Syracuse University
Shared Competencies Initiative

A White Paper to Guide Discussion

By the University Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Shared Competencies

October 30, 2019

Syracuse University Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Shared Competencies
October 2019

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Syracuse University prepares undergraduate students for professional and personal success through six learning goals called the Shared Competencies. Approved by the University Senate in December 2018, the Shared Competencies help faculty and students communicate the overall value of a Syracuse University education. They ensure consistency across the wide variety of academic programs.

The Shared Competencies (also see appendix A) are:

- Ethics, Integrity, and Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Scientific Inquiry and Research Skills
- Civic and Global Responsibility
- Communication Skills
- Information Literacy and Technological Agility

The next step is to implement the Shared Competencies. Three principles guide this process:

1. emphasis on student, faculty, and staff development;
2. sustainability;
3. shared institutional governance.

This white paper reflects our initial discussion and thinking about these principles and presents three interrelated implementation goals for 2019-20:

1. Build Capacity by pilot testing the creation of Communities of Practice for each competency;
2. Map the existing coverage of the Shared Competencies in academic programs;
3. Review outcomes of existing programs, and monitor post-graduation plans and career outcomes.

This work begins with the *Communication Skills Competency*. We expect a productive year of progress, learning, and occasional adjustment.

Background

Syracuse University undergraduates major in a diverse array of fields—from Architecture to Drama, Public Relations, Sport Management, Civil Engineering, English, Biology, History, Accounting, and Data or Computer Science. They should all, however, graduate with a shared Syracuse University education. To achieve this goal, in AY 2018-2019, a University Senate Ad Hoc Committee culminated five years of research and consultation with faculty, staff, and students by developing and refining a set of Shared Competencies. These institutional learning goals help faculty and students communicates the value of a Syracuse University education across the schools and colleges.[1] After several months of deliberation and revision, the University Senate approved the Shared Competencies in December 2018.

In the spring semester 2019, the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Shared Competencies began planning how best to implement the Shared Competencies, and chose "Communication Skills" as the first test case. Working with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (IEA), the committee reviewed three different assessment models, each based on faculty-driven processes at other universities using shared learning outcomes. The committee determined that each of these models was labor intensive and required extensive faculty, administrative, and financial resources. After the committee chair and another committee member attended a "Future of General Education" conference sponsored by Inside Higher Education, they presented an alternative model to the committee that builds on what the university is already doing and creates opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to talk about teaching and learning in each of the Shared Competencies. The committee was enthusiastic.

During the spring semester, IEA also set out to map the Shared Competencies to all current program learning outcomes from each school and college. The results show that most of our 182 majors and stand-alone minors already address the Shared Competencies in some way (Ethics, Integrity and Commitment to Diversity, 68%; Critical and Creative Thinking, 92%; Scientific Inquiry and Research Skills, 76%; Civic and Global Responsibility, 59%; Communication Skills, 80%, and Information Literacy and Technological Agility, 43%) (see Appendix C). The Senate Ad Hoc Committee and IEA will continue to work with departments to show how their programs are achieving the competencies. The committee will begin these discussions with their own departments this fall. The Senate Ad Hoc Committee also worked with the Provost's office to create content and FAQs for the provost's website: provost.syr.edu/sharedcompetencies. In addition, the committee created a bookmark and a wallet-sized information card on the Shared Competencies (see Appendix B).

Implementation Model

The committee believes that expertise in the Shared Competencies resides in every school and college. Building on conversations with the iSchool Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning and the University's Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, the committee proposes that each Shared Competency have an associated Community of Practice (see Appendix F) that brings together faculty and staff experts (and those interested in or passionate about the competency) from the various schools and colleges. There are no

[1] This Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Shared Competencies is comprised primarily of members from the Senate Committee on Curriculum and Senate Committee on Instruction. Members are: Anne Mosher (Chair), Lois Agnew, Karen Zannini Bull (resigned May 2019 with departure from the University), John Dannenhoffer, Kelly Delevan, Siham Doughman, Jerry Edmonds, Sophia Faram (student representative), Carol Faulkner, Mary Graham, Gerry Greenberg, Amanda Johnson Sanguiliano, Emily Stokes-Rees (Senate Agenda Committee liaison—resigned July 2019 on start of research leave), and Robert Van Gulick (resigned August 2019 due to additional department-level administrative responsibilities). Philip Arnold now serves as the Senate Agenda Committee liaison.

restrictions on membership, although each community should have two co-chairs. Nascent Communities of Practice already exist for some of the competencies, and efforts are underway to build the Communication Skills community. Each community will: share ideas and information for a variety of purposes, including enhancement of teaching, learning, and scholarship; solve problems; and participate in local or national conversations. Between September 2019 and July 2023, each Community of Practice will coalesce, establish a cross-school/college network, and have the opportunity to highlight a single competency through professional development, campus programming, and student engagement.

