



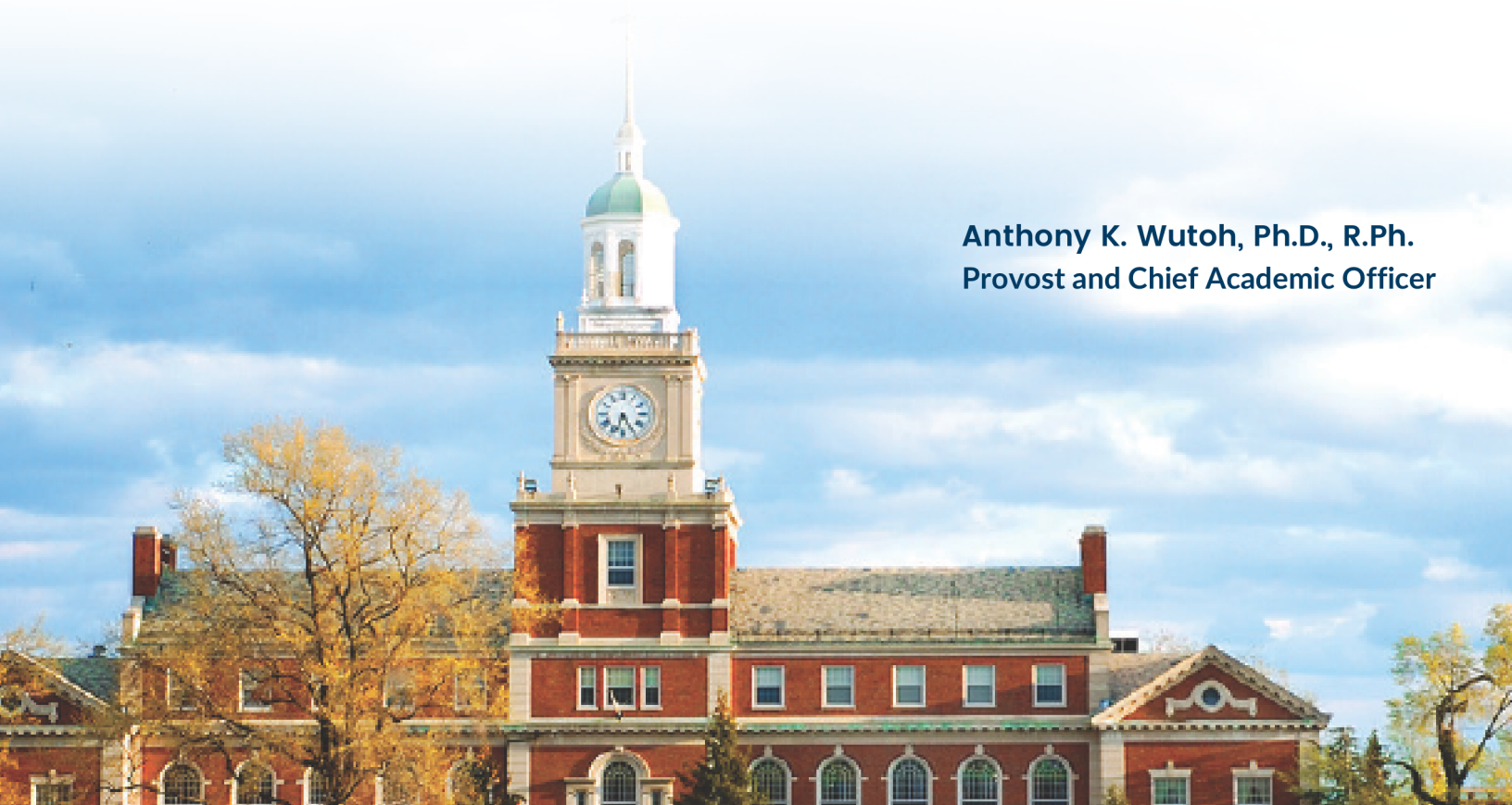
# HOWARD UNIVERSITY

## Re-Imagining the General Education Program

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### Fall 2023

Anthony K. Wutoh, Ph.D., R.Ph.  
Provost and Chief Academic Officer





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# University-Wide General Education Committee

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# Executive Summary

In 2020, Provost and Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Anthony K. Wutoh, released the *Howard Forward Academic Program Prioritization Report and Recommendations*<sup>[i]</sup>. Within the *Howard Forward Academic Program Prioritization Report and Recommendations*, Provost Wutoh emphasized the need to invest resources and transform the general education core into a twenty-first century general education studies program.

To accelerate the Enhance Academic Excellence Pillar of the *Howard Forward Strategic Plan*<sup>[ii]</sup>, the University invested resources to establish the Office of General Education in Spring 2022, which serves as a centralized support unit for undergraduate curriculum matters. The Office of General Education, a division within the Office of Undergraduate Studies, worked with faculty, staff, and students to (a) revise the general education requirements, (b) review more than 3,500 unique courses that were offered between 1999-2023, and (c) revise 107 degree plans (concentrations/tracks) across 47 majors, 56 minor options, and 5 pre-professional/accelerated programs.

This report summarizes collective efforts, led by the Office of Undergraduate Studies, which culminated in a comprehensive revision of the general education core, hereafter referred to as the General Education Program. After describing a brief history of general education, this report describes (1) The Charge, as determined by Provost Wutoh, (2) The Process, which led to the recommendations from the University-wide General Education Committee, and (3) The Recommendations, which were presented for Fall 2023 implementation, by Provost Wutoh, to the Academic Excellence Subcommittee of the Howard University Board of Trustees on March 2, 2023.

