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**University Studies**  
**North Carolina A&T State University**  
[www.ncat.edu/~univstud](http://www.ncat.edu/~univstud)

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## **Preamble, Learning Objectives and Curriculum Structure**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the General Education (University Studies) core curriculum at North Carolina A&T State University is to provide a framework for critical inquiry that serves as a foundation for continuing academic development and life-long learning. Through discovery, inquiry, analysis, and application, the core curriculum promotes:

- *broad-based critical-thinking skills*
- *effective written and oral communication of ideas*
- *appreciation for diverse cultures,*
- *commitment to ongoing civic engagement and social responsibility*

The University Studies (UNST) core curriculum derives its purpose from the University's goal to prepare students through interdisciplinary learning and discovery to assume leadership roles in a fast-changing global society. Through coursework and co-curricular experiences, the UNST core curriculum develops in students an understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge, encourages cross-disciplinary dialogue, and promotes the development of intentional learners who take responsibility for their learning.

### **Guiding Principles**

- The UNST core curriculum serves as a bridge to advanced study within disciplinary majors, where the critical thinking skills developed during a student's first two years of coursework are further developed and enhanced. The core curriculum extends into the major with an emphasis on the continued development of effective critical thinking and communication skills, culminating in a senior-level capstone experience that highlights and reflects students' intellectual development within and across disciplines. While the core curriculum promotes foundation-level knowledge in a broad array of disciplines, it is important to note that it does not provide *all* the preparation needed for every major. Some majors will require additional coursework, field experiences, and collaborative learning skills to meet discipline-specific needs.
- The UNST core curriculum provides a common foundation for building the knowledge and skills that are required in today's fast-changing society. Every graduate, regardless of his or her major, will possess a common set of attributes defined by the core curriculum's learning objectives.
- Students will be expected to demonstrate their achievement of these learning objectives and associated learning outcomes through ongoing assessment at both the course and program level. In addition, academic departments offering courses that fulfill UNST core curriculum requirements will be required to regularly provide evidence that the courses are achieving the learning objectives that they were originally developed to achieve.

## **Learning Objectives**

### Communication

1. Effectively use information technology to find, interpret, evaluate, and use information discerningly.
2. Effectively communicate in diverse settings and groups using written, oral, and visual means.
3. Effectively employ critical thinking skills in written and oral communication.
4. Effectively relate ideas and concepts, as well as modes of inquiry, across disciplines.

### Analytical Reasoning

5. Use analytical thinking skills to evaluate information critically.
6. Apply multiple modes of inquiry, including quantitative and qualitative analysis, to formulate, describe, evaluate, and solve problems.

### Application of Scientific Method

7. Apply scientific reasoning skills to model natural, physical, social, and aesthetic phenomena using multiple modes of inquiry.
8. Use a wide range of disparate information and knowledge to draw inferences, test hypotheses, and make decisions.

### Multicultural Relations Within a Global Society

9. Understand African/African-American culture and traditions, including political, economic, and social challenges affecting people of African descent.
10. Interact effectively with people from diverse cultures.
11. Understand and appreciate the diversity and interrelationship of cultures locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally

### Historical and Social Processes in a Changing World

12. Understand the role of social, political, and economic institutions and processes in the development of societies and the factors that lead to dynamic change in societies over time.

### Artistic and Literary Understanding

13. Understand the role of literature, music, and the fine arts in describing, defining, and celebrating the human condition in diverse world cultures.

### Ethics and Social Responsibility

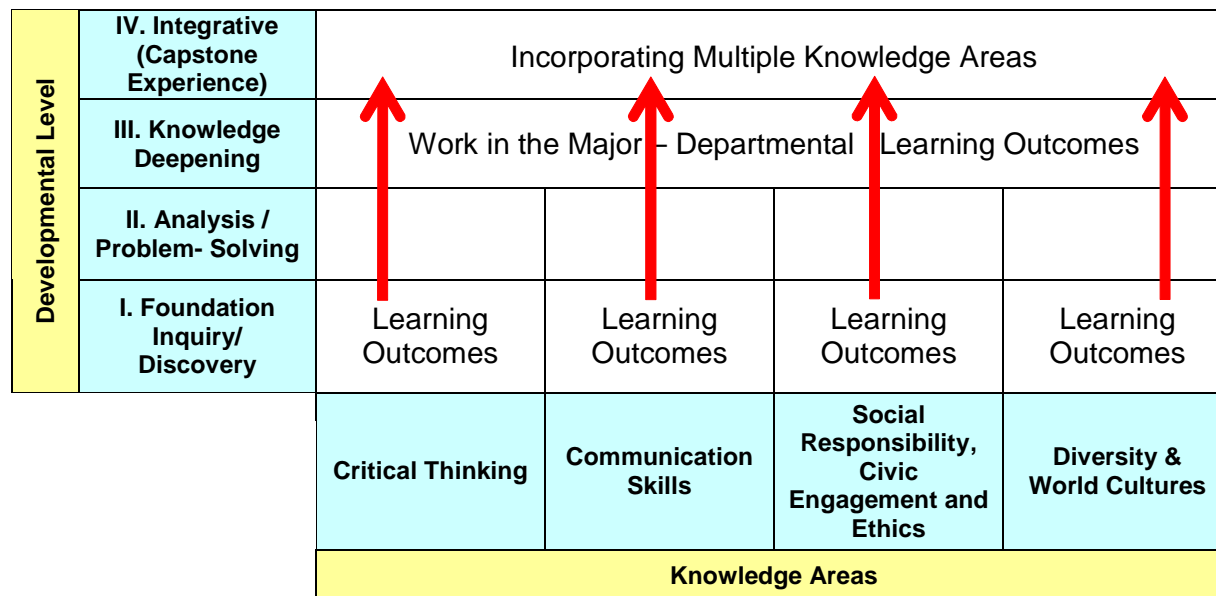
14. Understand and apply ethical reasoning principles to resolve moral, social, and professional issues.
15. Understand the role that markets, governments and other social institutions can play in reducing social and economic inequality

### Health, Lifestyles, and Behavior

16. Understand and promote principles of wellness that include nutrition, exercise, avoidance of mind-altering chemicals, development of healthy relationships and personal growth
17. Recognize behaviors that place individuals, families and communities at risk.

