

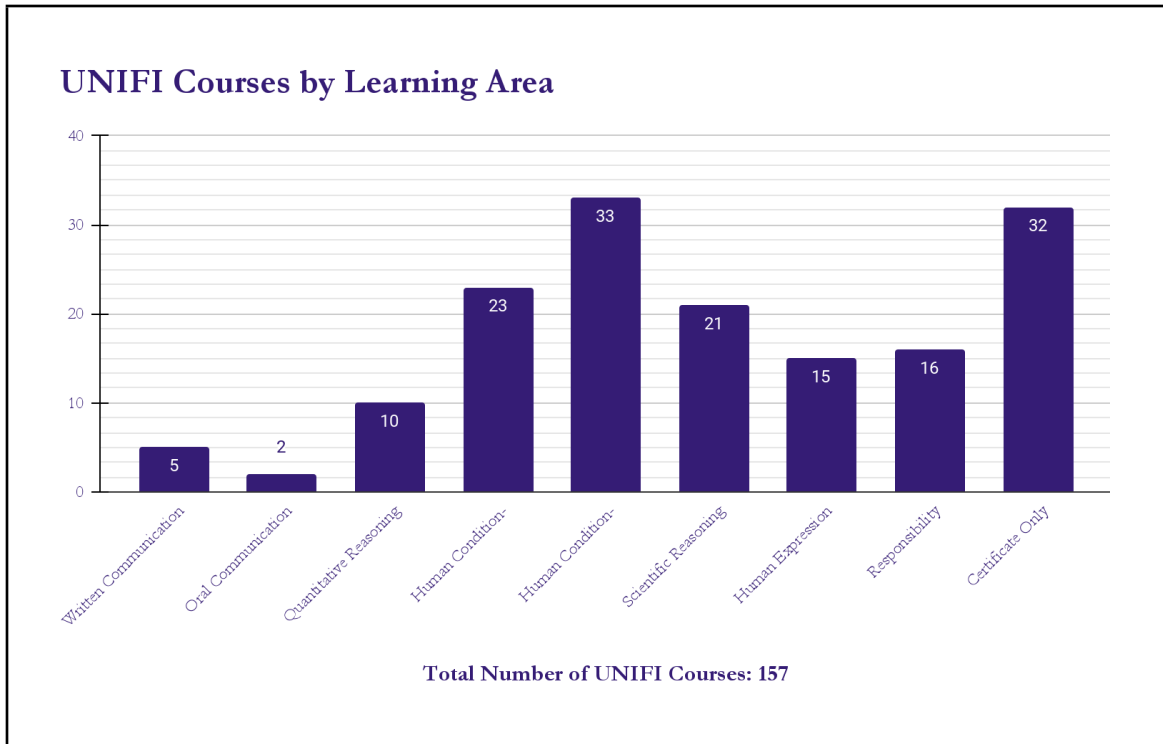
UNI Foundational Inquiry Faculty Senate Report, April 24, 2023

Per the UNI Foundational Inquiry’s Faculty Senate charter, this report summarizes the work the committee has accomplished this academic year, along with directions for future progress as the program grows to serve faculty, staff, and students.