The General Education Program includes an updated framework that honors our legacy while charting a new path forward. The framework includes seven (7) Essential Learning Outcomes that every undergraduate student should achieve before earning a degree at Howard University. These Essential Learning Outcomes include: (1) Knowledge of U.S. and Global African Diasporic Developments, (2) Knowledge of Human Cultures and Creative Expression, (3) Knowledge of the Physical and Natural World, (4) Intellectual and Practical Skills, (5) Social Responsibility and Knowledge of Political Institutions, (6) Leadership and Applied Learning, and (7) Comprehensive Wellness Practices.

The updated framework also includes a credit-hour distribution model that consists of 120 credits across three categories: (1) General Education Program Requirements (2) Major and School/College Requirements, and (3) Flexible Cluster, which is inclusive of minors, electives, concentrations, pre-professional requirements, and other innovative pathways.

Overall, the General Education Program aids in defining the value-proposition of a Howard University education. The General Education Program offers flexible pathways for students to pursue interests outside of traditional majors, allows an increasing pool of major changers and undeclared students to explore options without incurring significant delays in time-to-degree completion, emphasizes optional versus required minors, and supports interdisciplinary studies. The General Education Program embraces continuous improvement and innovation, and will employ a gradual release model, starting with new and transfer students in Academic Year 2023-2024.

# Abbreviated Timeline of General Education at Howard University since 2000

## 2000

Board of Trustees adopts General Education core competencies for Fall 2001 implementation. These core competencies included written communication, oral communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competence.

## 2009

Middle States self-study determined that Howard University should establish a University-wide General Education Committee (GEC). The first iteration was known as the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

## 2010 – 2014

Undergraduate Studies Committee issues report: *The Howard University General Education Experience: Achieving 21 Learning Outcomes for the 21st Century Undergraduate (HUGE 21 for 21 Report)*. HUGE 21 for 21 Report did not lead to wholesale adoption, but the outcomes established the foundation for future work. The HUGE 21 for 21 Report embedded the core competencies that were adopted by the Board of Trustees and thus the core competencies remained the primary focal points for general education. A series of reports<sup>[iii]</sup> on the core competencies were published by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment during this period.

Primary Lead: Dr. Gerunda L. Hughes, Ph.D. (retired), Inaugural Director, *Office of Institutional Assessment and Evaluation (now Office of Institutional Research and Assessment)*

## 2017 – 2020

General Education Committee (GEC), originally referred to as the General Education Taskforce, is appointed by Provost Wutoh. GEC includes faculty representatives from the schools and colleges that offer undergraduate programs, Faculty Senate, and staff from the Offices of the *Registrar* and *Institutional Assessment and Evaluation (now Institutional Research and Assessment)*. The GEC, Co-chaired by Drs. Denée Mwenda (College of Arts and Sciences) and the late Dr. Michaela Amoo (College of Engineering and Architecture) reviews general education and conduct analysis of credit requirements by school and college. Co-chairs find that general education core courses were mostly consistent between schools and colleges, but there were no stated learning outcomes for the required courses. GEC also found major credit-hour discrepancies for non-major courses outside of the general education core (e.g., school/college requirements). GEC felt that general education core and non-major requirements may limit course options within the majors. A draft framework, modeled after the American Association of Colleges and Universities' Four Essential Learning Outcomes framework<sup>[iv]</sup>, is developed, but progress is delayed primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Associate Provost of Undergraduate Studies and GEC recommend the creation of the Office of General Education.

Primary Lead: Melanie C. Carter, Ph.D., Inaugural Associate Provost, Undergraduate Studies

## 2022 – Present

GEC reconvenes in Spring 2022 and the membership is expanded. GEC adds new *Faculty Senate* representative, additional members from the College of Arts & Sciences, and works with the *Howard University Student Association* to expand student representation. The Office of General Education, a unit within the Office of Undergraduate Studies, is established to provide additional institutional support for general education and undergraduate curriculum matters. GEC presents provides framework to Schools, Colleges, and various Curriculum Committees and collects feedback on credit-hour parameters and Essential Learning Outcomes. GEC reconciles feedback, collects additional feedback from Schools and Colleges, and develops a revised Credit-hour Distribution Model along with an updated Essential Learning Outcomes framework. GEC sends final recommendation to the Provost and Chief Academic Officer in Spring 2023 for review and adoption. Provost presents final recommendations to the Academic Excellence Subcommittee of the Howard University Board of Trustees in March 2023 for Fall 2023 implementation for freshman and transfer students.

Primary Lead: Kenneth Alonzo Anderson, Ph.D., Associate Provost, Undergraduate Studies



# The Charge

## Why Re-Imagine General Education

In Spring 2018, the Provost and Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Anthony Wutoh, established a General Education Taskforce to build on The Howard University General Education Experience: Achieving 21 Learning Outcomes for the 21st Century Undergraduate (HUGE 21 for 21 Report, 2013). The General Education Taskforce, comprised of faculty representatives from the Faculty Senate and staff from the Offices of the Registrar and Institutional Assessment and Evaluation, reviewed current core requirements and explored how those requirements were operationalized across all undergraduate degree programs and aligned with measurable outcomes.

