

MEMORANDUM

TO: Matt Hudelson, Executive Secretary
Faculty Senate

FROM: Becky Bitter, Registrar's Office

FOR: Academic Affairs Committee

DATE: November 17, 2021

SUBJECT: Proposal to Establish a New UCORE Designation, EQJS, *Pursuing Equity and Justice*

Last April, the Academic Affairs Committee began discussing a proposal from the UCORE Committee pertaining to establishing a new designation, EQJS, *Pursuing Equity and Justice*. AAC approved the proposal on November 16, 2021. As the proposal describes, the EQJS designation will serve to identify courses which equip students to navigate an increasingly complex society and “create opportunities for students to connect coursework to the broader, co-curricular range of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at WSU.”

The proposal has undergone several iterations in consultation with campus stakeholders, including representatives from all campuses, colleges, the Provost's Office, advising leadership, Student Affairs, and ASWSU. Key points:

- Establishing the EQJS designation will not add credits to the general education (UCORE) program and will therefore not change the number of credits required for any degree.
- Students will choose either a DIVR or EQJS course to fulfill the 3-credit requirement under the “Applied Social Engagement” heading.
- Courses offered under the DIVR designation will focus on global cultural diversity; courses offered under the EQJS designation will focus on the social contexts of power and privilege.
- A subset of the courses currently offered under the DIVR designation are likely to shift to the EQJS designation.

Regarding implementation, the UCORE Committee stands ready to work with departments to convert existing DIVR courses to EQJS and to collaborate with those that have expressed interest in the EQJS designation. Because the addition of EQJS is credit neutral, the EQJS designation, and the courses migrating from DIVR to EQJS, can be approved for the Fall 2022 semester.

Members of AAC strongly support establishing this designation. It meets a timely need and fits well within the context of WSU's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

AAC recommends that the Faculty Senate approve the proposal, to be effective fall 2022.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Academic Affairs Committee, Faculty Senate
FROM: Clif Stratton, UCORE Director, on behalf of UCORE committee
DATE: 26 October 2021
SUBJECT: Revised proposal for UCORE DIVR-EQJS requirement revision

Members of the Academic Affairs of Committee of the Faculty Senate,

We want to thank the membership of AAC for its attention to the UCORE committee's original proposal to create a "Pursuing Equity and Justice" [EQJS] course designation and to revise the current Diversity [DIVR] learning outcomes. We appreciate and understand the concerns raised about the original proposal – especially the proposed increase in credits. We also recognize that AAC found much to like about the premise and need for this change to UCORE.

The UCORE committee has had a chance to discuss options, and on Monday, October 25, we unanimously voted to recommend the creation of a credit neutral "Pursuing Equity and Justice" [EQJS] course designation. If approved by Faculty Senate, students will be able to choose between a DIVR or EQJS course to fulfill Applied Social Engagement, as described in the original proposal. We are currently developing a course transition process to have sufficient EQJS courses in place ahead of Fall 2022. We kindly ask AAC to take up this recommendation as soon as possible so that it may move through proper approval channels.

The UCORE committee also remains committed to "full integration" of equity and justice into WSU's general education program. To this end, we will continue to explore potential credit-neutral changes to UCORE that would require of all UCORE students an engagement with equity and justice.

We are also committed to working with the Office of the Provost to ensure that faculty who are revising existing courses or developing new courses for Pursuing and Equity and Justice or Global Cultural Diversity have the support to do so. The WORD! Fellows writing professional development program has already committed its Spring 2022 cohort spots to such faculty, with a focus on equitable practices in teaching with writing. We will work to expand these efforts through existing and new means.

Sincerely,

Clif Stratton
Associate Professor of History (career track)
Director, University Common Requirements

To: Academic Affairs Committee of Faculty Senate

From: Clif Stratton, on behalf of University Common Requirements Committee

Dated: October 26, 2021

Re: *Updated* Recommended Changes to University Common Requirements (version 3)

On Monday, October 25, at its regularly scheduled meeting, the University Common Requirements Committee unanimously voted to recommend that...

RECOMMENDATION

...WSU add a 3-credit “Pursuing Equity and Justice” [EQJS] course category option to UCORE that complements but is distinct from the Diversity [DIVR] course category. This new course category will empower students to engage in critical conversations about racism, sexism, and other forms of inequality and injustice, and to familiarize them with research, key terms, and concepts that are essential for the next generation of leaders (see proposed learning outcomes section below).

...WSU retain as a course category, with revision, UCORE’s current 3-credit Diversity (DIVR) course category. Courses in this category should advance understandings of diverse experiences and perspectives in comparative, global contexts (see proposed revised learning outcomes section below).

