

# IMPACT GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM: VISION STATEMENT & CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

## IMPACT Vision Statement

Education is not just about what you learn—it's about **what you do with it and who you become because of it**. The **IMPACT Curriculum** invites students to consider themselves **citizen-scholars** preparing to turn their knowledge into action, skills into service, and passion into purpose. Designed for those who seek to **make a difference**, this curriculum **empowers students to lead, serve, and create lasting change** in their communities and professions.

- **IMPACT is hands-on.** Whether behind the microscope in lab, between the pages of a book, or beside a team in clinicals, the **IMPACT** curriculum invites students to practice and apply the versatile skills that both employers desire and our world needs to build competent workforces and resourceful communities.
- **IMPACT is about transformation.** Our students don't just graduate with knowledge; they leave with the ability to shape lives, solve problems, and create meaningful change. They are agents of their own self-discovery and visionaries for the world we will share—lifelong learners making ripples and riding waves.
- **IMPACT is mission-driven.** Grounded in the values of mercy, this curriculum prepares students to be just, compassionate leaders in an evolving world. Values-based education encourages students to both make meaning of what they are learning and to make meaningful their experience.

### Why IMPACT?

Today's students need more than a degree—they want an education that matters. The **IMPACT Curriculum** is committed to **competency-based learning**, equipping students with the tools they need to address complex, real-world challenges. Whether in healthcare, education, social work, or business, graduates of this curriculum leave not just prepared, but **empowered** to serve.

**Your Impact:** What are the “wicked problems” of the world – the ones that require collaboration, creativity, and analysis to solve – and how can my education position me to not only understand their complexity but to participate in their resolution? The Sisters of Mercy demonstrate the power of contemplation in action with their particular emphasis on these critical concerns: Anti-Racism, Immigration & Migration, Women and Minoritized Genders, Environment, and Nonviolence and Peace. What will you study and who will you serve? What skills will you need to develop to navigate complex problems and thrive in an interconnected world?

## The IMPACT Curriculum

The **IMPACT Curriculum** couples competency-based learning with values-driven education to help students develop the mindset and skills necessary to thrive in our changing world. By aligning our selection of competencies with what employers want and our core courses with what this world needs, we are positioning graduates to be agents of change

fortified with skills that are versatile and transferrable and values that are durable and resilient. They will do well and do good.

A skills-centered curriculum invites students to choose the subjects in which they are most interested in learning, applying, and building their competencies. Students will take **one course** in each of the following **competencies**: 1. Academic Writing, Information Literacy, & AI Proficiency, 2. Creative Thinking and Expression, 3. Critical Reading and Analysis, 4. Mathematical Reasoning, 5. Intercultural Understanding and Intercultural Communication, 6. Understanding Human Behavior and Social Systems, and 7. Scientific Thinking. Additionally, students will participate in the **MERCY CORE courses** which include an orientation to college course (Pathways to the Bridge), cornerstone seminar (Discovering the Self in the Universe), and capstone experience (Visioning a Future) as well as Religious Studies, Ethics, and Power & Society Requirements. To support our hands-on, transformational, and mission-driven approach, students will also be required to **participate in two Experiential Requirements and our Writing Intensive Program**.

In **39 credits**, students **will learn, apply, and demonstrate the knowledge, mindset, and skills of the IMPACT Curriculum**. Through integrative, collaborative, and experiential learning, graduates of the program will be able to articulate and transfer the skills and experiences from the classroom to the real-world.

## IMPACT Curriculum Competencies

### Academic Writing, Information Literacy, & AI Proficiency (3 CR)

#### *Mastering the Art of Influence*

**Why it Matters:** The ability to **communicate clearly, think critically, and engage ethically with information** is more essential than ever. Whether advocating for social change, crafting persuasive arguments, or analyzing complex global issues, strong writing and research skills empower students to be **credible, influential voices** in their fields.

**Your Impact:** In this course, you'll **hone the power of words**, learning to research, analyze, and write with clarity and purpose. With foundational **AI literacy**, you'll explore ethical ways technology can enhance your writing and critical thinking—skills that will serve you in every career and cause you pursue.

### Creative Thinking & Expression (3 CR)

#### *Turning Imagination into Action*

**Why it Matters:** Creativity is about innovation, problem-solving, and bold thinking. From designing solutions to global challenges to expressing ideas in new and transformative ways, creativity fuels progress. Experiencing creativity through personal practice and art appreciation connects us to one another—recognizing the beauty in our difference and the power in our articulation.

**Your Impact:** In these courses, you'll cultivate the **courage to think differently**, the skills to **bring ideas to life**, and the **confidence to make your mark**. Whether through artistic expression or creative problem-solving, you'll develop the mindset to **turn imagination into action**.

### Critical Reading & Analysis (3 CR)

#### *Decoding the World, One Text at a Time*

**Why it Matters:** Every movement, every revolution, and every breakthrough begins with someone **challenging the status quo**. Reading

critically means **seeing beyond the surface**, questioning narratives, and engaging deeply with ideas.

