Philosophical Statement – The purpose of higher education is to provide students with some of the knowledge and skills they need to function as thoughtful and educated citizens. Thereby, the public interests are served by providing an educated citizenry within the legal and moral structure of society. The structure of higher education should provide for both depth of knowledge and understanding through specialization in strong major and minor degree programs, and for breadth of knowledge and understanding through a program of university studies. The general goals of the University Studies program should be to provide the opportunity for students to enhance the skills of the intellect; expand their knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the arts, natural sciences, technology, social sciences, literature and the humanities; and contribute to the improvement of human interactions. These goals can best be accomplished through exposure to a common core of knowledge, as well as through the opportunity to select courses to accommodate individual interests. A common thread building the program components will be the required competencies called for in the 1985 AAC Report, (1) Inquiry, abstract logical thinking, and critical analysis; (2) Literacy; (3) Understanding numerical data; (4) Historical consciousness; (5) Science; (6) Values; (7) Art; (8) Intellectual and multicultural considerations; (9) Study in depth. The program of University Studies should broaden the sense of responsibility for the need to know the complex issues within various dimensions of human existence. The learning environment should be academically challenging and encourage active participation by the student.

Program Goals

The intellectual skills component of the University Studies program should enable the student to think independently, to write effectively, to speak fluently, to read with comprehension, and to listen attentively. Intellectual skills also include the abilities to use mathematical reasoning and thinking as well as computation, and to conceptualize goals and ways to attain those goals. Concurrent with the development of these skills should come improved ability to think logically, to analyze and compare, to question and evaluate.

The core component of the program is intended to provide the students with a broad range of experiences. So much knowledge exists and so many experiences are available that no program or student can exhaust the possibilities. Recognizing this, the core component will include content from various disciplines so as to provide students with common bodies of knowledge and experiences generally accepted as desirable of all educated people. This component, through the broad range of liberal arts courses, should further students’ ability to be flexible and to educate themselves as new needs arise.

The integrative studies component of the program is expressly designed to help students examine and develop imaginative, yet disciplined, solutions to complex problems. They will do so by synthesizing the skills, knowledge, and methods developed in other components of the University Studies program. Selected information and skills developed in earlier classes should be so integrated that students discover connections among diverse human endeavors.

Task Force Recommendations – The task forces have reached consensus on the following recommendations as determined by vote.
1. The name University Studies should be adopted as a working title for the revised General Education Program.

2. University Studies should change toward a less distributional model than the present General Education Program.

3. All students shall be required to demonstrate the competencies established for the University Studies program. Test out procedures should be available for students who can demonstrate proficiency in any of the intellectual skills courses. It is also recommended that test out procedures be developed for core area courses where appropriate.

4. The University Studies program should consist of a three-tier arrangements beginning with a first tier of Intellectual Skills, followed by a Core, and capped by Integrative Studies.

5. Intellectual Skills courses within a discipline should be clearly sequenced and completed before junior status is reached, with prerequisites clearly stated and rigorously enforced.

6. Core courses should be distributed throughout the four years.

7. Interdisciplinary studies should be set apart in a category identified as Integrative Studies, consisting of courses at the 3000 and 4000 levels.

8. Integration of course material is to be encouraged throughout the University Studies curriculum.

Consensus was also reached on the following points, although they were not formalized by parliamentary action.

1. Active learning was perceived as a means of drawing students into the learning experience, and it was agreed that active learning should be employed in university studies where feasible, without infringing upon the academic freedom of individual faculty.

2. Continued improvement of intellectual skill developed early in the educational experience can be enhanced by structuring course requirements so that students have the opportunity to use these skills throughout their academic careers.

The following sections of this report summarized the rationale, goals and recommendations presented by each task force. Readers interested in more complete presentations of each task force are urged to consult the attached reports.

Task Force I. Intellectual Skills
Rationale – One of the university’s major responsibilities is to foster creative and critical thinking in all of its students. Thinking is not a separate skill but is integrally bound up with reading, speaking, writing, reasoning mathematically and engaging with the content of all fields. Thus, all University Studies courses should call upon students to practice and grow in higher order thinking abilities.

Students should have opportunities to question, to clarify, to exchange and modify positions, to evaluate, and to challenge their own beliefs and those of others. Emphasizing active learning (e.g., questioning, discussions, collaborative learning and frequent short reaction writing to help students discover how to think and what to learn) in most University Studies classes should help students become more creative and critical thinkers.

