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Difficult Paths Often Lead To Beautiful Destinations

Fall 2020. You had every reason to put your head down and wait it out, do the minimum and try again another day/semester/year, just get by... but you didn't. Somehow, you created, innovated, tinkered, or even overhauled completely to provide our students opportunities to learn and progress, survive or thrive, and make sense of what's going on in the world around them even as you balanced your own family, work, activism and well-being. The path remains difficult, but we keep moving, keep teaching, keep engaging.

And the courses, minors and learning opportunities you have created are timely and engaging. For example, in Tom Ewing's Introduction to Data in Social Context course, students examine the 1918 Spanish Flu to make sense of the daily deluge of data and societal response to the current pandemic (read all about it in the Spotlight on **pg. 3**). With several new Pathways Minors in place (**pg. 5**), students can now explore their adaptive brain, Appalachian culture, climate change, and health communication and the ecosystem of well-being. Combine these with a brand new English course on Writing and Social Justice and existing minor on Peace and Social Justice and students have every opportunity to dive deep into the world's most pressing issues from a variety of perspectives (**pg. 6**). The Year 2020 was one big painful cry for the need for a liberally educated public and you have continued to answer the call.

We're certainly not back to normal, but we can get back to the work of collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement. We have set dates for the Summer Institute and don't miss this year's Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy (**pg. 7**). We have created a new mini-grant program and posted workshops (**pg. 2**) to support your return to assessment data collection this spring.

Thank you for meeting the needs of our students both emotionally and academically. Thank you to the Pathways Gen Ed Curriculum Review Committee and those who support their efforts for keeping the curricular work rolling (**pg. 7**). Thank you for showing up for another year to make Pathways General Education a beautiful destination for our students.

Stephen Biscotte

Director of General Education

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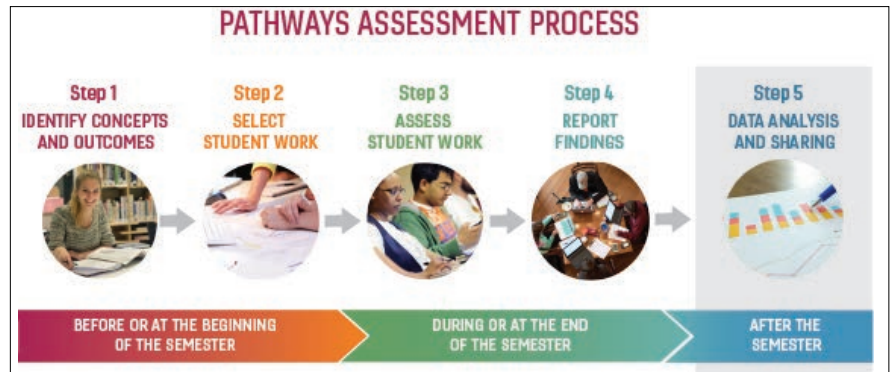


> Assessment

Pathways Assessment Resumes Spring 2021

After a two-semester hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Pathways data collection will resume for the Spring 2021 semester.

Feeling a little out of practice? The Offices of Gen Ed and Analytics and Institutional Effectiveness have put together a few resources to help you get back into the assessment groove. See below for details on assessment mini-grants and upcoming assessment workshops.



Assessment Mini-Grants

Through participation in the Pathways Assessment Mini-Grant Program, instructors will receive guidance and small monetary stipend to help get back on track in aligning their course(s) with Pathways concepts, student learning outcomes, and the assessment process.

Deadline for submission: January 22 by 5 pm

Participant Compensation: Participants who complete all components of Part I of the program will receive a \$100 stipend and 3 PDN computer refresh credits. Participants who complete Part II of the program (coming Fall 2021) will receive an additional 6 PDN credits and \$300.

Participant Eligibility and Commitments:

Details on eligibility and grantee commitments, as well as the proposal form, can be found at <https://www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/professional-development/grants/pathways-assessment-mini-grants.html>.

Assessment Workshops

Teaching a Pathways course this semester, but not entirely sure what this whole “assessment” thing is about? The Pathways Assessment spring workshop will bring you up to speed. Learn the five steps in the data collection and reporting process, including how to select student work to assess each Pathways concept and student learning outcome, apply the Pathways rubrics to determine student competency, and report assessment results. Registration details to the right.