A more formal review of these shared outcomes will include a senior reflection survey. Currently, Syracuse University students do not participate in a required exit survey before graduation. IEA will develop a Senior Graduation Reflection Survey to engage seniors on how well their Syracuse University experience prepared them to demonstrate the Shared Competencies. IEA will deploy two pilot surveys to seniors in December 2019 and May 2019. The Senate Ad Hoc Committee will discuss the findings, and determine which survey should be used in the subsequent review cycles. A periodic alumni survey is also under consideration. The committee seeks to partner with IEA, the Office of Career Services, Office of Institutional Research, and Advancement and External Affairs to formulate and test a post-graduate alumni outcomes survey to be administered to class cohorts five years after graduation.

The committee also continues to discuss the tagging of courses that support the Shared Competencies, and the assessment of these courses through faculty reflection on teaching and learning. More discussion with the Registrar's Office as well as the Committee on Curricula needs to occur.

To support and guide the Communities of Practice and IEA, we propose a permanent Senate Committee on Assessment and Shared Competencies. This committee will have two charges: first, collaborating with IEA's regular program assessment work, and second, communicating with the Communities of Practice on the Shared Competencies. This second effort will promote understanding of Community of Practice engagement efforts, hear the Community of Practices' ideas for future work, and make suggestions for improving student learning around the Shared Competencies. To do this work, each Community of Practice will collaborate with the proposed Senate Committee, as well as with IEA, other University Senate Committees, leadership from each School and College, and the Division of Enrollment and the Student Experience as needed.

The Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Shared Competencies proposes a flexible and sustainable collaboration between IEA and the new Senate committee, which will in turn support faculty, staff, and student engagement around the Shared Competencies. As described above, the Ad Hoc Committee proposes three main activities for the implementation of the Shared Competencies: capacity building, mapping, and outcomes review. These will be ongoing, regular activities carried out by the proposed Senate Committee, the proposed Communities of Practice, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (see Appendix G for a timeline and Appendix H for a proposed shared competencies rollout schedule). Table 1 presents the implementation model.

Table 1. Shared Competencies Implementation Model

Capacity Building	*Mapping*	*Outcomes Review*
1. **Communication** about Shared Competencies to students, faculty, and staff. 2. **Communities of Practice** established and maintained for each competency. They will share information, plan opportunities for development, and participate in the outcomes review. 3. **Infrastructure** to support the Shared Competencies. • Annual budget • Clearly defined shared governance roles • Designated IEA position—"Shared Competencies Assessment Associate"	1. **Map** existing program learning outcomes to Shared Competencies 2. **Program discussions** held periodically regarding the Shared Competencies mapping. 3. **Tag** courses to create and update lists of courses that foster particular competencies.	1. The **Senate** (**Ad Hoc) Committee on Shared Competencies** reviews results from the steps below and existing data in the University's Annual Progress Reports (APRs) and makes recommendations to enhance competency development. --- 2. **Communities of Practice evaluate** a sample of student artifacts from tagged courses and signature assignments, using a rubric created by the relevant Community of Practice.* OR **School/College faculty evaluate** student artifacts in sampled tagged courses, using a rubric created by the relevant Community of Practice. --- 3. Administer **Annual Senior Graduation Reflection Survey** 4. Periodic **Alumni Survey**

***** The Senate Ad Hoc Committee suggests training for the Communities of Practice in the spring semester and extra pay for the evaluation work in the summer.

To sustain the Shared Competencies, the committee urges an annual budget. We propose hiring a Shared Competencies Assessment Associate in IEA to oversee the administrative details of this work, and to act as a consultant available to each Community of Practice faculty-staff leadership team. The associate would report to the IEA Assistant Director but would also collaborate with the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, University Senate, and other key stakeholders. Communities of Practice will also need funding to support their activities.