Students need to grow in thinking ability not only to make themselves more able and interesting human beings, but also in order to communicate more effectively. Students need to be able to communicate effectively using mathematics and words because communication is a primary mode for discovering who they are, orienting themselves in the world, functioning with others and developing their potential for the future. Communication provides a foundation for much of their intellectual development, as well as serving as a primary means by which they discover, clarify and share with others their sense of values.

Goals – After completing University Studies courses, students should be more confident and capable in their ability to reason, to understand mathematical proofs and ideas, to write, to read, to speak, to listen, to observe, and to be creative. They should be critical thinkers able to employ different stages of thinking and different types of arguments. They should value the questioning spirit and critical attitude not only in themselves but in all others.

Because they should understand how intricately linked are thinking and other intellectual skills, students should routinely use writing, speaking and listening to enhance their own learning, as well as to communicate rationally and with ethical intent. In both speaking and writing, they should recognize the primary importance of audience and be able to adopt their communication for differing audiences.

Students need to be as flexible in their approaches to reading as they are in their approaches to writing. They should not only comprehend what they read, but be able to apply it. Further, they should read for pleasure as well as to gain insights into the human condition.

Students should realize that words are not the only means of communication. Mathematics is also a language with which they can reason and through which they can communicate. The students should develop an appreciation for the value of mathematics: through studying mathematics, they should learn the process of problem solving. Finally, they should become not only critical but also creative thinkers and value such creativity in others as well.

Recommendations – The fundamental recommendation of this task force is that creative and critical thinking should be taught across the University Studies curriculum (remedial or college preparatory courses will not be counted as credit towards University Studies). Classroom activities and tests and writing done in University Studies courses can reflect conscious awareness of the levels of thinking in a hierarchy such as that proposed by Benjamin Bloom (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation), or
some other relevant taxonomy. Because student-thinking abilities are advanced by active learning, we recommend that active learning be reflected in the University Studies curriculum.

In addition to fostering thinking across-the-curriculum, the university may wish to consider instituting a mandatory writing-intensive introductory course in creative and critical thinking, either a single-unit course, or a double-unit course team-taught by a member of the writing faculty and a faculty member from another discipline. If such a course is instituted, it should have prerequisites of a writing course and one other intellectual skills course.

The intellectual skills goals will be achieved by students through taking these courses only if mandatory placement is adopted for courses in this block. We do not consider that students have demonstrated sufficient ability in the sills if they cannot earn at least a “C” in their mandatory intellectual skills courses. Just as a “D” average does not allow students to graduate from this university, a “D” grade in any of the intellectual skills courses suggests that students have satisfied minimal course requirements but does not reflect proficiency in these areas.

Task Force II. Science and Technology

Rationale – The rationale for inclusion of a substantial component in science and technology in a university studies program stems from their seminal influence on the culture and philosophy of western civilization, and from the immense impact of these disciplines on present and future societies. A combination of skills, values and basic knowledge in the sciences is a major component of the foundation of our technologically dependent society. Citizens who are leaders or active participants in society will be vastly more effective if they have an acquaintance with these skills and values, and with some coherent part of the knowledge base. As a university with a particular focus on science and technology, CMSU has a special obligation to present students with the best possible learning experiences in these fields.

Goals – The science and technology component is intended to model attitudes of open-mindedness and honesty, inquisitiveness, objectivity and critical, independent reflection. Operating within these parameters, the student must discriminate between the formulation of hypotheses and their confirmation, and be capable of objectively evaluating assumptions upon which hypotheses are based. Students must be able to apply the processes of science and technology, which require familiarity with an appropriate body of knowledge. They must be competent in the recall of basic facts, theories and laws of the natural sciences and their applications. To succeed in this endeavor a student must achieve facility with quantitative measurements and their manipulation, as well as statistical analysis of data, and its application.

The science and technology component of a university studies program should address principally the AAC Competencies of inquiry, abstract logical thinking and critical analysis, understanding of numerical data and the body of knowledge recognized as science. This component should address in a secondary fashion, historical consciousness, literacy, and ethics.
Recommendations – We recommend a prescriptive block of courses structured around a single theme (e.g., energy), beginning with a unit in the physical sciences that explores the theme in some detail. The second unit in the sequence would be similar in design, expanding the theme into the biological sciences. Both physical and biological units would serve as prerequisites to a third unit in technology intended to show the application of natural laws relevant to the theme, and of scientific procedure to the design of tools that harness these natural forces. The purpose of this structure is to emphasize the commonality of science and technology. All courses must have an experiential/laboratory component.