The Taskforce concurred with the *HUGE 21 for 21 Report* that there is substantive variation among schools and colleges with regard to General Education requirements. The Taskforce recommended that the Office of the Provost host a General Education Institute for department and curriculum committee chairs with the expressed purpose of sharing resources and information that support the development of a unified General Education Program. This Institute was held in the Summer of 2018.

### **Why Re-imagine General Education? Embrace Academic Renewal and the Howard Forward Strategic Plan**

During the 2010s, there were several University initiatives that centered on academic quality. Some of the major initiatives included the *Presidential Commission on Academic Renewal*, *Program Prioritization Task Force*, *General Education Task Force*, and the *University-wide strategic planning process*.

In 2017, Provost Anthony K. Wutoh established the *Program Prioritization Task Force*, which was given the charge to assess the academic quality of all academic programs.

In addition, the University's strategic planning process commenced, resulting in the release of the *Howard Forward Strategic Plan (2019-2024)*. The *Howard Forward Strategic Plan* identified five Strategic Pillars: Enhance Academic Excellence, Inspire New Knowledge, Serve the Community, Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness, and Achieve Financial Sustainability.

Many of the concurrent academic initiatives converged and were aligned to the *Howard Forward Strategic Plan*. Notably, the work of the *Program Prioritization Task Force*, resulted in the release of the *Howard Forward Academic Program Prioritization Report and Recommendations<sup>[v]</sup>*, which categorized programs into one of four categories: strategic investment, continue as-is or with conditions, major reorganization or consolidation, or termination. Within the *Howard Forward Academic Program Prioritization Report and Recommendations*, Provost Wutoh re-affirmed and accelerated prior efforts to reform General Education at Howard University.

### **Enhance The Howard University Value-Proposition**

A central tenant of general education reform and many of the academic quality initiatives is to continue to enhance the value-proposition of a Howard University undergraduate degree. Relatedly, a key component of the Howard University value-proposition is the curriculum. Curriculum can be thought of on a continuum, ranging from a narrow focus on a series of coordinated courses to a very broad perspective of "everything that happens at an institution" (orientation, freshman seminars, major courses, laboratory experiences, study abroad, student organizations, athletics, etc.).

Accordingly, the "Howard Experience" is achieved through course offerings, experiential learning, lab experiences, co-curricular and non-credit requirements, informal faculty meetings, learning communities, student life engagements, and more.

# The Charge

## Why Re-Imagine General Education

Although students choose to attend Howard University for a multitude of reasons, it is important for the faculty and University leadership to collectively identify and be able to articulate the common features or the “secret sauce” of a Howard University education. Individual programs and University experiences collectively contribute value to a Howard University education, but the general education curriculum provides a unique opportunity to define and assess the common experience for all undergraduate students.

### Improve Graduation Rates and Removing Barriers to Degree-Completion

First-rate education along with high retention and graduation rates are hallmarks of vibrant, financially solvent higher education institutions. For the first time in recent history, Howard University achieved a 70% six-year graduation rate in August 2022, which places the University among competitive public and private higher education institutions and further accentuates the quality of a Howard University education. These rates are direct result of a range of initiatives over the past decade to ensure that our students persist to completion, but there is more work to do.

Curriculum reform, notably general education reform and re-evaluation of curricular practices, provide additional opportunities to improve graduation rates at Howard University. For example, legacy practices such as not allowing courses to meet more than one requirement, commonly referred to as “double counting”, and requiring students to complete minors are examples of simple modifications that can remove barriers to degree attainment.

One of the more challenging tasks of revising general education is trying to honor and maintain some legacy practices at Howard University, while charting a new path forward. However, the next few sections regarding the general education reform process will show how dialogue and stakeholder engagement, concerted effort, and commitment to continuous improvement can lead to healthy balance between Howard’s historic legacy while creating space for innovation.

### Provide a 21st Century Education

Higher education and these needs and interests are constantly evolving. For example, when examining the majors of first-time-in-college students (FTICs) over the past two years, FTICs who fall in the undeclared category have been in the top five for the past two years (Fall 2022 and Fall 2023). Although some students in the undeclared category have pre-existing interests in specific disciplines, the relatively large pool of undeclared students, coupled with an increasing pool of “major changers” after enrolling, highlight the need for a flexible curriculum that allows to students to explore options during at least the first year, while not automatically extending their time-to-degree completion.

The notion of 4-year and 6-year graduation rates are consistently being challenged regarding whether these two indicators are sufficient in the 21st century. Other measures such as total indebtedness, persistence, employment rates, and post-graduate admission rates are increasingly becoming of interest to students, families, policy makers, and other stakeholders. In addition, given the rise in advanced standing credits that students receive before entering college, three-year graduation rates (approximately 4% at Howard University), are additional metrics of interest. Likewise, students have increasing interests in entrepreneurship, industry certifications, service learning, and





# The Charge

## Why Re-Imagine General Education

opportunities to double major in fields across Schools and Colleges. Collectively, these trends stress the need for a flexible curriculum and general education program that meets the evolving needs of students.

### Meet Regulatory Requirements

Being able to articulate the common experience of a Howard University education is a germane to maintaining compliancy with many regulatory bodies, broadly and within specific academic disciplines. Specifically, a well-articulated and continuously assessed general education program aids in meeting the standards for re-affirmation with the *Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)*.