NEXT STEPS

We seek input on the proposed implementation plan from the University Senate, especially through the Senate Committees on Curricula and Instruction. With Curricula, in particular, we seek ways to integrate the Shared Competencies into curriculum proposals. The University Senate Ad Hoc Committee will also move during Fall 2020 to become a standing committee of the Senate beginning in AY2021-22. The Senate Ad Hoc Committee is also working with IEA and departments to understand more fully the ways program outcomes relate to the Shared Competencies. In addition, the committee is communicating with various constituencies on campus, including the Student Retention and Success Council, associate deans, undergraduate directors, and student support services.

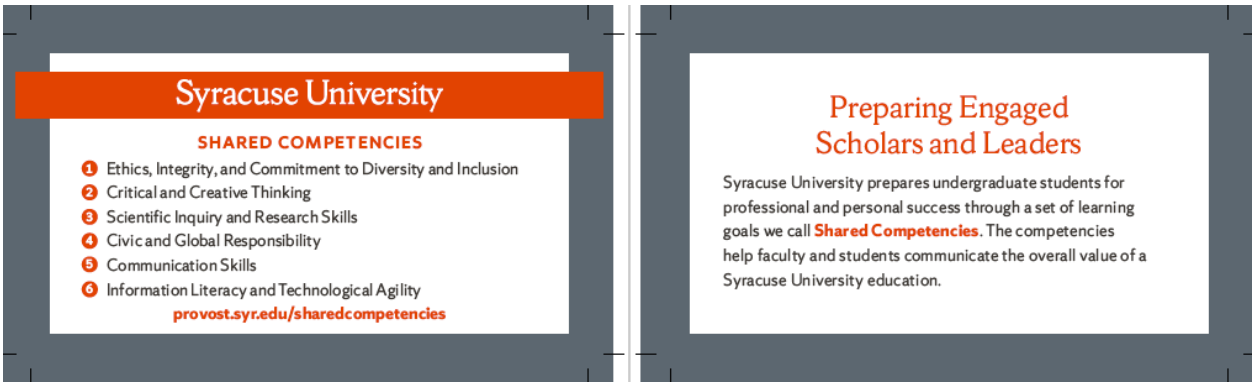
APPENDIX A - SHARED COMPETENCIES AND FRAMING LANGUAGE

The Syracuse University Senate approved the Shared Competencies idea and Framing Language for six competencies on December 12, 2018. The Framing Language is intended to guide and inspire faculty, students, and staff, as they design, implement, and assess learning in six areas that the University Senate and MSCHE believe are essential to the development of a university graduate prepared for 21st-century life. Given the flexibility of the Framing Language, academic and co-curricular programs can align courses and initiatives to the Competencies to support student learning. This flexibility promotes an important institutional value: operational sustainability.