Task Force III. Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Rationale – Clearly, the principal determinants of any individual’s place relative to all others are history, culture, and public institutions. Without history, the student loses the essential guidance of experience; without the vital knowledge of literature and the arts, the individual is deprived of the means by which people have interpreted the meaning of that experience. Deprived of a knowledge of public institutions and the social, economic, and political system, no person can be an effective citizen, consumer, and producer.

Students are the heirs of a great civilization. The study of their history, especially that of western civilization, along with the literary and artistic artifacts of various historical periods, is a means to permit personalities of the present in the light of the long record of human endeavor and with reference to solid evidence. The study of American government and institutions, and especially the Federal Constitution, introduces students to the means by which power is gained, helps them to evaluate how power is used, and encourages them to analyze the value and implications of particular public policies. Similarly, the student of economics permits students to understand the economic processes which determine the allocation of resources and the production and distribution of goods and services.

The social sciences, including anthropology, geography, world history, political science, economics, and sociology, also help students to understand the contribution of prehistoric societies to the rise of civilization, to see the influence of the world beyond the national frontier, and to comprehend the dynamics of intergroup and intragroup activity. They further help students to understand the significance of politics and political processes to the individual, to the state and government, and to the international system, while conveying the impact of the physical and cultural environment, of the character of place, on the development of the social order.

Philosophy introduces students to some of the great intellects of our civilization, whose arguments and systems are part of the vital core of our cultural heritage. Study of their work contributes to cultural literacy, enhances various crucial intellectual skills, and empowers students to develop in a more informed and disciplined manner their own speculations on human nature, religion, knowledge, justice and other perennial philosophical topics.

Ignorance of the arts is a form of illiteracy. Therefore, the University Studies core should require varied arts experiences and enough of those experiences to produce a meaningful level of cultural competence in students. The importance of learning about the arts is further evidenced by the Association of American Colleges, which has identified art as one of the “nine critical competencies.” Through art, including music, literature, theatre, and the visual
arts, students develop cultural concepts and discover and experience the beauty of life, lesions of history, problems of society, and questions of value and moral character. As a Rockefeller report noted, the arts are educating and civilizing.

Goals – In the area of history, government, and the social sciences, students should understand that their lives have been shaped by past events, trends, and understandings. They should study history and civilization to learn that there is a cause and effect relationship in human affairs and that knowledge of the past provides perspective and permits a more rational and effective evaluation of individual and collective thought and action. Students should also obtain knowledge of the structure of government and the formal and informal means of gaining and using power. This should include knowledge of governmental institutions and the criteria for evaluating public policy and issues, but it should also include an inculcation and understanding of values and qualities of character that help sustain civil liberties and rights.

Students should also acquire knowledge of the economic systems by learning the processes which determine the allocation of resources and the production of goods and services. Finally, students should be aware of the significance of geographical influences on human existence, the foundations of modern life provided by prehistoric societies, and the impact of individual and group behavior.

Students should have (1) some acquaintance with the problems, procedures and conclusions posed by great philosophers; (2) an appreciation of the pervasiveness of philosophical problems, and the relevance of philosophical speculation, in a variety of disciplines and areas of human experience; (3) the ability to analyze and evaluate complex arguments; (4) the ability to speak and write about such arguments with clarity and precision.

Students of literature and arts should have (1) a knowledge and comprehension of the historical and cultural background, terminology, and mechanics of art, and ways of approaching particular types of aesthetic experiences; (2) the ability to apply this knowledge and understanding to works of art and artistic traditions with which one is previously unfamiliar and which one has not studied in a formal class; (3) the ability to analyze the formal structure of works of art, seeing the relation of parts of the whole and recognizing the theme, purpose, and means employed in the work; (4) the ability to formulate conclusions about how a particular work relates to the artist’s sensibility, the medium and genre requirements of the art, and its historical, cultural, and aesthetic considerations and on considerations of morality, ethics, and human value; (6) the ability to communicate the above understanding in the effective written and spoken English using commonly accepted aesthetic criteria.