As of July 1, 2023, the *MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation* (14th Edition), *Standard III, Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience*[vi], requires that:

A candidate or accredited institution possesses and demonstrates the following attributes or activities:

...3. “academic programs of study that are clearly and accurately described in official publications of the institution in a way that students are able to understand and follow degree and program requirements and expected time to completion;

4. sufficient learning experiences and resources to support both the institution’s programs of study and the academic progress of all student populations;

5. at institutions that offer undergraduate education, a general education program, free-standing or integrated into academic disciplines, that:

a. offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field;

b. offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning,

technological competency, and information literacy. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives;...”

### Engage High-impact Practices

Beyond regulatory requirements, it is simply good practice to regularly reflect on the curricular experiences that shape any institution of higher education, including Howard University. To support general education reform, the Office of the Provost invested resources to establish the Office of General Education, a division within the Office of Undergraduate Studies. The Office of General Education was created by Associate Provost Dr. Kenneth A. Anderson, and the inaugural Director, Dr. Joycelyn L. Hughes-Moulden, was appointed in Spring 2022.

The creation of the Office of General Education re-affirmed Provost Wutoh’s commitment, noted in the Howard Forward Academic Program Prioritization Report and Recommendations, to “invest resources to transform general education into a twenty-first century program in university studies” (p. 9). Specifically, the Office of General Education serves as a centralized convener of Howard University faculty and stakeholders to help shape and assess what it means to be a Howard University graduate. In addition, the Office of General Education will build capacity for undergraduate programs, serve as a conduit for interdisciplinary collaboration, and reduce administrative burden of the faculty by maintaining systems that streamline and automate the curriculum management and catalog maintenance processes.



# The Process

This section summarizes the process used to transform the “General Education Core” into a “General Education Program.” Specifically, this section will focus on efforts from 2017-present. Activities that occurred before 2017 are summarized via a timeline provided in a previous section of this report.

General education has largely been the responsibility of faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences. The College of Arts and Sciences will continue to play a major role in the General Education Program, but as noted in the [\*Howard Forward Academic Program Prioritization Report and Recommendations\*](#), a new charge was issued to transform general into a program of university studies. Rather than place the burden of general education on one College, all Schools and Colleges should look for opportunities to leverage university resources and contribute to the General Education Program.

In addition, the General Education Program should no longer be viewed as a fixed set of requirements that remain for decades. Instead, the General Education Program will embrace continuous assessment cycles over shorter periods, in a manner that values our legacy and charts a path for the future. Thus, the distinction between the term “core” and “program” is not trivial in that the new General Education Program moves away from a fixed set of courses that every student should take. Instead, the revised General Education Program focuses on a common set of outcomes that every undergraduate student should achieve before earning a degree at Howard University.

## Formation of the General Education Committee and Initial Recommendations

The General Education Committee (GEC), originally referred to as the General Education Taskforce, was appointed by Provost Wutoh in 2017. The primary purpose of the General Education Committee (GEC) is to support the adoption, assessment, and continuous

review of a Howard University General Education Program that will institutionalize a unique and innovative Howard experience for all undergraduates. The GEC includes faculty representatives from the undergraduate colleges and Faculty Senate as well as staff from the Offices of the Registrar and Institutional Assessment and Evaluation (now Institutional Research and Assessment).

## Guiding Principles for General Education Reform

Values are at the core of curriculum reform. There are numerous examples from institutions around the country that have faced challenges with revising general education. Howard University is no exception. Since the early 2010s, there have been several attempts to revise general education, with varying levels of success or impact. In some ways, differing values often strengthen general education, but can also impede general education reform. Common questions that often lead to delays include the timeline, communication challenges, the number of credits allocated to various categories and disciplines, concerns that non-major requirements crowd out opportunities for the majors, the overall change management process, and more.

Given the Howard University has attempted to revise general education on a number of occasions, the General Education Committee established a set of guiding principles to aid in completing the arduous task of revising general education. The chief principle was to support the Howard University Strategic Plan Pillars:

1. Enhance Academic Excellence
2. Inspire New Knowledge
3. Serve the Community
4. Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness
5. Achieve Financial Sustainability



# The Process

Whereas, the General Education Program is most closely aligned to Enhance Academic Excellence Pillar, general education is connected to all five Strategic Plan Pillars.

Additional Guiding Principles of the GEC included an acute focus on:

- **Developing a Common Howard University Experience**
- **Empowering faculty**
- **Ensuring portability across Schools and Colleges**
- **Providing flexibility and removing unnecessary barriers to graduation**
- **Increasing graduation rates and reducing time to degree completion**
- **Supporting larger enrollments**
- **Being innovative and exploring opportunities to earn experiential/service learning credits**
- **Supporting accreditation needs and continuous improvement**

These principles aided the General Education Committee by focusing conversations, reviewing feedback, and making final recommendations to the Provost.

## Data Collection, Findings, and Initial Recommendations

The GEC, Co-chaired by Drs. Denee Mwenda (College of Arts and Sciences) and the late Dr. Michaela Amoo (College of Engineering and Architecture) reviewed legacy general education requirements, conducted analysis of credit requirements by School and College, and assessed perceptions of general education. The GEC found that the general education core courses were mostly consistent between Schools and Colleges, but there were no stated learning outcomes for the required courses.