CURRICULUM UPDATE

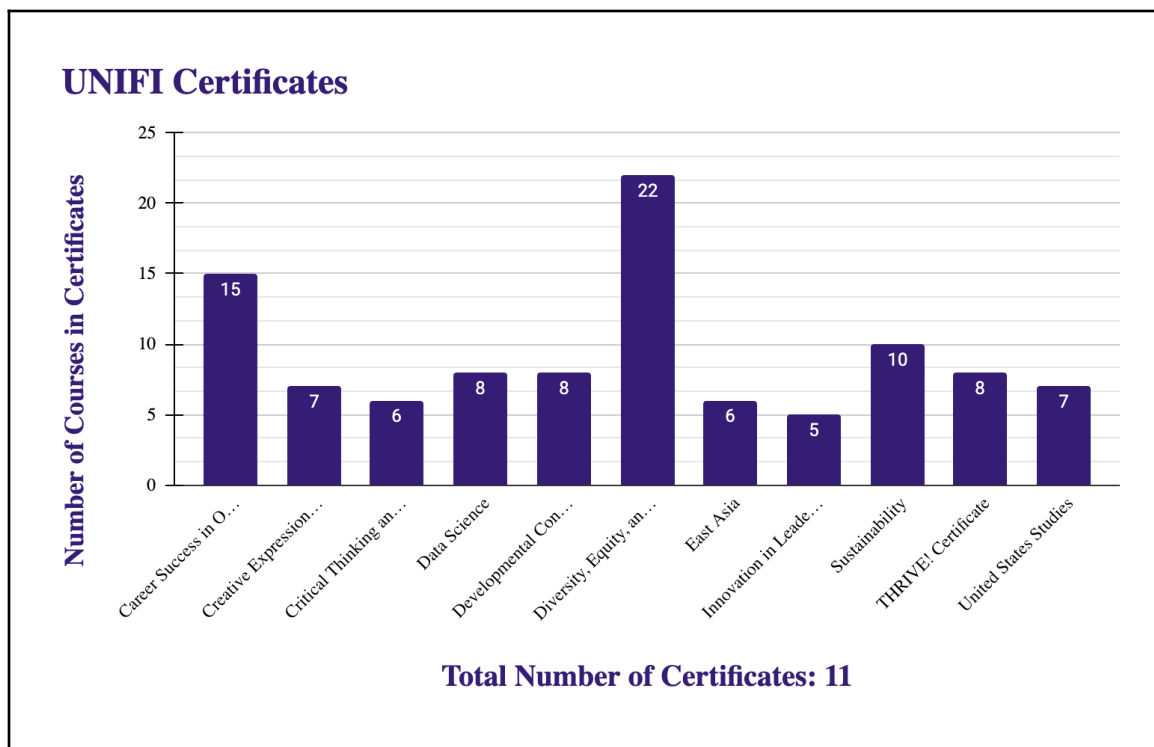
1. New Courses and Certificates

As UNIFI was about to be launched in Fall 2022, the program consisted of 121 total courses distributed over eight learning areas and certificate categories. Since then, 36 more courses have been added, now totalling 157 total. See the bar graph below for the current distribution.



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In Fall 2022, the UNIFI program had four certificates available. Since then, we have added seven more certificates for a total of eleven, with more in development among faculty across campus. See the chart below for the total number of courses available in each certificate.



2. Study Abroad

In UNI's former general education program, the Liberal Arts Core, enrollment in short-term Study Abroad courses had been offered substantial support through the Capstone requirement. Because the new UNIFI program does not include such a course, Study Abroad was not given direct support by the general education program.

Some individual Study Abroad courses have already been proposed and accepted into the UNIFI program in the Human Condition Global learning area (e.g., ENGLISH 3162 Ireland: Literature, Culture, and History, and LANG 2020 Constructing Cross-Cultural Bridges), and a "shell" course, UNIV 3003 Study Abroad: (Topic), was proposed by Undergraduate Studies and accepted by the committee and is in the current catalog.

Recognizing the value of Study Abroad as a High Impact Practice for our students in an increasingly globalized world, the UNIFI committee has approved the following for the 2023-2024 Academic Year:

- Any short-term, faculty-led UNI Study Abroad course will count as a Connect Elective in the UNIFI program;

- Faculty teaching Study Abroad courses will be required to select at least one of the twelve UNIFI Student Learning Outcomes, meeting the requirements for that SLO and providing an assessment artifact to the committee;
- Other rules governing UNIFI courses, such as prerequisites or junior standing, will still be enforced;
- Courses that require credit-bearing work in advance of a Study Abroad experience are considered *corequisites* rather than *prerequisites* and are admissible;
- Only one Study Abroad course will count toward the requirements in the Connect tier unless one of these courses has also been individually approved as a UNIFI course in a specific learning area;
- Faculty may still propose new Study Abroad courses in specific learning areas.