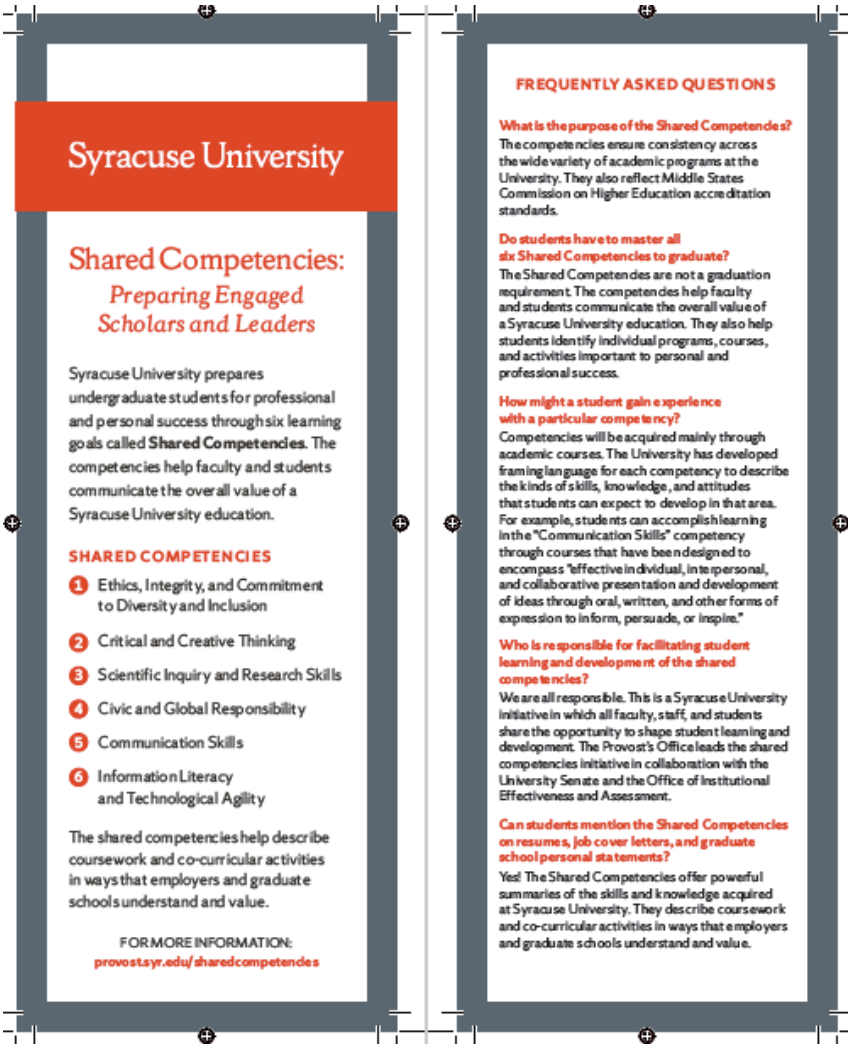
Competency	Framing Language
Ethics, Integrity, and Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion	Reflection on the dynamic relationships among power, inequality, identities, and social structures. Thoughtful engagement with one's values, intersectional identities, experiences, and diverse perspectives and people. Application of ethical and inclusive decision-making in the context of personal, academic, professional, and collaborative pursuits.
Critical and Creative Thinking	Exploration and synthesis of ideas, artifacts, issues, and events to inform and evaluate arguments, develop new insights, and produce creative work. Reflection on, and application of divergent modes of inquiry, analysis, and innovation to research, knowledge, and artistic creation.
Scientific Inquiry and Research Skills	Application of scientific inquiry and problem solving in various contexts. Analysis of theories, replication of procedures, and rethinking existing frameworks. Supporting arguments through research, data, and quantitative and qualitative evidence that can generate new knowledge.
Civic and Global Responsibility	Knowledge, exploration, and analysis of the complexity surrounding interdependent local, national, and global affairs. Engagement in responsible, collaborative, and inclusive civic and cross-cultural learning, with an emphasis on public, global, and historical issues.
Communication Skills (pilot 2019-20)	Effective individual, interpersonal, and collaborative presentation and development of ideas through oral, written, and other forms of expression to inform, persuade, or inspire.
Information Literacy and Technological Agility	Identification, collection, evaluation, and responsible use of information. Effective, ethical, and critical application of various technologies and media in academic, creative, personal, and professional endeavors.