The GEC also found major credit-hour discrepancies for non-major courses outside of the general education core (e.g., school/college requirements). Some committed members of the GEC expressed the concerns that some faculty felt that the general education core, coupled with non-major

requirements, such school/college requirements, limited major course options and discipline-specific rigor.

In terms of perceptions, the GEC conducted surveys of students and faculty and found that:

- students were aware of which general education requirements that they were required to take, but did not understand "why" they had to take them.
- faculty generally agreed that general education was valuable but did not know exactly "what" constituted general education or "why" it was required for their school or program.

Based on the analysis of general education requirements, survey results, extensive dialogue, and the General Education Institute that was held in 2018, the GEC developed a draft framework, focused on four Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) that mirrored the ELOs adopted by the American Association of Colleges and Universities. The four ELOs were Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World, Intellectual and Practical Skills, Personal and Social Responsibility, and Integrative and Applied Learning.



# The Process

The draft framework aimed to re-focus general education requirements around learning outcomes and reaffirmed a previous University effort to limit undergraduate degree programs to 120 credits. To provide structured guidance and shape a common experience, the draft framework recommended credit-hour parameters for the various categories of degree requirements. The GEC initially recommended:

- 30 credits for the General Education Program (25% of the curriculum),
- 50-65 credits for Major Requirements (42-54% of the curriculum),
- 0-15 credits for Minor Requirements (0-18% of the curriculum, if required).
- 15 credits for Electives (12.5% of the curriculum).

The GEC also initially recommended the elimination of a stand-alone school and college requirements, but based on feedback, recommended integrating school and college requirements with major requirements. The GEC originally planned to engage the various Schools and Colleges by sharing and discussing the proposed recommendations, but the COVID-19 pandemic significantly slowed the momentum of the GEC.

## Creation of the Office of General Education

During the summer of 2021, Dr. Melanie Carter, Inaugural Associate Provost of Undergraduate Studies worked on transition plans with Dr. Kenneth A. Anderson, an original member of the General Education Taskforce, who also assumed the role of Associate Provost of Undergraduate Studies on July 1, 2021. During these transition meetings Drs. Carter and Anderson discussed progress and strategies to re-invigorate efforts to re-imagine general education at Howard University. A key strategy was to follow through with the recommendation to create an Office of General Education to support undergraduate programs.

In Fall 2021, the University transitioned back to in-person instruction after a period of mostly online instruction for undergraduate programs, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fall 2021 was dedicated to envisioning the role of the Office of General Education and drafting position descriptions. In Spring 2022, the Office of General Education was launched by Associate Provost Dr. Kenneth A. Anderson and the Inaugural Director, Dr. Joycelyn L. Hughes-Moulden, and Program Manager, Ms. Shaunda Young were appointed.

The Office of General Education serves as a centralized convener of Howard University faculty and stakeholders to help shape and assess what it means to be a Howard University graduate. In addition, the Office of General Education will build capacity for undergraduate programs, serve as a conduit for interdisciplinary collaboration, and reduce administrative burden of the faculty by maintaining systems that streamline and automate the curriculum management and catalog maintenance processes. The creation of the Office of General Education reaffirmed Provost Wutoh's commitment, noted in the *Howard Forward Academic Program Prioritization Report and Recommendations*, to "invest resources to transform general education into a twenty-first century program in university studies" (p. 9).

## Stakeholder Meetings and Feedback

In Spring 2022, the GEC held several meetings to re-convene and refresh on prior work conducted to re-imagine general education at Howard University. The GEC also welcomed a new representative from the *Faculty Senate*, additional faculty members, and several new student members. The Office of General Education also developed a website to track progress and share updates more widely. The primary goals of the Spring 2022 meetings were to develop a common understanding of key breakthroughs from the previous efforts, synthesize ideas, and develop a plan to engage faculty in the School and Colleges that offer undergraduate degree programs (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Summary of General Education Activities Since Spring 2022.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Spring 2022</b>	Office of General Education is established. GEC re-convenes and continues work that before major disruptions due to COVID-19. Office of General Education creates website to provide technical support and publicly track general education efforts.
<b>May 2022</b>	Office of Undergraduate Studies presents general status updates to the Council of Deans and plans to engage faculty in the upcoming Fall 2022 semester.
<b>June 2022</b>	Office of Undergraduate Studies provides status updates to the Academic Excellence Sub-committee of the Board of Trustees.
<b>September 2022</b>	Office of General Education shared the common presentation, outstanding issues prompts, and engaged all seven schools and colleges that offer undergraduate degree programs.
<b>October 2022 - December 2022</b>	GEC received written feedback from curriculum committee chairs or representatives from the seven schools and colleges that offer undergraduate degree programs and publishes the feedback on the General Education website. Office of General Education posted all versions received from the School-wide committees and GEC developed an updated framework that incorporated the feedback of the curriculum committees for public comment.
<b>December 2022 - February 2023</b>	Office of General Education continues to engage faculty via individual and group meetings.
<b>February 2023</b>	GEC submits final recommendation to Provost for review and recommendation to Board of Trustees. Office of General Education analyzes more than 3,500 undergraduate courses offered since 1999 and develops guidelines for faculty review.
<b>March 2023</b>	Provost Wutoh presents final General Education Program recommendations for Fall 2023 implementation to the Academic Excellence Sub-committee of the Howard University Board of Trustees.
<b>March 2023</b>	Office of General Education presents, to the Council of Deans, the recommendations that were shared with the Academic Excellence Sub-committee of the Howard University Board of Trustees.
<b>June 2023</b>	Office of Undergraduate Studies provides technical implementation status updates to the Academic Excellence Sub-committee of the Howard University Board of Trustees.
<b>March 2023 - August 2023</b>	Each Department is provided with templates to align courses, as appropriate, with the new Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs). Faculty identified a rich array courses that map to the ELOs. The Office of General Education holds regular offices hours to answer questions, provide technical support, and collect updated degree plans (formerly known as degree schemes) from Departments.  Faculty reviewed more than 3,500 unique course listings that were offered between 1999-2023 and revised 107 degree plans (concentrations/tracks) across 47 majors, 56 minor options, and 5 pre-professional/accelerated programs.
<b>August 2023 - present</b>	Gradual release model is deployed where incoming freshman and transfer students begin following the new General Education Program requirements. Feedback and assessment data from the first year will be used to inform implementation for Academic Year 2024-2025.