...The addition of EQJS and revisions to DIVR be credit neutral. Students will select either a DIVR or EQJS course to complete an “Applied Social Engagement” requirement (3 credits) in UCORE.

In the process of creating this new EQJS category, some current DIVR courses will transfer to EQJS, and new courses will emerge for both in collaboration with departments and programs offering said courses.

RATIONALE

WSU students have grown steadfast in their desire for an academic curriculum and campus experience that critically examines power dynamics, questions structural inequities and privileges, and promotes healing and justice. Many students and recent alumni committed to social justice [cut their teeth](#) in the weeks, months, and years following the August 2014 police

killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, the 2016 killings of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, LA and Philando Castile in St. Paul, MN, and the 2016 [Indigenous-led resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline](#). Black Lives Matter, led by women of color, began to transform and anchor national and international conversations about race, and many students gravitated to it. For many Cougs, the 2016 US presidential campaign and election, which saw white power support accrue to the eventual winner of the electoral college and sexist animus directed at the runner up, was a high point of such engagement and activism. This work continued in 2017 with women's marches, the #MeToo movement, protests against family separation at the US-Mexico border and against Muslim travel bans. Momentum carried into the Fall semester with a [sit-in protest at French Ad](#), led largely by women students of color, to demand that university leadership, faculty, and staff take seriously the demands, needs, and aspirations of underrepresented and marginalized students. Students persisted in 2019 in exposing [racial disparities in policing](#) by university police. The uprisings for racial justice across the US and indeed the world during the [summer of 2020](#) further crystalized the need for an introspective focus on equity and justice at local, national, and global levels. More recently, the January 6, 2021 riotous, terroristic insurrection at the US capitol by white supremacist conspiracy theorists, incited by a sitting president, laid bare the [stark inequities in law enforcement response](#) and the fragile and deeply unequal state of American democracy. In short, substantive change within our institutional context has been a long time coming.

WSU has begun the work of examining its own institutional shortcomings, blinders, and failures with regard to equity and justice. Following the public lynching of George Floyd at the hands of the state in summer 2020, WSU's executive leadership team issued a forceful [statement](#) committing the WSU community to "greater accountability in confronting racial and social justice failures." "How do we acknowledge the atrocity and pain of past and recent tragedies?" leadership asked. It has called upon WSU to "create an authentic space" in which to address inequality and pursue healing and justice. We believe that the university classroom should provide one such space, through the creation of a new equity and justice course category in UCORE.

WSU's new Provost Dr. Elizabeth Chilton has begun efforts to advance this work, including cluster hires focused on racism and social inequality in the Americas and support for faculty and staff diversity, equity, and inclusion professional training. Professor Lisa Guerrero has been named to a [new vice provost position](#) for inclusive excellence, and she has commenced the work of "implementing WSU's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion." These are no doubt important steps. **An EQJS course category would provide appropriate landing spaces in WSU's general education curriculum for new faculty whose research and teaching align with this proposed UCORE designation** and create opportunities for students to connect coursework to the broader, co-curricular range of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at WSU.

Preceding and overlapping these more recent initiatives, a team of Five Working Groups led by Jaime Nolan, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, Community, Equity, and Social Justice, engaged in a two-year effort to examine "campus climate and culture" following the Fall 2017 student protests. In September 2020, the Five Working Groups issued a report and

recommendations on [“Developing and Sustaining an Inclusive and Equitable Campus at Washington State University.”](#) One of the “highest priority concerns” that the Five Working Groups took up in the wake of the protests was “the need to examine the courses that qualify for UCORE Diversity general education requirements for all students.” To this end, the Five Working Groups have recommended the adaptation of “a core set of learning goals that anchor all [cultural competency and ally] trainings, the diversity UCORE requirement, and all activities related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice on all campuses.”

These recommended changes to UCORE are a sincere effort to address this concern. UCORE presents perhaps one of the most wide-reaching opportunities to build strong foundations for these efforts, as it is the one academic experience common to most WSU undergraduates.

While the proposed EQJS course category, which would centrally address power, privilege, (in)equity, (in)justice, would not be limited to US/western/colonial contexts, maintenance of DIVR would ensure that students examine global, non-western, and pre-colonial contexts. DIVR courses would continue to offer unique insights into how - as anthropologists, linguists, ecologists, and others will argue – “adaptation, local ecologies, subsistence strategies, language, kinship, gender relations, identity, ethnicity and ethnic relations, trade and exchange among neighboring groups, long-distance interactions, hostilities, peaceful relationships, and many other dimensions of culture” demonstrate “the ways in which different groups of people have made sense of their worlds, across space and through time.”

