Appendix E: Proposed Adaptation of the Re-Envisioning Proposal (Provost)

The General Education Program at Western Connecticut State University is designed to help students develop essential skills and habits of mind that are the underpinnings of a successful undergraduate education. The program is organized into four tiers starting with Foundations for Learning, which orient students to college level expectations for speaking, writing, and reasoning. The Foundations are followed by five Modes of Inquiry designed to explore the distinct ways disciplines ask and answer questions. Courses in Self and Society encourage students to develop a sense of their own values in relationship to their life choices and their engagement with others. Finally, Synthesis courses ask students to bring together information from different bodies of knowledge, draw connections and distinctions between them, and communicate about those connections and distinctions in discipline appropriate writing.

Each general education category has a common set of learning outcomes that can be developed in a wide range of courses. Students may complete the general education categories within their major or in another discipline. This gives students the flexibility to develop essential skills and habits of mind in disciplines that interest them the most. However, to ensure breadth in the undergraduate experience, all students must take at least 40 credits outside of their major.  

Tier 1: Foundations for Learning
- First Year (FY)
- WRT101 Composition I (W1)
- Information Literacy (IL)
- Logical Reasoning (LR)
- Oral Communication (OC)
- Quantitative Reasoning (QR)

Tier 2: Modes of Inquiry
- Creative Process (CP)
- Critical Interpretation and Analysis (CA)
- Scientific Inquiry (SI) (Must be natural or physical science)
- Historical and Social Inquiry (HS)
- Writing Intensive Tier 2 (W2)

Tier 3: Self and Society
- Cultural Awareness (CA)
- Health and Wellness (HW)

Tier 4: Synthesis
- Writing Intensive Tier 3 (W3)
- Culminating General Education Experience (CE)

First Year (FY), Writing Tier 1 (W1), and Quantitative Reasoning (QR) must be completed within the first 30 credits.

1 Cognates and certification courses may be included in the breadth requirement. See your program sheet for details.
Proposed Statement on *The Educated Person*

In the digital age, with continuous access to instant and ancient forms of communication from all over the world, it is striking that the educated person is best cultivated through the essential skills and habits of mind most associated with the traditional liberal arts. The ability to navigate and organize the barrage of inputs, such that one feels capable of responding in a reflective and informed way, is the goal of an undergraduate education and serves as preparation for life-long learning. To develop that ability to reflect and respond, our students will

- Practice presenting their ideas in writing and orally in order to become clear and confident communicators;
- Develop skill in finding and sorting through information, evaluating its merits in terms of the credibility of sources and the logical consistency of arguments in both verbal and quantitative forms;
- Understand that the questions we ask about the world are shaped and answered differently depending on the discipline in which they arise;
- Be aware of the ways in which culture is infused in every aspect of their lives, from personal behaviors and interpersonal interactions, to patterns of power or rites of passage; and
- Connect the skills and habits of mind introduced in our general education program to their major disciplines, becoming ever more aware of how interdisciplinary perspectives can enrich and enhance understanding of both simple and complex questions.

Our graduates will carry these habits of mind with them after graduation, prepared to successfully navigate myriad choices as they build rewarding lives.

(Note: An Educated Person statement must be developed for any version of general education).

**Adaptation Proposal: Revised or New Learning Outcomes**

For this Adaptation of the Re-Envisioning proposal I propose the following changes to the learning outcomes and general education categories.

1. Accept the revisions suggested at the Assessment Retreat (Appendix B).
2. Remove the term “competency” in the descriptions and replace with “courses.”
3. Add a restriction to Scientific Inquiry that limits accepted courses to Natural or Physical Sciences to align with the TAP definition and New York General Education rules.
4. Divide Critical Thinking into Logical Reasoning (LR) and Critical Interpretation and Analysis (CI). Logical Reasoning is nearly the same as the existing Critical Thinking definition as amended at the retreat. Critical Interpretation and Analysis makes room for courses focused on Textual Analysis in all forms, without having to address the structure of an argument.

**Logical Reasoning (LR)** courses help students develop the ability to recognize, examine, critique and synthesize arguments. It consists of two key components: acquiring the skills to assess the clarity, accuracy, relevance, and strength of arguments, and developing habits of mind to utilize those skills in the evaluation of arguments.