Note: Much of the work was iterative, with no clear beginning and end dates, so the dates represent approximations.



# The Process

When synthesizing prior work, the GEC felt that the proposed framework (as of Spring 2022) was a strong initial model that aligned with national practices but did not seem to fully capture the distinctiveness of a Howard University Education. Additional outstanding issues also emerged, which resulted in the creation of a common presentation and guiding questions for larger faculty engagement.

All Schools and Colleges received the common presentation via in-person or virtual faculty meetings. During these meetings, faculty were given opportunities to ask questions and provide initial feedback. In addition, faculty were provided templates to collect comments and share written feedback to the Office of General Education through the various curriculum committees.

Within the common presentation, the GEC asked faculty to complete three steps:

## 1. Review:

- a. Recommended Credit-hour distribution model
- b. Proposed Essential Learning Outcomes
- c. Outstanding Issues

## 2. Convene:

- a. Department/School/College Curriculum Committees to discuss areas of agreement and areas for improvement

## 3. Submit:

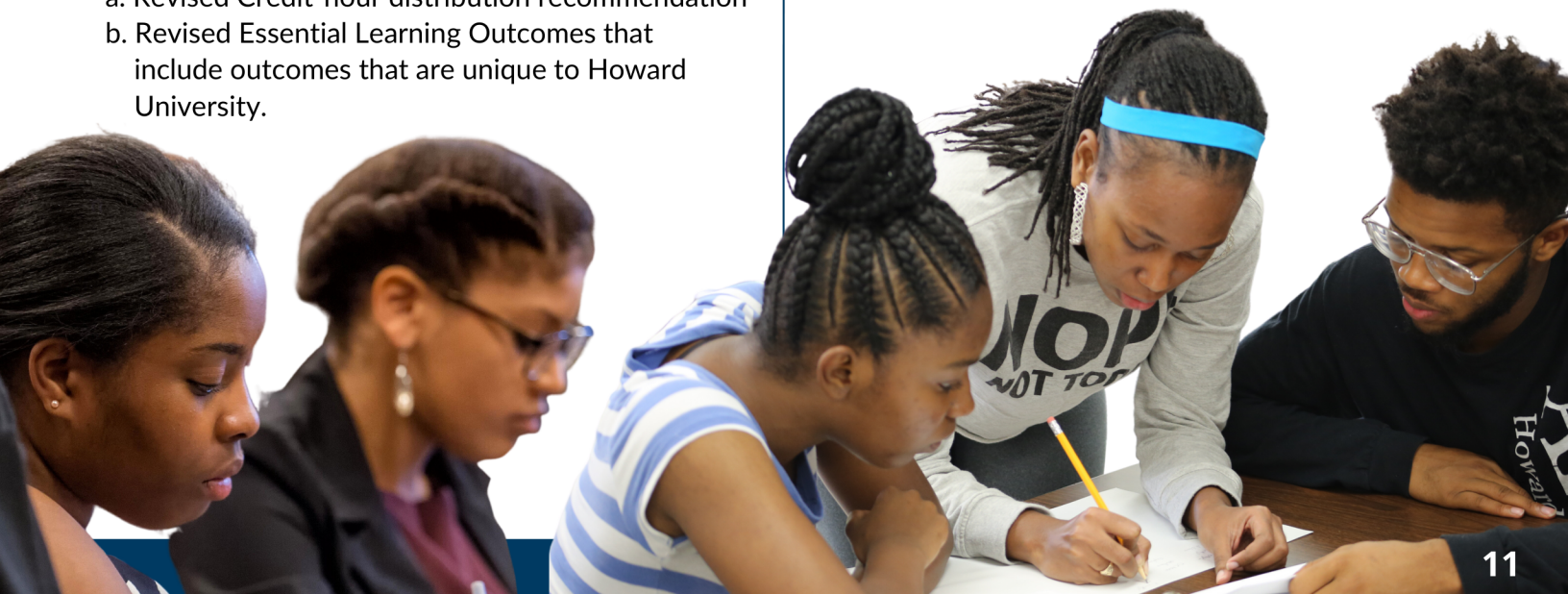
- a. Revised Credit-hour distribution recommendation
- b. Revised Essential Learning Outcomes that include outcomes that are unique to Howard University.

The Office of General Education also provided some optional prompts for faculty to consider based on conversations and questions that were raised in the General Education Committee meetings or other engagements.

