have had exposure to the need of the world and introduction to providing practical means of resolving the problems of the world by wisely using their discovered gifts. When successfully launched, this core experience will truly provide a distinguishing "**UF Maker's Mark**" on every graduate, leading them to successful vocations and to more strongly bonding them to the University and to their shared identity in effecting the **Gator Good** in this world.

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