Upon completion of a course focused on **logical reasoning**, students will be able to:
• Recognize arguments: Students will distinguish between arguments (which may be in the form of claims, propositions, positions on a topic, a specific interpretation, or another form, depending on the discipline) and unsupported claims or opinions, and identify the central claim of an argument. (Retreat Revision)
• Analyze arguments: Students will determine the components of a given argument and their relation to the whole;
• Critique arguments: Students will evaluate assumptions and the quality and reliability of evidence. They will apply relevant criteria for evaluating different types of arguments, including potential counter-arguments;
• Synthesize arguments: Students will formulate good arguments, which justify positions by bringing together reasons and evidence in a coherent structure that provides reasonable support for a conclusion; and
• Apply arguments: Students will apply critical thinking through a discipline-specific method

Critical Interpretation and Analysis (CI) courses focus on sustained engagement with texts of various kinds – photographs, films, novels, plays, poems, primary documents, critical and theoretical essays, works of music and art, among others – such that students will develop an understanding of the texts as understood by disciplinary experts and be able to articulate their own defensible interpretation of those texts.

Upon completion a course focused on critical interpretation and analysis of texts, students will be able to:

• Demonstrate understanding of the text(s) in terms of the discipline; and
• Present a defensible interpretation of a text from their own perspective.

This is suggested as an alternative to the proposed humanistic inquiry so that courses in any area that focuses on close readings and interpretations of text might be included. It removes the disciplinary tag and simplifies the learning outcomes. It is adapted from Connecticut College Modes of Inquiry [http://wordpress.conncoll.edu/connections/modes-of-inquiry/](http://wordpress.conncoll.edu/connections/modes-of-inquiry/)

5. Replace Intercultural Competency with Cultural Awareness and allow all courses approved for IC to retain the approval.

Cultural Awareness (CA) courses ask students to explore artifacts, practices, social institutions, and social interactions of cultures other than their own, with curiosity and openness, even (especially) when they challenge one’s worldview. Cultural Awareness can be achieved in many areas of the curriculum and be demonstrated in many formats (papers, presentations, applications), but in all cases students must be required to do something that asks them to examine the interplay of the subject of study and their values/worldview. Adapted from AAC&U Intercultural Competence Rubric.)

Upon completion of a courses focused on cultural awareness, students will be demonstrate:
• Openness to cultural differences by suspending judgment of the subject of study in favor of understanding it from the perspective of the context in which it arose; and
• Curiosity about cultures by asking questions that move beyond descriptions of the subject of study to examining it in relationship to one’s own worldview.

6. Add Historical and Social Inquiry rather than the two separate categories proposed in the Re-Envisioning Proposal. This makes room for a wide range of departments to participate, reflects the fact that at many schools history is considered a social science, and does not add too many new credits to the existing requirements. When coupled with Cultural Awareness and Critical Inquiry and Analysis, nearly every non-science or math curriculum will find a natural home in these areas of the general education curriculum.

Historical and Social Inquiry (HS) courses examine human societies and human experience in terms of change and continuity over time. Drawing on modes of inquiry appropriate to the humanities (close readings of texts) and/or the social sciences (empiricism), students will develop a sense of pattern and context, connecting past to present. (Adapted from Connecticut College’s Modes of Inquiry.)

Upon completion of a course focused on historical thinking, students will be able to

• Understand the people, events, or practices studied from the perspective of the contexts in which they arose.
• Connect that perspective with present circumstances and events.

7. Remove of the requirement to repeat three competencies.

Impact on Credit-Hour Requirements
This proposal has been mapped to following disciplines: JLA: Corrections, BBA: Financial Accounting, BS: Music Education, BS Meteorology, and BA Chemistry: Biochemistry, BA Political Science, BS Secondary Education: History, and BS Elementary Education: Interdisciplinary Major. In testing the impact of this proposal, only Elementary Education will have to make any changes to fit into a cap of 120 credits. The changes will be relatively easy to make.

Impact on Approved General Education Courses
Following some of the suggestions in the Re-Envisioning proposal, these principles should minimize the disruption that would follow this change.

1. All intercultural competency courses will be accepted as Cultural Awareness Courses. Departments would simply update the learning outcomes on the approved courses and submit them to the Provost to be placed in the course outline archives.
2. Courses approved for Critical Thinking should be reviewed. Departments will determine if they wish to convert to Critical Interpretation and Analysis or Logical Thinking.
3. Scientific Inquiry should be removed from the two approved non-natural/physical science courses.
4. Courses should be submitted for Historical and Social Inquiry. It is anticipated that several History courses will change their designation from CT to HS.