The prompts were:

- Do we include specific African diaspora ELOs or embed African diaspora issues within the disciplines?
- What does a Common Orientation Experience look like?
- How do we account for innovation (e.g. 6 maximum credits for Service/Experiential Learning Credits)?
- Should we move to encouraged minors vs. required minors (except in unique cases)?
- How do we cultivate a wellness culture and revisit current fitness requirements?
- How do we address financial literacy?

The General Education Committee used the Guiding Principles, described in a previous section of this report, to reconcile feedback from stakeholders and recommend a robust General Education Program (GEP) framework to Provost Wutoh.



# The Recommendations

On March 2, 2023, Provost and Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Anthony K. Wutoh, presented the revised General Education Program (GEP) framework, for Fall 2023 implementation, to the *Academic Excellence Subcommittee* of the Howard University Board of Trustees. The revised GEP framework synthesized years of collective efforts to develop a twenty-first century general education program that captures Howard University's distinctiveness and aligns with national standards.

The Revised Howard University General Education Program are centered on two key components:

- **Component I: Essential Learning Outcomes**
- **Component II: Credit-hour Distribution Model (120 Credits)**

## **Component I: Essential Learning Outcomes**

The revised GEP framework includes seven *Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs)* that every undergraduate student should achieve before earning a degree at Howard University.

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***Upon graduation, Howard University undergraduate students will achieve:***

1. ***Knowledge of U.S. and Global African Diasporic Developments*** by engaging in learning experiences and disciplines, including Black/African diaspora awareness, history, emerging trends, ways of life and institutions, intercultural knowledge, and cross-cultural comparative skills.
2. ***Knowledge of Human Cultures and Creative Expression*** by engaging in learning experiences and disciplines, including world language competency, visual/performing arts, digital literacy, creative thinking, humanities, and intercultural knowledge.
3. ***Knowledge of the Physical and Natural World*** by engaging in learning experiences and disciplines, including science and environmental consciousness, quantitative research, qualitative research, generativity, and sustainability.
4. ***Intellectual and Practical Skills*** by engaging in learning experiences and disciplines, including written communication, inquiry and analysis, financial literacy, oral communication and public speaking, computational thinking, and information literacy.
5. ***Social Responsibility and Knowledge of Political Institutions*** by engaging in learning experiences and disciplines, including ethical reasoning, understanding the past, social sciences, and civic knowledge and engagement.
6. ***Leadership and Applied Learning*** by engaging in learning experiences and disciplines including foundation and skills for life-long learning, service and experiential learning, 21st-century digital skills, entrepreneurship, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving.
7. ***Comprehensive Wellness Practices*** by engaging in learning experiences and disciplines including emotional wellness and social resilience, health and physical wellness, organizational wellness, and community wellness.

# The Recommendations

The ELOs clearly define a common experience and helps to shape what it means to be a Howard University graduate. In alignment with standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the ELOs provide a framework that can be tracked, assessed, and modified as necessary.

All ELOs must be achieved by students and should be demonstrated by completing 30 credits across at least four different disciplines (e.g., English, Mathematics, Communications, Fine Arts, Education, Sociology, Business, Chemistry, etc.). Requiring 30 credits (25% of the curriculum) across four different disciplines ensures a well-rounded general education curriculum that can stimulate new student interests.

## Component II: Credit-hour Distribution Model (120 Credits)

The revised GEP framework includes a credit-hour distribution model that consists of 120 credits across three categories: (1) University General Education Program Requirements, (2) Major and School/College Requirements, and (3) Flexible Cluster, which is inclusive of minors, electives, concentrations, stackable credentials, and other innovative pathways.

Table 2 provides a summary of the differences between the previous Credit-hour Distribution Model and the new Credit-hour Distribution Model.

**Table 2. Revised Credit Hour Distribution Model (120 Credits)**

PREVIOUS MODEL			REVISED MODEL		
Credit Hours for Undergraduate Degree	Credit Hours	% of Total Credit Hours Required	Credit Hours for Undergraduate Degree	Credit Hours	% of Total Credit Hours Required
	120	100%		120	100%
<b>Course Categories (5)</b>			<b>Course Categories (3)</b>		
General Education Core	15-20	12.5% - 17%	University General Education Program	30	25%
School / College Requirements	18-53	15% - 44%	Major & School / College Requirements	60 - 81	50% - 67.5%
Major	36-45	30% - 37.5%	Flexible Cluster	9 - 30	7.5% - 25%
Minor (If required by the Department)	0-18	0% - 15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optional Minor (15 - 24 Credits)</li> <li>Concentrations</li> <li>Electives / Technical Electives</li> <li>Stackable Credentials / Digital Badging</li> <li>Double Major</li> <li>Pre-professional Requirements</li> </ul>		
Electives	15	12.5%			

**Note:** \*Most programs under the previous model adhered to the 120 credits requirement. However, there were exceptions.

\*\*Double majors and other pathways in the Flexible Cluster may require more than 120 credits that are required to earn a bachelor's degree. In these instances, the Flexible Cluster may be used for partial fulfillment of requirements.