## Developmental Model

Conceptually, the University Studies curriculum represents an intentional developmental process focused on introducing basic inquiry, discovery, and critical thinking skills in the freshman year, strengthening analytical and problem-solving skills in the sophomore year, deepening those skills through coursework in the major during the junior and senior years, and ending with an interdisciplinary, integrative capstone experience in the senior year. At each of these levels, coursework and experiences outside the classroom should build and reinforce critical thinking and communication skills, social responsibility and ethical decision-making, and appreciation and understanding of diverse cultures.



## Clusters Concept

Clusters consist of foundation courses (13 credit hours) and theme-based “problem-solving” courses (12 credit hours). Students will be expected to complete their foundation courses in the freshman year, before taking the theme-based courses as shown below.

UNST 2XX/3XX	UNST 2XX/3XX	UNST 2XX/3XX	UNST 2XX/3XX	<b>Theme-based analysis/problem-solving courses (12 credits)</b>	<b>Volunteer Service (50 hours)</b>
UNST 100: University Experience (1 credit) UNST 110: Critical Writing (3 credits) UNST 120: The Contemporary World (3 credits) UNST 130: Analytical Reasoning (3 credits) UNST 140: The African-American Experience: An Interdisciplinary Experience (3 credits)				<b>Foundation courses (13 credits)</b>	

## Curriculum Structure

### 1. Cluster Courses

#### *1A. University Experience*

1 credit

This seminar will emphasize the role of the University Studies program and present a broad overview of the curriculum structure and rationale. The seminar will introduce students to a variety of interdisciplinary themes within the UNST program.

#### *1B. Foundation Courses*

12 credits

These four courses form the foundation of the University Studies curriculum and focus on the four major goals of the UNST program. The Foundation courses emphasize formative and summative assessment, active learning, and introduction to interdisciplinary thinking.

#### *1C. Theme-based Courses*

12 credits

Students will be required to select one cluster theme and take 12 credit hours within the same theme. Theme-based courses will emphasize interdisciplinary learning motivated by societal issues and problems, will be communications-intensive, and will emphasize formative and summative assessment. Each cluster theme will be governed by a committee consisting of faculty members from various disciplines.

### 2. Major specified courses

**At least 9 credits**

Selection of these courses is left to individual degree programs provided each of these additional courses adds to or reinforces one or more of the learning objectives.

### 3. Capstone experience

**At least 3 credits**

Designed and specified by individual degree programs and consistent with the goals and objectives of the UNST program. Capstone experience may include design projects, internships, co-op experiences, foreign study, community projects, etc. Senior level course.

### 4. Volunteer service

**50 hours**

Students will spend 50 hours in volunteer service. The purpose of the projects will be to promote service learning through participation in community service activities either on campus or in the local community.

## Freshman Competency Assessment

### Freshman Competency

0-12 credits

During Freshman Orientation, all students will be expected to demonstrate competency in the following areas:

- English composition
- Mathematics

Each competency area will be assessed separately. If a student fails a particular assessment, he/she will be required to successfully pass one 3-credit course to enhance his/her abilities in the corresponding area. Students who fail the assessment in English composition will be required to successfully complete UNST 103. Students who fail the Mathematics assessment will be required to successfully complete MATH 099. These courses will not count towards UNST requirements.

In addition, it is strongly recommended that academic programs consider adding competency assessments in the following areas:

- Information technology
- Foreign language

### **UNST 103: Basic Writing 3(3-0)**

This course is designed to prepare the student for writing college-level compositions. The course begins with a focus on paragraph writing, requiring that students demonstrate their ability to develop and organize paragraphs adequately and clearly. In addition, the course concentrates on the short composition, requiring that students demonstrate competency in writing short essays. Computer-based tools such as Criterion may be used to address basic errors in student writing. The course will be offered for Pass/Fail grade.

## **Exceptions to UNST Requirements**

The UNST Program is subject to the academic regulations published in the University Bulletin. This section clarifies the treatment of special situations that may require exceptions to the UNST course requirements.

### **Advanced Placement Credit**

A student entering the University from secondary school may obtain advanced placement and college credit on the basis of performance on the College Entrance Examination Board Advanced Placement examinations. A score of three (3) or higher on any CEEB advanced placement examination will entitle the student to credit for a comparable UNST course. The academic advisor and department chair will recommend AP credit. The final decision on accepting AP course credits as a substitute for one or more UNST courses will be made by the Dean of the school/college in consultation with the Dean of University Studies.

### **Transfer Credits**

All transfer students must discuss with their NCA&T academic advisor whether specific courses taken at previous institutions qualify for UNST credit. The academic advisor and department chair will recommend transfer credit equivalencies. The final decision on accepting transfer credits as a substitute for one or more UNST courses will be made by the Dean of the school/college in consultation with the Dean of University Studies.