Title: Pathways Assessment: How to Prepare and Make the Most of the Process

Sessions:

Jan 14, 10:00 - 11:00 am

Jan 29, 2:00 - 3:00 pm

Feb 9, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Location: online

PDN Credits: 1 credit

Register: through the [PDN](#) (click Login in upper right to register)

Assessment Data Reports

Pathways assessment data reports from Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 are now available online! VT log-in required.

https://www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/content/pathways_prov_vt_edu/en/assessment/pathways-data.html

> In the Spotlight

HIST/SOC/STS 2604: Introduction to Data in Social Context



An emergency hospital in Brookline, Massachusetts, established to care for influenza patients. Courtesy of the National Archives.

When Tom Ewing, professor of history and the CLAHS associate dean for graduate studies and research, created his Spring 2020 DiSC syllabus, he had little idea how relevant it would turn out to be. Whereas the prior semester's class had analyzed data relating to three different topics, Ewing presciently chose to focus the full spring semester on one historical event: The Pandemic of 1918.

Students researched the historical pandemic by analyzing epidemiological statistics, media reports, and documents relating

to governmental and community response to the crisis, uncovering parallels to the current global pandemic.

Researching a topic with such compelling modern relevance, Ewing's students again attracted attention. VT News published an article on the course in [early April](#), followed by a second piece in [late April](#). Additionally, students had the opportunity to present their research in an academic setting through collaboration with the National Library of Medicine. DiSC students



Professor Tom Ewing (left), and Introduction to Data in Social Context students presenting their Fall 2019 semester projects.

The Pathways history course, Introduction to Data in Social Context (DiSC), has attracted quite a bit of attention over the last year.

Last January, it was the subject of a [VT News article](#), recounting how students from the Fall 2019 DiSC class combed historical documents and analyzed data on early-twentieth-century child labor, the 2019 Virginia elections, and the role of surveillance in American society. The students' work on child labor even caught the attention of the Library of Congress, which showcased the projects in a [blog post](#).

participated in a National Library of Medicine research symposium titled "Reporting, Recording, and Remembering the 1918 Influenza Epidemic," presenting their findings on newspaper coverage of the epidemic, social distancing practices, public response to the crisis, and how the crisis was remembered by those who lived through it.

You can watch the symposium videocast [here](#), or read more about the students' work in these June articles from [VT News](#) and the [NIH Record](#).

> Grant Announcement

2021 Pathways Annual Grant Program is OPEN!

In addition to the Assessment Mini-Grants, we are also offering traditional Pathways grants. Read all about the program scope, goals, and funding details down below, and then visit <https://www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/professional-development/grants.html> for the necessary forms.

Deadline for submission: March 1, 2021

Overview:

In April 2015, Virginia Tech approved Pathways, a new general education curriculum that guides students in integrating ways of knowing across disciplinary traditions and articulates learning outcomes relevant for the 21st century. Students will be able to complete their general education program through a distribution of courses, an interdisciplinary Pathway minor, or an innovative alternative Pathway. Ethical reasoning and global and cultural awareness is integrated across the curriculum. The arts, design thinking, computational thinking, and national issues of identity and equity are emphasized, with an opportunity for more advanced learning, especially in discourse and quantitative reasoning.

In support and recognition of the scope of these curricular changes, the Provost's Office has committed additional base funding to support the transition to Pathways. This Request for Proposals describes the grant process that will be used to invest these new resources strategically to ensure that students have access to innovative and experiential learning across the Pathways curriculum.

2021 Grant Goals:

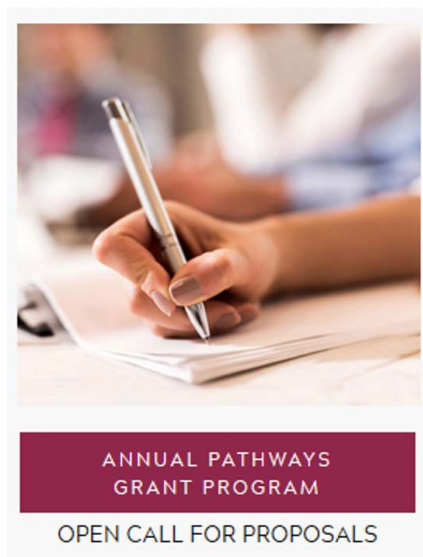
1. To support the development and delivery of Pathways Minors, particularly those that span multiple colleges.
2. To support the development and delivery of courses in areas of need: advanced/applied quantitative and computational reasoning, arts, design thinking, advanced/applied discourse, and identity/equity in the United States.
3. To scale up best practices in general education to reach a greater number of students.
4. To support the incorporation of engaging pedagogies and informative assessment strategies across the Pathways curriculum.
5. To increase the incorporation of high-impact practices such as undergraduate research, project-based learning, education abroad, and service learning (Kuh, 2008) in Pathways courses and minors.

