

Connecting, Supporting and Reinforcing Content: Creating Alignment Across Undergraduate Programs

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INTRODUCTION

Squires defines alignment within an academic curriculum as agreement between two categories,¹ such as between curriculum expectations and assessments, or programmatic learning objectives and course learning objectives² Aligned curriculums, such as the Balanced Curriculum, has been shown to significantly enhance student achievement outcomes¹. While much research on curricular alignment focuses on alignment between state standards, school district standards and what is taught/assessed at the elementary and high school level³, these same principles can be applied to an undergraduate curriculum.

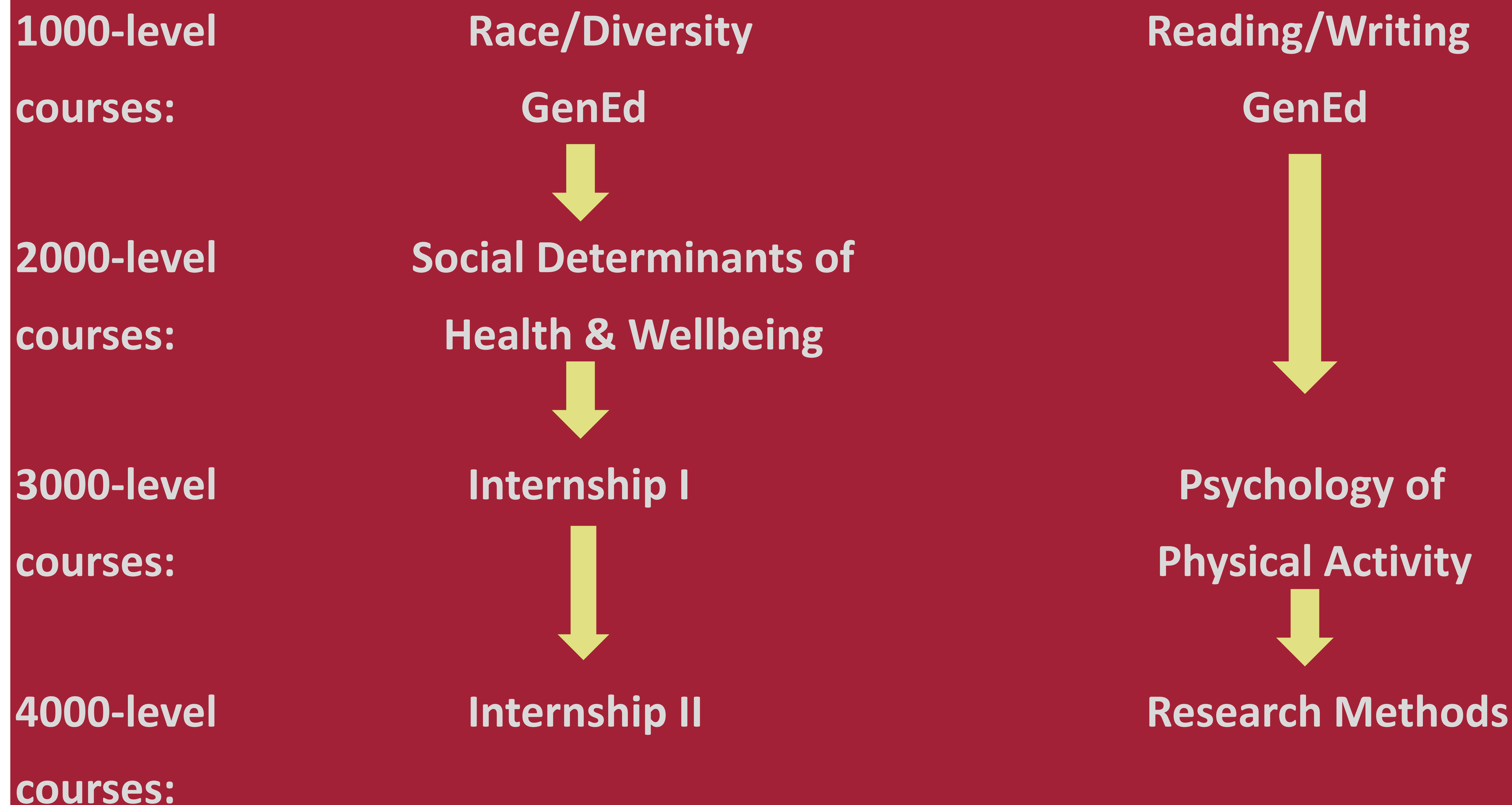
METHODS

The Department of Kinesiology is reviewing and refining our undergraduate programs to better align courses and create learning pathways within the degree. The curriculum review focuses not only alignment between program and learning objectives, but also on the progression from prerequisite to subsequent courses to ensure that learned content is scaffolded across higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy. Two key areas of alignment include a focus on: 1) equity, social justice and the social determinants of health that impact an individual's access to and participation in physical activity, and 2) readings and writing skills (i.e., writing intensive courses).

DISCUSSION

While reviewing the undergraduate curriculums and identifying areas of alignment is only in the preliminary stages, the intent of this initial planning is to create connections across classes, as well as support and reinforce key content throughout the undergraduate curriculum.

Aligning an academic curriculum provides an opportunity for students to learn, review and apply key concepts across courses, and facilitates instruction and assessment of key curricular content.



To develop alignment for our focus on equity, social justice, and the social determinants of health, we propose that the Race/Diversity General Education (GenEd) course that is required for all Temple University students be recommended to students in their first year in the department.

Similarly, alignment will be created for all reading and writing courses in the curriculum. Students will be encouraged to complete their Analytical Reading and Writing GenEd course in the first two years of their curriculum. This will serve as a foundation leading up to their 3000- and 4000-level writing intensive classes.

REFERENCES

1. Squires, D. (2012). Curriculum alignment research suggests that alignment can improve student achievement. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 85(4), 129-135.
2. Roach, A. T., Niebling, B. C., & Kurz, A. (2008). Evaluating the alignment among curriculum, instruction, and assessments: Implications and applications for research and practice. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(2), 158-176.
3. Squires, D. A. (2013). The balanced curriculum model: Description and results. *SAGE Open*, 3(1), 2158244013478012.