3. Textbook Equity

This semester, the UNIFI committee consulted with the Textbook Equity Librarian Anne Marie Gruber to strategize ways that UNIFI can help support this initiative. Since tracking began in 2016, this initiative has saved UNI students more than \$1.5 million. A UNI Textbook Equity Student Advisory Board was created in partnership with NISG to engage students in textbook equity advocacy. More than forty-five UNI faculty have been recognized as Textbook Equity Champions, demonstrating commitment to course materials access by transitioning courses to Open Educational Resources (OER), saving UNI students more than \$300,000 per year.

Understanding that Textbook Equity affects all students and faculty, this initiative should be supported by entities across campus. Because of its broad reach, the UNIFI program is a natural place to assist in this important work. Some specific 2023-2026 Textbook Equity goals include the following, which UNIFI will support directly or indirectly:

- Increase the number of course sections reporting free textbook use by 150%;
- Designate at least one Zero Textbook Cost major/program/pathway;
- Increase the number of UNIFI course sections reporting free textbook use by 100%;
- Ensure at least one course that meets each of the 8 UNIFI Learning Areas uses a free textbook.
- Collaborate with the CETL to provide Educational Development to support Textbook Equity among UNIFI faculty.

4. Service-Learning

This semester, the UNIFI committee consulted with the Director of the Office of Community Engagement Julianne Gassman to strategize ways that UNIFI might be able to intersect with and support initiatives to promote community engagement in the general education curriculum. Given Goal 2 in the university's [2023-2028 Strategic Plan](#) and the

explicit metrics including engagement, we see UNIFI as a fruitful place to make this work visible and to continue to develop engaged learning opportunities for students. UNIFI will be on prong in our approach to promoting engaged learning at UNI. To that end, we will do the following:

- Do a count of current service-learning designated courses that are currently in UNIFI.
- Review current UNIFI courses that could include a service-learning component.
- Contact departments and faculty teaching UNIFI courses to encourage the development of new service-learning projects.
- Collaborate with the CETL to provide Educational Development to support development of service-learning courses among UNIFI faculty.

5. Course and Certificate Proposal Process

The UNIFI committee continues to encourage innovation from faculty, inviting additional course and certificate proposals. To streamline the process, the committee has decided on the following process. The timeline for proposals will align with the university's curriculum cycle. Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis but will be reviewed in the fall semester each year for inclusion in the subsequent catalog. The committee will either accept proposals or offer feedback for revision and resubmission by October 15. Revisions will be due by November 1 and will be reviewed and either accepted or responded to by November 15, with final inclusion in the subsequent course catalog taking place by December 1. New courses should be added into the Leapfrog system beginning March 15. Contact the UNIFI Curriculum Coordinator with questions.

Proposal information for faculty

As the UNIFI committee reviews course and certificate proposals, they will keep the following principles and guidelines in mind:

- All learning areas will potentially include courses from a wide range of departments and disciplinary perspectives. Faculty are encouraged to think creatively about where their courses belong and will most fruitfully contribute to the general education program.
- Proposals must demonstrate how a course meets all of the outcomes in its learning area.
- While many different learning outcomes might be covered, a course may only be included in *one* of the eight learning areas.
- Instructors must commit to including appropriate assignments in their course and submitting those artifacts for assessment.
- Courses may also count as major or minor courses. Departments must determine how many or how few of these courses they want to include.

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- Courses cannot have prerequisites, but some prior preparation may be used for placement purposes.
- Courses must be designed to include and be accessible for students in diverse majors, and not aimed at students in a particular major.
- Departments must be willing and able to offer the course regularly.
- The committee will consider experimental courses with the understanding that the course will enter the curriculum cycle to become a permanent course in the catalog.
- The committee may ask faculty to resubmit a course or certificate proposal if revisions are deemed necessary.

Once a course is accepted into UNIFI, we encourage departments to do an honest assessment of their offerings to determine if they wish to continue having them included in the program. If a course cannot be offered at least once per year, departments may wish to reconsider its inclusion. Furthermore, if there is no participation or compliance with assessment processes, departments should reconsider their willingness to be part of UNIFI. If a certificate has little participation from students, the UNIFI committee will revisit and review ways to make it more attractive or effective.

