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# General Education

General Education profoundly influences undergraduates by providing the breadth of knowledge necessary for meaningful work, life-long learning, socially responsible citizenship, and intellectual development. This 49-unit program, which comprises over one third of an undergraduate's course of study, places specialized disciplines into a wider world, enabling students to integrate knowledge and to make connections among fields of inquiry.

The General Education program at SDSU prepares students to succeed in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world. Our students will live and work in the context of globalization, scientific and technological innovation, cross-cultural encounters, environmental challenges, and unforeseen shifts in economic and political power. Through this program, students will acquire knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world that will enable them to engage significant questions, both contemporary and enduring.

To put their breadth of knowledge to work, students gain intellectual and practical skills such as inquiry and analysis, creative and critical thinking, written and oral communication, scientific and quantitative literacy, and technological-information proficiencies. Students practice these skills in progressively challenging venues, mastering learning outcomes from a series of courses drawn from the following four sections: I) Communication and Critical Thinking; II) Foundations of Learning; III) American Institutions; and IV) Explorations of Human Experience. In order to acquire the skills required for advanced coursework within and across disciplines, student should complete the four sections sequentially.

The General Education program at San Diego State University is evolving. A standing committee of faculty and students reviews the program continually and encourages the development of new courses, concepts, and learning experiences.

## Seven Essential Capacities Developed through General Education

In addition to mastering the specialized disciplinary knowledge typically associated with undergraduate majors, well-educated individuals acquire general abilities, habits of mind, or capacities that significantly enhance their intellectual and professional lives. Students come to understand how arguments—whether in journal articles, laboratory reports, lyrics, or manifestos—are constructed and evaluated; and they are able to craft persuasive cases in a wide variety of contexts. Students become familiar with the ways scholars—whether physicists or literary critics—theorize; and they are able to apply different kinds of theoretical models to real-world conditions. Students come to realize that most significant phenomena—from endangered species to British novels—cannot be understood in isolation because they are inevitably situated in complex webs or networks of interrelated phenomena; and they are able to locate concepts, ideas, texts, and events within these broader contexts. Students recognize the value of engaging diverse and opposing principles, perspectives, and people to achieve political, intellectual, artistic, and social ends; and they grow competent in the sorts of negotiations such engagement requires. Students come to appreciate that local and global perspectives on subjects as diverse as policing, safe drinking water, and artistic trends are inevitably connected; and they can bring the two perspectives together. Students come to see that diverse concepts—from principles of harmony to supply and demand—apply to multiple phenomena; and they are skilled in identifying the relevance of such concepts across traditional boundaries. Finally, students come to understand the intricate causal relationships between actions—whether giving a dowry or exploring space—and their effects; and they develop the ability to evaluate consequences in meaningful and responsible ways.

In order to develop these abilities in all our students, San Diego State University's General Education program will emphasize the following seven *essential capacities*:

1. Construct, analyze, and communicate arguments;
2. Apply theoretical models to the real world;
3. Contextualize phenomena;
4. Negotiate differences;
5. Integrate global and local perspectives;
6. Illustrate relevance of concepts across boundaries;
7. Evaluate consequences of actions.

It is important to note that although these essential capacities inform General Education, they are by no means its exclusive property. In fact, these fundamental abilities are to be further strengthened through students' major coursework. More specific goals of the various areas of General Education articulate directly with the seven essential capacities, in many cases manifesting the general abilities characterized—in rather abstract terms—by the capacities.