Funding Details:

Pathways Grants will support the work of an individual or a team of faculty members in designing, redesigning, implementing or scaling courses or minors. Priority will be given to work that aligns with outcomes of greatest need to this point and for existing approved minors seeking to scale. Pathways Grants for an individual course (new or revised) or new minor will be awarded at a maximum of \$10,000. Pathways Grants for existing *approved* minors will be awarded a maximum of \$15,000/year for 1-3 years. However, the minor must be offered across **at least** two different colleges.

Find additional information on Pathways grants at
www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/grants

Pathways Grants



Introducing Five New Pathways Minors!

The Pathways General Education Curriculum Review Committee approved five new Pathways Minors in 2020. These five minors, although developed prior to 2020, are directly relevant to the global challenges and upheavals of the past year, offering students multiple lenses through which to make sense of their current world. These minors offer students the opportunity to: gain an in-depth understanding of the causes and responses to the climate crisis (CLSO), discover how historical and current events and policies have affected the region they currently call home (APCE), gain a deeper understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic by exploring the intricate interplays between human and animal health and between ecosystems and culture (EHWB), develop the skills needed for a career in the frontline field of community health (HCOM), or understand and learn to manage biological and neurological responses to stress (ABB).

You can find more information on all 26 Pathways minors at www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/minors.html.

Adaptive Brain & Behavior



The Adaptive Brain and Behavior (ABB) helps students bridge learning between natural sciences, social science, and the humanities at the nexus of neurophysiology, behavior, and social environment. It offers a transdisciplinary approach to promoting well-being, resilience, and the optimization of development by supporting learning opportunities (classes, modules, and experiential learning) that emphasize the interdependent nature of brain, behavior, and context (social and environmental). Contact: Dr. Matt Komelski, komelski@vt.edu.

Appalachian Cultures & Environments

The Appalachian Cultures and Environments (APCE) minor provides students with an understanding of the places, cultures, histories, artistic expressions, ecologies, and politics of the Appalachian region historically and currently. Courses within the minor examine the socioeconomic concerns of Southwest Virginia, and of Appalachia more broadly, and illuminate ways in which Appalachian places and issues are inextricably linked to global places and issues. Contact: Dr. Emily Satterwhite, satterwhite@vt.edu.



Climate & Society



The Climate and Society (CLSO) minor provides students with the opportunity to explore and understand the science, causes, impacts, and policy of climate change at the local, regional, and international levels from an inter-multidisciplinary perspective. The minors brings together coursework from the physical/natural sciences, environment and ecosystems, and human dimensions and policy, as well as the option to explore additional coursework on methodological approaches that will provide students with the capacity to understand and analyze climate change impacts on society and the environment. Contact: Dr. Carol Franco, carol@vt.edu.

Ecosystems for Human Well-Being

The Ecosystems for Human Well-Being (EHWB) minor allows students to examine the world from multiple perspectives in the context of a critical global and ethical issue: the planet's life support systems. Students will explore the connection between ecosystems and the services they provide to communities, the impact of culture on the environment, and the pathways associated with human and animal health risks. The minor is appropriate for students from numerous disciplines across campus, but especially those with an interest in the "One-Health" concept. Contacts: Dr. Matt Eick, eick@vt.edu, or Renee Eaton, rselberg@vt.edu.