**Your Impact:** In these courses, you won't just read—you'll **interrogate, interpret, and synthesize**. You'll sharpen your ability to **analyze arguments, detect bias, and shape your own informed perspective**, preparing you to navigate a world of competing ideas and complex challenges.

## Mathematical Reasoning (3 CR)

*Reading Numbers, Writing Change*

**Why it Matters:** Mathematics is the **language of patterns, logic, and problem-solving**—the tools behind some of the most important discoveries, innovations, and policies shaping our world today.

**Your Impact:** Whether calculating risk, analyzing data, or building models for real-world challenges, these courses will give you the mathematical mindset to **break down complexity, find solutions, and make informed decisions** in any field, from health sciences to humanities.

## Intercultural Understanding & Intercultural Communication (3 CR)

*Bridging Worlds, Building Change*

**Why it Matters:** In an interconnected world, the ability to **listen, understand, and communicate across cultures** is not just a skill—it's a necessity. Cultural awareness fosters empathy, **dismantles bias**, and creates leaders who can work toward **equity and justice**.

**Your Impact:** These courses invite you to **step beyond your own experience**, engage in dialogue, and learn how **culture shapes perspectives, identities, and interactions**. You'll develop the skills to **build bridges by appreciating difference, fostering meaningful relationships, and advocating for a more just and inclusive world**.

## Understanding Human Behavior & Social Systems (3 CR)

*Unraveling Systems, Creating Solutions*

**Why it Matters:** Social structures shape our lives—from **laws and economies to cultures and communities**. Understanding how societies function is key to **creating solutions for systemic challenges** in fields like public health, education, criminal justice, and social work.

**Your Impact:** These courses will help you **decode human behavior and social structures**, empowering you to **ask big questions, challenge injustices, and use data to advocate for change**. You'll gain the skills to **turn insight into action**, whether in policy, leadership, or community engagement.

## Scientific Thinking (4 CR)

*Curiosity That Drives Discovery*

**Why it Matters:** Science isn't just about knowledge—it's about **questioning the world, seeking truth, and solving the problems that shape our future**. From climate change to medical breakthroughs, scientific thinking fuels innovation and progress.

**Your Impact:** In these courses, you'll **think like a scientist**, using **evidence, experimentation, and critical analysis** to understand the natural world. Whether in the lab or in real-world applications, you'll develop the skills to **challenge assumptions, explore possibilities, and contribute to discoveries that shape our world**.

## IMPACT Curriculum MERCY CORE Courses

The Mercy Core and BRIDGE Program were developed by Sister Mary Paula Cancienne, Sister Mary Bilderback, and the General Education Curriculum Committee, including Director Dr. Paul Cappucci. In the launch of the IMPACT curriculum, these core courses serve as the bridge-builders not only between our previous program and our current curriculum, but also between the mission of our university and our promise to teach the whole student. These courses are the Bridge – the core strength – of our GCU liberal arts education, that give us the courage and curiosity to explore new pathways and possibilities and the confidence to make our mark.

The MERCY CORE courses offer students a coherent and integrated learning experience in the Catholic intellectual tradition. This program aims to cultivate passion for intellectual growth and to foster informed, responsible, and creative citizenship for a complex 21st-century world. Students who complete the MERCY CORE courses will sharpen the intellectual and practical skills essential to their chosen field of study and necessary to their pursuit of personal, professional, civic and social goals. In addition, completion of the MERCY CORE courses enable students to discover pathways to lifelong learning and to envision a future shaped by their engagement with the university's mission and Mercy charism.

### MERCY CORE: The BRIDGE

The BRIDGE program encourages students to develop self-knowledge within a broader understanding of others and the world. It emphasizes the importance of critical inquiry that leads to knowledge across fields of study and provides a means for students to think critically and creatively, connecting and building upon what they learn in their general education courses. Students examine conditions necessary for peace, justice, and sustainability, as well as the ways mercy and justice are integral for how we confront the present and vision the future.

The cornerstone of the BRIDGE program is Discovering Self in the Universe, an introductory course that invites students to examine their particular sense of self and place within their local situations, as well as within the broader scope of the universe. This course provides students with a framework for learning by demonstrating the inter-connectedness of all life, fostering respect for creation and the integrity of life systems. The BRIDGE program culminates with Visioning a Future: Justice, Compassion, and Service, a capstone course that asks students to synthesize their learning experiences and envision their roles in shaping a just, compassionate world.

### GEN101: Pathway to the BRIDGE (2 CR)

**Why It Matters:** The transition to college isn't just about academics—it's about discovering who you are, where you're headed, who is on this journey with you, and how you can make an impact together. Your college journey is an opportunity to develop the **skills, mindset, and values** that will shape your future success, both in and beyond the classroom.

**Your Impact:** In this course, you'll gain the **tools to thrive** in college and beyond. Through **collaborative service projects, weekly workshops for personal and professional development, and engagement with the university's mission**, you'll build the habits of a **curious, resilient, and purpose-driven citizen scholar**. You won't just learn about your education—you'll shape it.