Course Proposals

In its deliberations over course and certificate proposals, the UNIFI committee will ask itself the following questions as it makes its determination to accept or request a revision and resubmission:

- **Is the course appropriate for general education?**
The committee will determine if the course is intended and accessible for any student on campus regardless of major. Furthermore, the committee will ensure that no UNIFI course has a prerequisite, including previous coursework and/or minimum class standing. If courses are determined to be too specialized (e.g., technical, pre-professional, vocational, or disciplinary), the committee will offer feedback about how it might be revised to be more open and general.
- **Does the course require prior preparation for placement purposes?**
The committee will consider certain prior preparation in order to place students in courses they would otherwise not be positioned to be successful. UNIFI does not consider a handful of items to be “prerequisites” even if they appear in that space in the course catalog. These items include ALEKS score to determine mathematical preparation and non-English language proficiency to determine linguistic preparation. Where needed, prior preparation for other courses will be considered on an ad hoc basis.

- **Are the SLOs in the proposed learning area adequately addressed?**
The committee will evaluate if and how each of the SLOs is covered in the proposed course, ensuring that the **material** is covered thoroughly, that the **assignments and activities** are relevant, and that an appropriate **assessment artifact** can be provided. The committee will consult the UNIFI Student Learning Outcomes to help make their determination. This consultation is not only to align the general education courses with the rubrics but also to help shape and further revise the rubrics themselves. In some cases, if the committee believes a course is more appropriate for a different learning area, it will offer feedback to this effect and encourage revision and resubmission. In other cases, the committee might suggest that the coursework itself be revised.
- **How many seats will the course offer? Will the course be offered frequently enough?**
The committee will review the number of students a course will be able to serve, knowing that some courses have necessary enrollment caps based on the kind of work students do, as well as limitations of classroom space itself. There is no single metric that the committee will use to decide if a course will be taught with enough frequency to be part of the general education program, but in principle UNIFI courses should be offered at least once annually. The committee will encourage departments to assess their own ability and willingness to teach their UNIFI courses regularly, making curricular revisions accordingly.
- **How can this course be included in UNIFI?**
In all cases, the UNIFI committee's goal is not to be a strict gatekeeper of general education at UNI. Rather, all deliberations are held in the spirit of finding a way to help courses find a home in UNIFI as appropriate. Holding true to specific principles of general education as developed over time and approved by the Faculty Senate, the committee will always offer feedback to unsuccessful course proposals that encourages revision and resubmission and spells out specific changes that can be made. Any faculty member can request a one-on-one consultation with the UNIFI Curriculum Coordinator and/or other members of the UNIFI committee for help when crafting or revising proposals.

Certificate information for faculty

UNIFI's multidisciplinary certificates apply liberal arts approaches to topics, questions, ideas, or problems that don't fall within a single discipline or domain. They are intended to convey to students that the world's complexity cannot be understood solely from the perspective of any one discipline, and that different approaches can complement one

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another to build more holistic understanding. The strongest certificate proposals will combine significantly different disciplinary approaches.

By revisiting important Student Learning Outcomes, certificates also give students a chance to further develop key skills of critical thinking, writing, and oral communication. We expect that those skills will be applied in the context of the certificate's theme, and we do not expect that the number of assignments need be as high as in the Discover tier. For example, if a philosophy class fulfills the writing SLO for a certificate, we expect that class to devote time to enabling students to write effectively (as opposed to merely assigning writing), but it might not require as many writing assignments as gold tier writing courses.

Certificate Requirements:

- Each certificate must address SLO 1 (critical thinking), SLO 2 (writing), and SLO 3 (oral communication).
- Each certificate must also address at least two *additional* SLOs from the list of general education SLOs.
- Each certificate must include courses from at least two substantively different disciplines.
- Certificates must include three to four courses (9-13 hours).
- Instructors must be prepared to submit artifacts to be assessed on each of the outcomes covered in their courses.
- Departments must be willing and able to offer certificate courses regularly.
- Each certificate must be able to schedule enough seats every semester within each category in order to meet student demand for the certificate and allow a timely path to graduation. Enrollments in classes and declarations of certificates will be monitored by the UNIFI committee.
- Certificate proposals must show which courses address which outcomes.