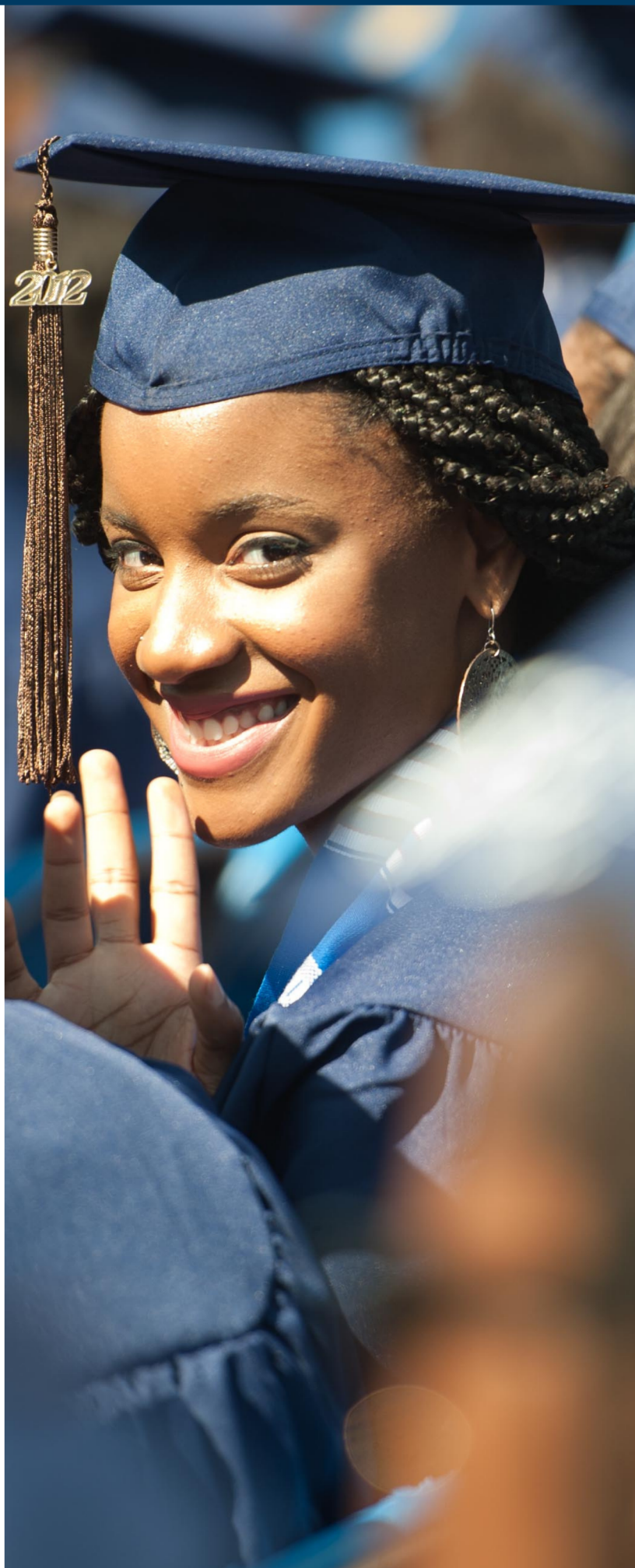
# The Recommendations

After the recommendation was presented to the Academic Excellence Subcommittee of the Howard University Board of Trustees, the faculty leveraged the distinctive course offerings of a Howard University education by identifying a rich array of courses that meet ELOs. Moreover, the faculty reviewed more than 3,500 unique course listings that were offered between 1999-2023 and revised 107 degree plans (concentrations/tracks) across 47 majors, 56 minor options, and 5 pre-professional/accelerated programs.

These updates provide an opportune time to update the general education assessment plan. As such, the Office of General Education, in partnership with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, will implement an updated assessment plan during the Academic Year 2023-2024. Lessons learned from the first year will be used to inform implementation for Academic Year 2024-2025.

The revised General Education Program represents the beginning of a new era, as the work does not end with these recommendations. As such, the Office of General Education will continue relevant activities by engaging and supporting faculty, providing trainings, automating and streamlining curriculum and maintenance course workflows, and integrating changes into BisonHub, the new student information system of record.

Likewise, faculty should continue to engage the process to consider ways to enhance the General Education Program. Opportunities may include developing new courses, creating credit-bearing service learning opportunities to support existing activities such as Alternative Spring Break and Study Abroad, and crafting alternative ways to meet Essential Learning Outcomes, through innovative mechanisms such as non-credit modules that address critical needs such as financial literacy.



# Conclusion

The two components of the General Education Program collectively address the six reasons, discussed in a previous section of this report, for re-imagining general education at Howard University. The GEP framework clearly:

**Aligns with the Academic Prioritization initiatives and the Howard Forward Strategic Plan** by delivering on efforts to enhance academic excellence.

**Enhances the Howard University Value-Proposition** by defining the role that general education plays in determining what it means to be a Howard University graduate;

**Sets the University on a Path to Improve Graduation Rates** by removing barriers to degree completion by enhancing portability of the general education requirements across Schools and Colleges and shifts to optional versus required minors for most disciplines;

**Provides a 21st Century Education** by providing flexible pathways to meet the evolving needs of 21st century learners;

**Adheres to Regulatory Requirements such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education** by offering sufficient curriculum scope, expands cultural and global awareness, and identifies essential skills in a manner that can be tracked and formally assessed;

**Engages High-impact Practices** by providing infrastructural support for undergraduate programs, through the recently-created Office of General Education, with the aim of reducing administrative burden of faculty and supporting continuous assessment.





# In Memoriam



We would like to recognize the significant contributions of our late colleague, Dr. Michaela Amoo, former Co-chair of the General Education Committee and faculty member in the College of Engineering and Architecture.



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