Recommendations – These goals may be achieved only by a variety of academic experiences in history, philosophy, the social sciences, literature and the arts. The encounter with literature and the arts must involve hearing, reading, and viewing of works in conjunction with formal study. And, given the state mandate for instruction in American history and American and state government, it follows that students should also have sufficient opportunities to study the other social sciences as well as the history of their civilization and other aspects of government. In all practicality, however, if these goals are to be achieved, a greater proportion of the total program must be devoted to this general category than is presently the
case. This is necessary to give minimum latitude to the social sciences and to achieve the goals of humanities and the arts.

In order that a meaningful, coherent relationship be achieved within this category, therefore, it is recommended that students have distinct academic experiences in history, government and public institutions, and in more than one of the social sciences. It is further recommended that students have distinct academic experiences in literature, philosophy, and the arts.

Task Force IV A. Cultural Interactions (International and Multicultural Studies)

Rationale – Multicultural awareness occurs when someone encounters another whose appearance, tools, customs, beliefs, and language(s) are significantly different. As in the past, people still resist a mutual understanding of and respect for the many ways of global life. Multicultural education intends to promote this understanding and respect. It encourages students to overcome their native ethnocentrism and feel at ease in an international or cross-cultural setting. A liberal education about human diversity prepares students to compete in an interdependent and changing world.

Goals – A fundamental goal is the recognition that cultures, and attitudes, develop through time; every culture has a heritage. Therefore, multicultural studies involve the past as well as the present, record the inevitable changes in all human societies, and note the successes, failures, and impacts of cultures through time. As an immediate goal, multicultural studies will teach a basic belief in human equality through diversity. Students should learn and display in-depth knowledge of the languages, beliefs, customs, and tools of other cultures, including non-American and non-Western. If possible, they directly experience other cultures through on-campus activities with international students and/or study abroad. This knowledge and experience helps students develop curiosity and tolerance, rather than mistrust, for other ways of life. They constantly compare aspects of their lives with others. They accept the presence and validity of cultural differences. As an ultimate goal, multicultural education should refine attitudes away from prejudice. These changes in attitude are individual, and hence, measurable goals. They serve as student assessments before and after course work and experience.

Recommendation – Cultural Interactions directly addresses AAC Competency #8, International and Multicultural Experiences. It “. . . will take students into a world beyond themselves, make them again and again outsiders, so that they may return and know themselves better.” No single experience accomplishes these goals. Students require many exposures in different arenas to build an adequate sample of the world’s cultures. Multicultural education first depends upon those academic disciplines with a history, priority, and practice of cross-cultural research.

Task Force IV B. Personal Interaction

Rationale – The purpose of a university education is to help students become cultural heritage, [sic] but if they do not also understand themselves and how to effect productive relationships with others, they will be impoverished indeed. An understanding of how and why individuals change physiologically, psychologically and sociologically throughout their lifetimes, as well as how these changes affect their relationships with others, is necessary to complete the wholeness of the university graduate.
Goals – Students need to learn how humans change in intellectual, personality and socialization skills and what causes those changes. They need to learn strategies that will enable them to prevent undesirable changes in their cognitive, emotional and physiological well being. Further, they need to recognize appropriate and inappropriate behaviors in themselves and others. And they need to know the causes of personal and social conflicts and understand strategies to resolve those conflicts.

Recommendations – We recommend that students have a choice from courses which integrate the physiological and psychosocial goals.

Task Force V. Integrative Studies

Rationale – Within the framework of University Studies, a culmination of a CMSU student’s learning endeavor will be work in integrative studies. Students need to be able to blend concepts from disparate learning areas; to see what the methods of one type of study can teach when applied to the content of another area (e.g., how proportion, a mathematical concept, can be applied to poetry or architecture as an aid in aesthetic appreciation); to perceive how allusions from one type of learning can inform the emphases made in another (e.g., historical references in a marketing analysis).

Goals – Students are to demonstrate, in sustained as well as brief oral and written presentations, a capacity to react to a problem by marshalling facts and approaches of an interdisciplinary nature.

Recommendations – Meshing the contents and methods of different disciplines will require that courses approved as integrative studies combine the materials of two or more of the traditional disciplines (basically those represented in departments) that are not already closely related to each other (a la physics and chemistry), and that at least one discipline be represented in other University Studies categories. Course proposals for integrative studies must show what methods and/or subject matters are being integrated, and they must include means of requiring inquiry and critical thinking, a stipulation that mandates a small class size.