Certificate Options

- Each course within the certificate need not address all the outcomes.
- A course may be a “certificate-only” course if it does not fit within one of the eight learning areas. In this case, it will also count as a general education Connect Elective.
- Outcomes can be addressed by multiple courses within the certificate.
- A certificate course may also appear in another learning area.
- If a course appears in another learning area, it may be assessed for a different outcome in the certificate.

6. Prerequisites

In January, UNIFI leadership was contacted by Colin Weeks from the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry with a proposal to remove two guidelines from the set of approved guidelines for accepting courses into the UNIFI program: 1. “Courses cannot have prerequisites (ALEKS scores can be utilized for placement),” and 2. “Courses must be designed to include and be accessible for students in diverse majors, and not aimed at students in a particular major.” On January 20, UNIFI Assessment Coordinator Don Gaff, Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies John Ophus, and UNIFI Curriculum Coordinator Jeremy Schraffenberger met with Colin Weeks by Zoom to discuss the proposal. UNIFI leadership encouraged Colin to have conversations with interested faculty on campus. The proposal was brought to the UNIFI committee, which discussed it at length at the January 25 meeting.

In general, the committee did not agree with these two proposals, noting that the arguments had already been heard and discussed in the four years leading up to the implementation of the new general education program. The committee was in general against making further concessions, especially regarding the rule against junior standing as a prerequisite. It was noted that our new program was less than a year old, and the proposal seemed like a solution looking for a problem. It was suggested that we give UNIFI a few years to see what actual problems might emerge. These specific principles were agreed upon:

- UNIFI will continue to maintain its rule prohibiting prerequisites.
- UNIFI will continue to assert the importance of *general* education that is open and accessible to any and all students on campus. (See the above answer to the question “Is the course appropriate for general education?” in the Course and Certificate Proposal section of this report.)
- UNIFI will continue to uphold exceptions to the prerequisite rule as prior preparation for placement purposes, including ALEKS scores and language proficiency. Such exceptions tighten the definition of “prerequisite” even if some information appears in that location in the course catalog descriptions.

ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Assessment of UNIFI began in AY 2022-23 and, as a new program, encompassed a range of activities.

- An Assessment Coordinator was appointed in Summer 2022.
- An assessment plan was developed in coordination with the UNIFI Committee and Undergraduate Studies for implementation in Fall 2022.
- During Fall 2022, a request for syllabi went out to faculty. Syllabi received were examined to see if UNIFI Student Learning Outcomes were listed or described. Of 225

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syllabi received, 141 had Student Learning Outcomes, meaning 63% of Fall UNIFI classes had this information available to students in their syllabi.

- Near the end of the Fall 2022 semester, a request for assignments and two student artifacts (e.g., samples of student work) was sent to faculty. In response, 221 unique (multiple sections of the same class were counted once) packets with assignments and artifacts were received. These were sorted into a Google drive according to SLO.
- Spring 2023 witnessed the first round of assessment of student work in the form of faculty workshops that included orientation to assessment, assessment of artifacts, and feedback about assessment results. Four Student Learning Outcomes were assessed—SLO 1 (Critical Thinking), SLO 6 (Diversity & Commonality), SLO 8 (Scientific Reasoning), and SLO 11 (Values). All workshop-based assessment will have been completed by April 19.
- Preliminary results of the Spring 2023 assessment found roughly 15 artifacts being assessed per learning outcome. In almost all instances student work fell between “Competent” and “Emerging” across the different categories on the rubrics, with the one exception being Scientific Reasoning where “Limitations and Implications” rated “Emerging” and “Needs Improvement.” Overall, these results are in line with what would be expected from General Education classes.
- Feedback solicited in the workshops indicates some changes to the rubrics are required—some technical (e.g., half steps in scoring and an N/A option) and some pedagogical (e.g., regions to rubric terminology and changes to some categories).
- Results of assessment will be further analyzed and developed into a report during Summer 2023.
- Fall 2023 will see the assessment of SLO 4, SLO 5, SLO 10, and SLO 12.

This report is respectfully submitted by Don Gaff, Associate Professor of Anthropology and UNIFI Assessment Coordinator; and Jeremy Schraffenberger, Professor of English and UNIFI Curriculum Coordinator.