DIVR courses would address social worlds and realities in the broadest sense. EQJS courses, meanwhile, may include some learning outcomes addressed by DIVR courses, but must address a critical dimension of such social worlds and realities - power, privilege, (in)equity, (in)justice - by providing students a set of tools to understand and engage in critical conversations in EQJS, as well as in DIVR and other WSU courses and indeed more broadly in civic life. The two categories would be distinct but symbiotic in our collective mission to prepare students to navigate the messy, shifting social worlds they inhabit.

While the UCORE committee originally approved a recommendation from a faculty working group (Spring 2021) that both DIVR and EQJS be required for completion of UCORE (a credit hour increase of 3), we recognize the concerns raised by Academic Affairs and other constituents at the university regarding increased credit hours. Thus, we concede the credit hour issue and propose the creation of EQJS as an option alongside DIVR. The UCORE committee also remains committed to “full integration” of equity and justice into WSU’s general education program. To this end, we will continue to explore potential credit-neutral changes to UCORE that would require of all UCORE students an engagement with equity and justice.

The following UCORE category descriptions and learning outcomes reveal points of distinction and symbiosis.

PROPOSED DESCRIPTIONS & LEARNING OUTCOMES

APPLIED SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT (3 CREDITS)

Through completion of applied social engagement course, students prepare to become active, empathetic, and inclusive-minded members of the multiple, overlapping social worlds they inhabit. Students complete one of the following...

GLOBAL CULTURAL DIVERSITY [DIVR] (3 CREDITS)

Global Cultural Diversity courses introduce students to differences, similarities, and connections among cultures by exploring the multiplicity of individual and group experiences within and across historical periods, societies, and cultures *in global comparative context*. Courses help students engage and understand social and cultural contexts and interactions across the globe using critical thinking, information literacy, communication, self-awareness, and flexibility in perspective. Using multiple cultural or intellectual perspectives, courses prepare students to address questions about how factors such as history; politics; communication styles; economics; institutions; and/or cultural values, beliefs, and practices influence cultural variation. Courses are intended to help prepare students for lifelong constructive engagement with others in plural societies, promoting the abilities to suspend value judgment in interactions with culturally different others and/or the core beliefs of others; and to negotiate a shared understanding of what produces cultural variation and/or how culture changes across time and/or different geographic and environmental contexts.

Learning Outcomes: *Upon successful completion of a UCORE DIVR course, students should be able to:*

- *Demonstrate understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices (critical thinking)*
- *Recognize and articulate the sources and limits of one's own perspective and cultural rules and limitations in relation to the perspectives of others (critical thinking; self-awareness)*
- *Ask complex questions about other cultures or plural societies, seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect more than one cultural perspective (communication; critical thinking, information literacy)*
- *Seek and use relevant sources of information to demonstrate ways that history, institutions, and/or ideologies shape cultural variation and/or different experiences (informational literacy; critical thinking; communication).*

PURSUING EQUITY AND JUSTICE [EQJS] (3 CREDITS)

Pursuing Equity and Justice courses equip students with intellectual tools and social contexts necessary to critically examine power dynamics and to recognize, question, and understand structural inequities and privileges. Courses demonstrate how inequalities and/or stereotypes, discrimination, systemic inequities, and violence along lines of race, ethnicity, class, gender,

religion, national origin, sexuality, ability, or intersections thereof are produced, sustained, and adapted across time and/or geography. Students develop the ability to position themselves in relation to structural inequities and privileges using self-reflection and open dialogue. Courses provide vital intellectual foundations, tools, and literacies to assess and evaluate ideologies and narratives in order to ethically pursue inclusive and just societies.

Learning Outcomes: *Upon successful completion of a UCORE EQJS course, students should be able to:*

- *Recognize structures of power and privilege and describe when and how such structures shape unequal social positioning and/or sustain unethical worldviews or ideologies (critical thinking).*
- *Articulate the ways in which one's own social identities impact one's engagement with others (communication; self-awareness).*
- *Seek and use relevant sources of information to demonstrate how and why ideologies, constructions, scripts, and other broad generalizations about groups are produced, replicated, adapted over time, and/or persist or manifest in oppressive beliefs and behaviors (information literacy; communication; critical thinking).*
- *Seek and use relevant sources of information to demonstrate how individuals, communities, and movements resist and/or transform institutions that (re-)produce inequality and oppression (information literacy; communication; critical thinking).*

IMPLEMENTATION

Communication, Collaboration, and Recommitment

The UCORE committee fully recognizes that the creation of a new UCORE category and the revision of another will have varied impacts on campuses, colleges, programs of study, advisors, and students. We intend this process of implementation to be collaborative and responsive to the unique circumstances of constituencies across the institution. But we also intend it to be bold in its re-affirmation of the essential role of scholars of Comparative Ethnic Studies; Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; English; Sociology, and other allied fields in advancing equitable and just societies. We must first and foremost recommit to this set of values not just with words but with resources.