APPENDIX B - SHARED COMPETENCIES COMMUNICATION TOOLS

BUSINESS CARD FINAL PROOF



BOOKMARK FINAL PROOF



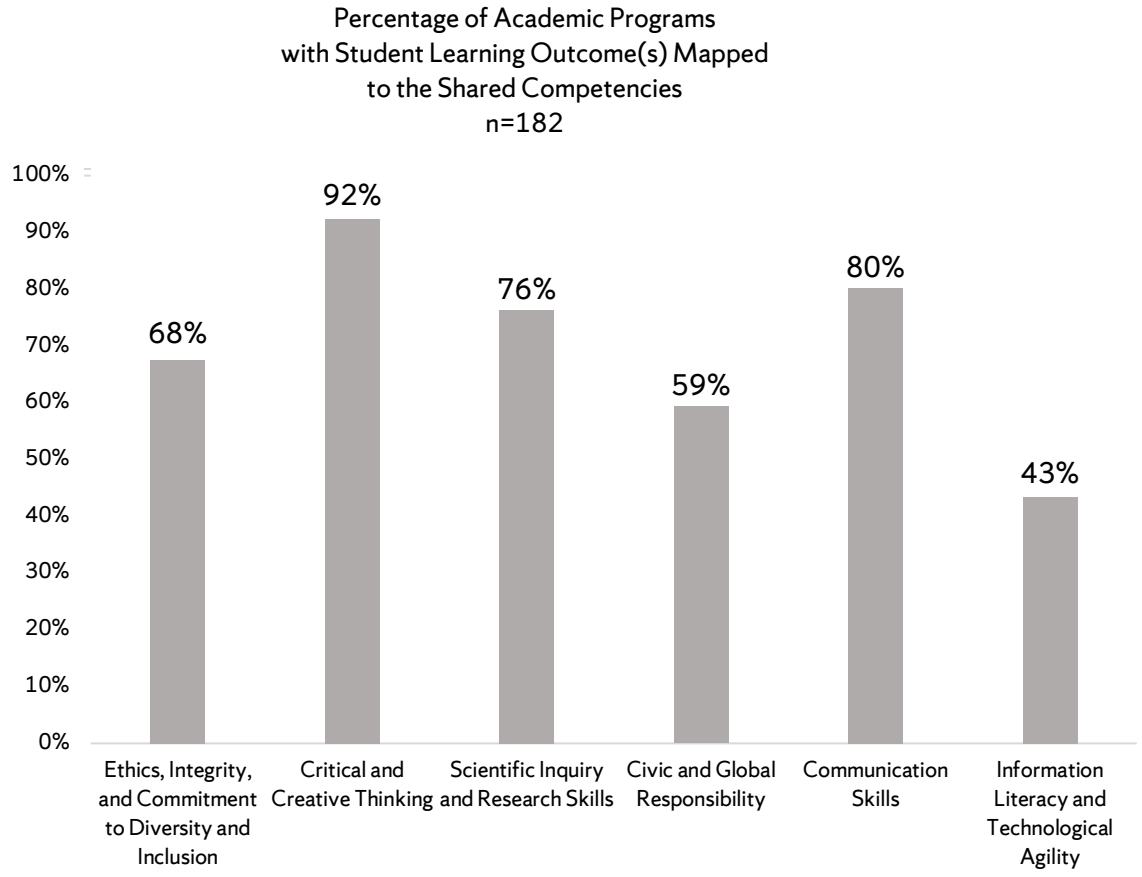
APPENDIX C - PRELIMINARY RESULTS - MAPPING PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES TO THE SHARED COMPETENCIES

Overall University Undergraduate Academic Programs with Student Learning Outcomes Mapped to the Shared Competencies

Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (IEA):

- conducted a pilot mapping exercise to determine the extent to which existing program-level student learning outcomes align with the Shared Competencies.
- reviewed 182 undergraduate major and stand-alone minor program-level statements.

The table below depicts the percentage of academic programs that have one or more program-level student learning outcome(s) mapped to the respective competency.



APPENDIX D - RESULTS OF MAPPING REGIONAL AND SPECIALIZED ACCREDITATIONS TO THE SHARED COMPETENCIES

Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (IEA) conducted a mapping exercise to determine the extent to which existing undergraduate accreditation standards align with the Shared Competencies. IEA reviewed 13 accrediting agencies. Please note that accrediting agencies are independent of each other.
The table below depicts the number of student learning specific standards within undergraduate specialized and regional accreditors that align with the Shared Competencies. This review demonstrates that the Shared Competencies are congruent with Syracuse University's accrediting agencies.

Accrediting Agency	Ethics, Integrity, and Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion	Critical and Creative Thinking	Scientific Inquiry and Research Skills	Civic and Global Responsibility	Communication Skills	Information Literacy and Technological Agility
National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB)	7	15	8	4	1	2
American Chemical Society (ACS)	4	4	9	0	3	2
Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET)	2	3	4	2	1	1
Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND)	12	12	10	4	5	2
Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH)	9	4	8	6	2	3
Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)	15	11	11	5	2	1
The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)	5	4	3	4	1	6
Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC)	3	2	2	3	2	3
Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP)	3	1	2	2	1	1
National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD)	6	9	3	2	3	3
Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA)	13	32	16	15	9	11
National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)	3	6	3	2	6	2
Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)	2	2	1	1	1	1

APPENDIX E - RESULTS OF MAPPING THE ACADEMIC STRATEGIC PLAN TO THE SHARED COMPETENCIES

	Ethics, Integrity, and Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion	Critical and Creative Thinking	Scientific Inquiry and Research Skills	Civic and Global Responsibility	Communica-tion Skills	Information Literacy and Technological Agility
Number of objectives in the Syracuse Univ. Academic Strategic Plan that map to ...	14	6	5	16	3	4

APPENDIX F - COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Communities of Practice

What is a community of practice?

