PHILOSOPHY OF EASTERN’S GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Approved by Faculty Referendum Spring 2003

CORE ABILITIES OF A LIBERALLY EDUCATED PERSON

ECSU’s general education program, major programs, campus culture and environment are designed to produce graduates with the self-disciplined habits of mind, the skills, and the abilities that allow them to meet future challenges with success. These include the ability to:

- productively engage in multiple modes of thinking (creative, intuitive, reflective, critical, analytical, logical, etc.) so that the graduate may 1) select appropriate frameworks to make and implement decisions, and 2) examine, structure, and/or create information in ways appropriate to a variety of contexts;
- communicate clearly both orally and in writing in order to meet the demands of the variety of complex communications situations graduates will encounter in their workplaces and communities;
- apply scientific concepts and quantitative skills, thus understanding how scientific and mathematical data are presented and verified, and allowing for a systematic and rational approach to scientific or mathematical problems and issues in graduates’ workplaces and communities;
- act in an informed and appropriate manner when interacting with those from other cultures, so that graduates can live and work productively in an increasingly global society;
- understand the influences of their own culture, so that graduates can understand how culture provides a framework for their interpretation of their world, both clarifying and limiting that interpretation;
- appreciate historical context in order to apply the lessons of history and to understand the interrelated influence of the cultural, philosophical, social, political, economic, scientific, technological, and artistic realms on human values; and
- acquire new skills and engage in independent inquiry so that graduates can continue to educate and prepare themselves for a variety of future challenges in their workplaces and communities.

Liberally educated ECSU graduates, then, are independent thinkers and self-initiated learners--who have the means and ability to make their own choices in life. Because of their ability to make sound decisions and solve problems, graduates of ECSU are able to take active roles in their communities and their workplaces.
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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ECSU’s commitment to liberal education is anchored in three principles:

• Involvement
• Integration
• Independence

ECSU encourages involvement, faculty involvement, administrative involvement, staff involvement, and, most certainly, student involvement. Faculty at ECSU get involved through innovative and student-centered approaches in the classroom, participation in co-curricular programs and activities, and a commitment to mentoring students outside the classroom. Students become involved academically through their work on class projects that require their imagination and intellectual commitment; they become involved socially through participation in a variety of clubs, athletics, or other co-curricular activities; and they become involved in the community through projects and programs that address the common needs of the university and Willimantic communities.

ECSU’s curricular and co-curricular programs emphasize integration. Courses within the general education requirements and within major programs help students understand the relationships between diverse fields of study and the impact that people and ideas outside their own field can have on their work and their lives. The academic, social, and personal realms of students' lives are integrated, so that students see their studies as an important part of who they are and who they will become, and so that they also see their social activities (participation in clubs, athletics, or life in the residence halls) as a complement to and reinforcement of--rather than an interruption of or break from--their lives as students. Co-curricular and curricular integration invites students to make connections everywhere--between a course in Chemistry and a course in Philosophy, between those courses and a campus entertainment event, and between a discussion in class and a discussion with friends in the dining hall.

Finally, ECSU students develop independence. ECSU's integrated curriculum, faculty involvement and mentoring, and student involvement in active learning produce graduates who are independent thinkers and self-initiated learners--who have the means and ability to make their own choices in life. Students' experiences at ECSU encourage the development of self-awareness, allowing them to identify their own strengths and recognize challenges. They also develop the self-disciplined habits of mind and behavior that allow them to meet these challenges with success. Because of their ability to make sound decisions and solve problems, graduates of Eastern are able to take active roles in their lives, their communities, and their workplaces.