As such, we **first** call on university leadership to **appropriately resource units that have remained at the vanguard** of the pedagogy and curriculum that we are proposing. We must recommit the institution to valuing this work by reinvesting in departments and programs that are steadfast drivers of diversity, equity, and justice. Such a recommitment in and of itself would be an act of equity and is an essential first step to ensuring that the people and programs providing essential scholarly expertise are not just surviving but thriving. Without such

investments at the level of central administration, this change to general education is not likely to succeed in delivering on its intended goals as articulated in the learning outcomes section.

This resourcing, we submit, should take the form of stable positions for faculty committed to teaching undergraduate education in the areas of diversity, equity, and justice. Cluster hires modeled on the current tenure-track cluster hire on racism and social inequality in the Americas offers one potential path to scaling course offerings across departments and programs such as Comparative Ethnic Studies; Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; English; Sociology, and other allied fields. Such resourcing would begin to restore and grow departments negatively impacted by the confluence of general education reform and enrollment-based budgeting implemented in 2012-13. It would ensure that units can offer high quality instruction, student-centered engagement with critical issues of diversity, inequity, and injustice, and stable positions for faculty committed to teaching, scholarship, and university service.

Second, we invite colleagues outside of these core departments and programs to develop new courses that speak directly to the contexts, experiences, and needs of the range of programs of study across the institution. As such, part of UCORE's work will be to assist colleges, schools, departments, and programs, if desired, in developing or reimagining courses that satisfy EQJS or DIVR within the context of those fields of study. This too, will require course development resources that bring to bear, in collaborative settings, the expertise of scholars of diversity, equity, and justice as applied to fields of study that as of yet do not steadily focus on this work.

For example, the School of Environment might develop an EQJS course on environmental racism and/or environmental justice, especially in collaboration with faculty in Sociology who specialize in environmental justice. The College of Education's current "Diversity in Education" or "Communicating in Diverse Classrooms" courses might achieve UCORE designation for either DIVR or EQJS, depending on learning outcomes alignment. Or the college might choose to develop a new course on social justice in education. The Voiland College of Engineering and Architecture might consider existing or new course(s) within the School of Design and Construction, which was recently awarded one of the positions within the new cluster hire for racism and social inequality in the Americas, for addressing issues of discrimination and marginalization within the industry and professions of engineering, design, and construction.

Likewise, the Carson College of Business might devise a course around issues of equity and justice in wages, hiring processes, or supply chains, as examples, or collaborate with History faculty on a course that examines the long history of inequities in global capitalism. A course on inequality in rural public health seems essential to the training of undergraduate students planning to pursue medical, nursing and pharmacy degrees. Sociology and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, both of which offer courses that explore the connections among health, society, and social inequity, offer points of collaboration. UCORE leadership stands ready to broker relationships among programs in order to foster cross-/multi- disciplinary collaboration on new and revised courses. In the long run, such collaboration only strengthens the curriculum and student experience in general education.

In doing so, programs would be committing themselves to producing graduates capable of addressing issues of diversity, equity, and justice in their respective professional contexts. The stakes are high both in the public square and also in the workplace: lawsuits, microaggressions, violence. Our students must be able to recognize and actively dismantle inequities in their future professional contexts, not to mention while students at WSU.

In short, we recommend that with regard to UCORE DIVR and EQJS courses, the university:

- *Bolster with appropriate resources the units whose current and future experts are already engaged in scholarship, teaching, and service around issues of diversity, equity, and justice, and...*
- *Expand in collaborative fashion and where appropriate into colleges and programs whose educational missions traditionally lie elsewhere.*

We see this proposed change to UCORE as generative of the kinds of listening, acknowledgement, responsiveness, and collaboration sorely needed in times of political, economic, and social stratification. It further provides an impetus or spark for curricular reforms that colleges, departments, and programs may already intend to initiate in the wake of 2020's events and university leadership's calls for self-examination and institution-wide change.

CONCLUSION

A broadly educated populace is a necessary pre-condition for economic, environmental, political, and social orders undergirded by a collective commitment to diversity, equity, and justice. Based on the American Association of Colleges and Universities' LEAP initiative, UCORE provides this broad, liberal education. We must help students connect this education to the present and future work that society will demand of them. As geographer Richard Russo notes: "general education should set about trying to end the alienation and isolation that prevents us from challenging the status quo, dulls our capacity for empathy, and neutralizes our will to agitate for change and justice."¹ In other words, we ought to further align our mission not only with understanding the world as it is but with a capacity to generate the kinds of equitable, justice-minded changes necessary for all people to meet their basic needs, to contribute, and to thrive.

¹ Richard Russo, "Social Justice as General Education," *Journal of Geography* 103 (2004), 102-110.