A group of people who share a passion for a particular disciple or topic and engage in frequent gatherings to discover ways to enhance their work.

Communities of practice are important because they:

- Connect people who might not have connected on their own.
- Provide a shared space to connect around one another's experiences.
- Enable dialogue.
- Stimulate learning by promoting self-reflection, coaching, and communication.
- Capture and diffuse existing knowledge to assist members in enhancing their field.
- Introduce a collaborative process to stimulate ideas.
- Produce purposeful actions that deliver results.
- Generate new knowledge.

Three Elements:

Domain - members share expertise in and commitment to the focus area.

Community - members engage in collective dialogue and activities to learn how to enhance similar initiatives.

Practice - members will produce a collection of resources (e.g.; shared experience, knowledge, tools) that informs their work (individually or the field).

Steps in Creating a Community of Practice:

- Identify membership
- Establish purpose, goals, expectations and learning outcomes
- Pilot with a select group and topic
- Roll out to the broader community over a period of time
- Grow each community
- Sustain each community

Learning Theories Associated with Communities of Practice

- Constructivist Theory - create new knowledge based on current/past knowledge
- Critical Theory - address inequalities in institutions
- Social Learning Theory - observing and modeling behaviors leads to learning

Cambridge, D., Kaplan, S., & Suter, V. (2005). Community of practice design guide. Retrieved from https://transitiepraktijk.nl/files/Community%20of%20practice%20guide.pdf

Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity. Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press

APPENDIX G - TIMELINE FOR SHARED COMPETENCIES PILOT TESTING AND REVIEW

Shared Competencies: Iterative Pilot Testing and Review Key Activities and Timeline

- Communicate the Shared Competencies to faculty and staff
- Set a Shared Competencies rollout schedule that aligns with MSCHE milestones (2019-2026)
- Engage academic programs in reviewing the preliminary results from IEA's mapping exercise
- Engage academic programs in finalizing the learning outcome mapping via the Discovery Toolkit
- Deploy senior graduation reflection to December and May graduates
- Establish the Communication Skills Community of Practice
- Review evidence from the Liberal Arts Core assessment and action plan regarding communication skills

- Communicate the Shared Competencies to current and potential students and families
- Engage academic programs in tagging courses via the Discovery Toolkit
- Collaborate with Registrar to tag courses in Degree Works and Course Catalog
- Finalize where the Ad Hoc Committee on Shared Competencies fits into the University Senate
- Collaborate with Committee on Curricula to incorporate the competencies into their processes
- Establish the Community of Practice for competency under review this academic year
- Deploy senior graduation reflection to December and May graduates
- Identify evidence to review for the competency being reviewed this academic year
- Collaborate with Enrollment and the Student Experience to incorporate the competencies into internship and student employment data collection methods

- Communicate the Shared Competencies to Alumni
- Establish the Community of Practice for competency under review during this academic year
- Deploy senior graduation reflection to December and May graduates
- Engage faculty teaching tagged courses in a faculty reflection on teaching and learning
- Develop a guided pathway tool for students to explore the Shared Competencies
- Collaborate with Advancement efforts to include the Shared Competencies in communications to alumni and surveys

APPENDIX H - PROPOSED SHARED COMPETENCIES ROLL-OUT SCHEDULE

Proposed Shared Competencies Roll-Out Schedule for Capacity Building, Mapping, and Outcomes Review

Academic Year	Competency	Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Accreditation Milestones
2019-2020	• Communication Skills	
2020-2021	• Information Literacy and Technological Agility	
2021-2022	• Ethics, Integrity, and Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion • Civic and Global Responsibility	
2022-2023	• Critical and Creative Thinking • Scientific Inquiry and Research Skills	MSCHE Self-Study Design
2023-2024	• Communication Skills • Information Literacy and Technological Agility	
2024-2025	• Ethics, Integrity, and Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion • Civic and Global Responsibility	MSCHE Self-Study Teams meet to begin the process
2025-2026	• Critical and Creative Thinking • Scientific Inquiry and Research Skills	MSCHE Self-Study Report due Fall 2026. MSCHE Site Visit Spring 2027