Grand Challenge Learning Leadership Committee

Lauren Goodlad, Office of the Provost, Liberal Arts and Sciences, English, Co-Chair
Kelly Ritter, Office of the Provost, Liberal Arts and Sciences, English, Co-Chair
Gabrielle Allen, National Center for Supercomputing Applications
Phyllis Baker, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
Trevor Birkenholtz, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Geography
Tami Bond, Engineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering
Joe Bradley, Engineering, Engineering Administration
Antoinette Burton, Liberal Arts and Sciences, History
Evan DeLucia, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Plant Biology
Laura DeThorne, Applied Health Sciences, Speech and Hearing Science
Kim Graber, Applied Health Sciences, Kinesiology and Community Health
Lisa Hinchliffe, University Library, Library Administration
Karen Hyman, Engineering, Engineering Administration
Kenneth Importante, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
Jonathan Inda, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Latina/Latino Studies
Kevin Jackson, Business, Accounting
Madhu Khanna, Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, Agricultural and Consumer Economics
Frances Kuo, Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, Natural Resources and Environmental Science
Joseph L. Murray, Senior Undergraduate Representative
Gene Robinson, Institute for Genomic Biology
Olesya Savchenko, Graduate Student Representative
Anna Stenport, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Germanic Languages and Literature
William Stewart, Applied Health Sciences, Recreation, Sport and Tourism
Chloe (Rosie) Velazquez, Undergraduate Student Representative
Terri Weissman, Fine and Applied Arts, Art History
Valeri Werpetinski, Engineering, Engineering Administration
Gillen Wood, Liberal Arts and Sciences, English
Staci Provezis, Office of the Provost, ex-officio

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a member of the Grand Challenge Learning Leadership Committee. This Committee is charged to provide crucial oversight and guidance through the next steps (through December 2016) of a campus-wide pilot in Grand Challenge Learning at the general education level.

Background:
The goal of educating students for society’s grand challenges was identified as a high priority in the Fall 2013 round of the Campus Conversation on Undergraduate Education and subsequent Spring 2014 working groups. Their recommendations called for the creation of pathways for three themes:
Health & Wellness, Inequality & Cultural Understanding, and Sustainability, Energy & the Environment. Each pathway will eventually include several kinds of high-impact learning organized around these topics.

In Fall 2015, working in collaboration with the Grand Challenge Learning Leadership Committee, the campus launched six prototype Grand Challenge Experience courses (GCX), two for each pathway. In Spring 2016, 22 additional courses were added. GCX courses are designed to include diverse cohorts of up to 25 first-year students (including first-year transfer students). Taught by faculty, Grand Challenge Experience courses engage the grand challenge topic in question, while covering one or more General Education requirements, and include some dimension of experiential learning (for example, project or design-based learning, community-engaged scholarship, field trips, or service learning). GCX courses afford the opportunity for professors to work on a voluntary basis with Student Affairs staff members (chosen for their expertise on the grand challenge topic and/or related forms of experiential learning). The 2015-16 GCX courses cover General Education requirements in the Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities and Arts.

The 2015-16 GCX courses have been assessed through a special instrument designed by the Provost's Office in addition to ICES and instructor-generated questionnaires. In Fall 2015, instructors chose their own ICES forms while in Spring 2016 we have introduced a core of questions chosen for their relevance to Grand Challenge Learning.

The next phase of the pilot is already under way, with three new Critical Frameworks Modules for all three pathways now approved for General Education credit at the college and campus levels. Twenty faculty members—from Agriculture, Business, Applied Health Sciences, Engineering, Fine Arts, Liberal Arts & Sciences, and the School of Labor—have signed on to teach these innovative courses in Fall 2016 and again in Fall 2017.

The next component of the pilot is a “call for courses from all over campus.” These may be existing General Education courses that bear on the topics of Health, Inequality, and Sustainability. They may also be new or modified courses. Although we expect most of the courses to be at the 200 or 100 level, we will also consider proposals at the 300 level.

An additional component of all Grand Challenge Learning course entails creative use of ePortfolios. In general, ePortfolios should be used to enhance students’ critical thinking, communication skills, and professional development while helping them to concretize and integrate learning goals specific to the topic of the grand challenge theme. As the Grand Challenge Learning initiative grows, and begins to include cohorts of students who plan to complete an entire four-part pathway, ePortfolios will provide a concrete and visible means of integrating and showcasing student learning on a particular grand challenge topic.

The Grand Challenge Learning Leadership Committee provides oversight and guidance to a pilot structure that is currently led by two Provost Fellows and a Project Manager* all of whom report to Charles Tucker, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education & Innovation. The Provost Fellows share their leadership responsibilities with three Executive Co-Chairs: Bill Stewart (AHS) for Health & Wellness, Terri Weissman (FAA) for Inequality & Cultural Understanding, and Trevor Birkenholtz (LAS) for Sustainability, Energy & the Environment.

*Beginning in Spring 2016, Provost Fellow Kelly Ritter joined the leadership team. Provost Fellow Lauren Goodlad continues as Provost Fellow through the end of AY 2015-16 after which she will continue to lead the Critical Frameworks courses with Ritter taking over her other duties. In Spring 2016 Alaina Pincus took over for Esti Ezkerra as Project Manager.
Charge:
All members of the Grand Challenge Learning Leadership Committee (GCLLC) should familiarize themselves with the website for the Grand Challenge Learning pilot: https://undergrad-education.illinois.edu/initiatives/grand-challenge-learning-pilot/index.html

Beginning in Spring 2016, members of GCLLC should

1. work to assist the pilot leadership in finalizing, disseminating and publicizing the “call” for campus courses (see draft call in Appendix 1). They should also assist in helping each Executive Co-chair to create procedures and assemble committees suitable for the thorough evaluation of proposals. GCLLC members are also invited to identify and recommend existing courses that represent exemplary learning on Grand Challenge topics. (Such courses should be qualified for General Education or suitable for adopting for General Education teaching.)

2. help the pilot leadership team to create learning objectives suitable to Grand Challenge Learning courses.

3. provide advice on publicity and other vehicles for introducing Grand Challenge Learning to various campus stakeholders and scaling up accordingly.

4. assist the pilot leadership team in the continuing assessment of Grand Challenge Learning courses and the program more generally, including the use of ePortfolio software.

5. take part in preliminary discussions about the integrative experience (the concluding component for each pathway) and the possibility of a certificate for each grand challenge topic.

Thank you very much for devoting your time and expertise to this important undergraduate initiative.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Tucker III
Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Innovation

c: E. Feser