**GEN101 Pathway to the Bridge (2.0 Credits)** This course, required of all first time in college students, will develop the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for success at Georgian Court University. Students will

gain an understanding of the university's mission, charism, and heritage. Through a collaborative project, students will execute and reflect on the practices associated with a successful college experience. Enrollment restricted to first time in college students.

### GEN199: Discovering Self in the Universe (3 CR)

**Why It Matters:** Understanding who we are means understanding the world we are part of. In an era of **rapid change, interconnected cultures, and social transformation**, exploring **identity, diversity, and our place in the universe** is essential to becoming an **informed, ethical, and engaged global citizen**.

**Your Impact:** In this **writing-intensive course**, you'll explore what it means to be human in a **complex, dynamic, and fragile world**. Through **philosophy, science, history, and culture**, you'll examine **how we are all connected** and how we can act with **respect and integrity** in an evolving global society. You'll leave with a **deeper sense of self and a clearer vision for the kind of impact you want to have in the world**.

**GEN199 WI: Discovering Self in the Universe (3.0 Credits)** A cornerstone general education course that asks students to explore the Mercy core values of respect and integrity within the framework of commonality, diversity, and symbiosis. Students analyze their identity by investigating the oneness of humanity and the rich complexity of diverse cultures. Students consider, from multiple disciplines, how all of humanity is a part of a much larger story of the universe. It examines the origin and the composition of the universe and humanity's response to its complexity and fragility, beauty and wonder. In this writing intensive course, students develop questions about what it means to be creative, responsible human beings in today's integrally connected global society and dynamic universe. The course is designed to be taken in the spring of the first time in college year or, in the case of transfer students, in the first semester at GCU. Pre/corequisite(s): EN111 (<https://catalog.georgian.edu/search/?P=EN111>) or equivalent or EN221 (<https://catalog.georgian.edu/search/?P=EN221>).

### GEN400: Visioning a Future—Justice, Service, and Compassion (3 CR)

**Why It Matters:** As you prepare to step beyond the university, it's time to **reflect on your journey, refine your vision, and define the mark you want to leave on the world**. In the face of **social, environmental, and ethical challenges**, today's leaders must be **bold thinkers and compassionate changemakers**.

**Your Impact:** This **capstone experience** challenges you to **synthesize your learning, engage in service, and explore pressing global issues** through readings, discussions, and guest speakers. You'll reflect on how your education has shaped your worldview and **envision the future you want to help create**. Whether you're drawn to **advocacy, innovation, sustainability, or justice**, this course will help you **step forward with purpose, prepared to contribute to a more compassionate and just world**.

**GEN400 WI: Visioning a Future (3.0 Credits)** In light of GCU Mercy core values, this writing intensive capstone course invites students to reflect and analyze how their General Education Program has impacted their understanding of themselves in the world, as well as how their world view has developed. Course readings, service learning, and speakers encourage students to consider key questions of the time. Students contribute toward envisioning the future and humankind's responsibility in helping to shape that future. This involves questions that have emerged from the General Education Program such as how do we contribute to a more compassionate and just world for humankind and the Earth itself? How do we think about just, healthy, and sustainable

ways of living and working on this planet? Prerequisite(s): Senior status or approval from the director of the General Education Program; GEN199 (<https://catalog.georgian.edu/search/?P=GEN199>).

### MERCY CORE: Common Intellectual Experiences Religious Studies (3 CR)

#### *Contemplation and Action*

**Why it Matters:** Faith traditions are more than rituals—they are blueprints for **meaning, morality, and social change**. Understanding religion, particularly the Catholic Intellectual tradition, offers insight into the values that have shaped history, justice movements, and the pursuit of human dignity.

**Your Impact:** In these courses, you'll engage with **foundational texts, moral teachings, and global perspectives**, learning how faith traditions, especially Catholic Social Teaching, challenge and inspire people to **build a more just and compassionate world**. Whether or not you identify with a specific faith, you'll explore how **religious traditions call us to action, justice, and mercy**.

### Ethics (3 CR)

#### *Building a World We Can Stand Behind*

**Why it Matters:** Ethical decisions shape everything—from personal choices to global policies. In a world facing **climate crises, systemic injustice, and rapid technological change**, understanding how to **think critically about ethics and justice is essential for leadership in any field**.

**Your Impact:** These courses will **equip you with the tools to analyze ethical dilemmas**, challenge assumptions, and develop arguments grounded in **philosophical and theological traditions of justice and moral reasoning**. You won't just learn about ethics—you'll practice it, gaining the **wisdom and courage to make choices that matter**.

### Power & Society (3 CR)

#### *Dismantling Injustice, Reimagining the Future*

**Why it Matters:** **Power is everywhere**—in laws, institutions, media, and culture. To create a more just world, we must **understand how power operates, whose voices are amplified, and whose are silenced**.

**Your Impact:** These courses challenge you to **examine systemic oppression, analyze movements for social justice, and explore the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability in identity**. Through foundational texts and real-world connections, you'll learn how to **transform awareness into action, embodying the university's mission of mercy and justice in your own leadership and advocacy**.