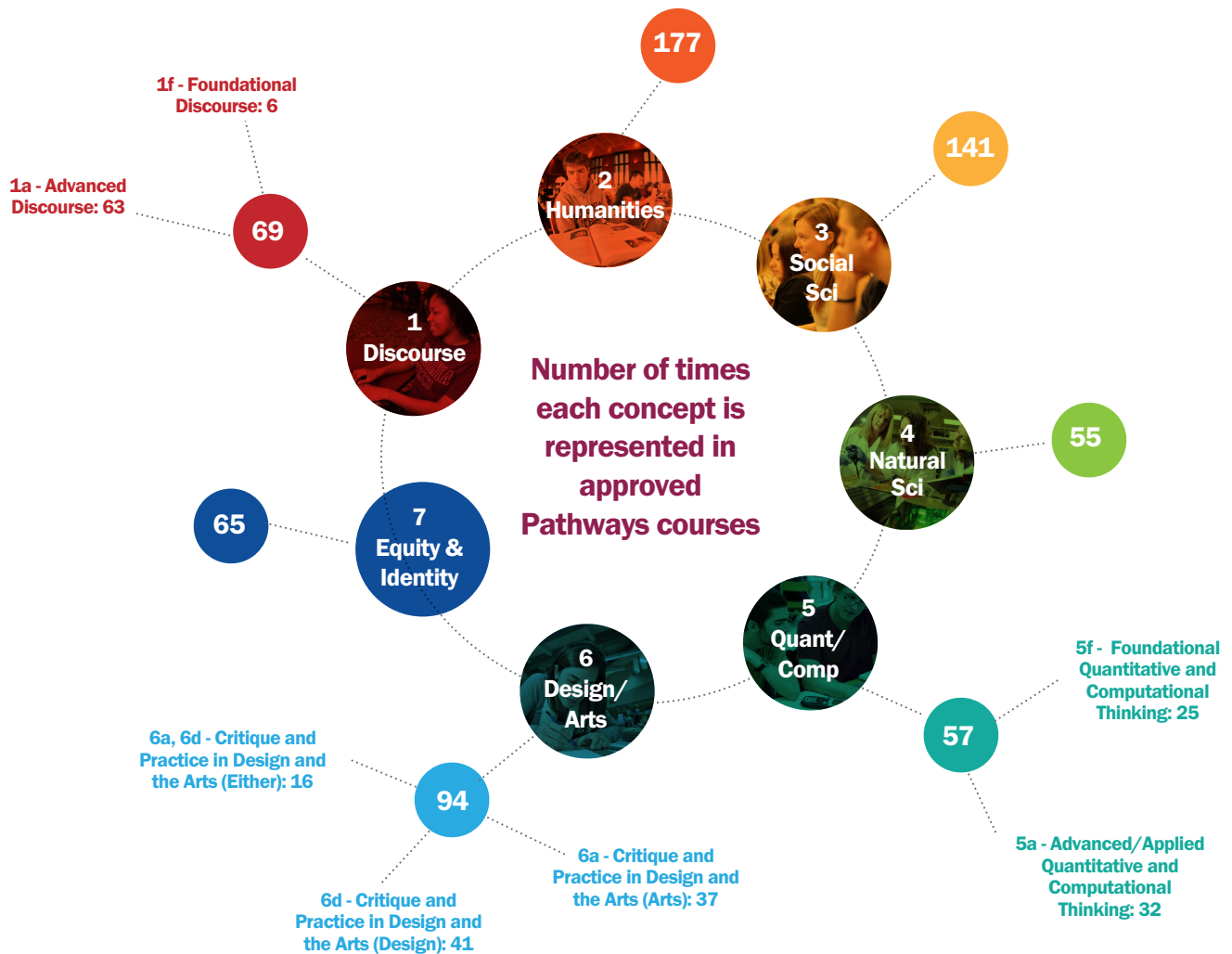
Health Communications



The Health Communications (HCOM) minor prepares students to work in one of the fastest growing industries in the U.S. and across the world: healthcare. Students will learn the factors that affect health behavior and tools that can be used to promote and affect change related to health behavior. This minor will particularly benefit students who plan to enter any health-related profession (healthcare provider, administrator, community health worker, patient advocate, non-medical support staff, etc.) Contact: Dr. Hannah Shinault, hannah84@vt.edu.

> Implementation Update

To Date, the Pathways General Education Curriculum Review Committee Has Approved Nearly 500 Courses and 26 Pathways Minors



Explore a sampling of the 500+ Pathways courses, sorted by topic of interest, at <https://www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/courses.html>. Topics include:

- The African American Experience
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Race and Social Justice
- Sustainability and the Environment
- Sex, Gender, and Sexuality
- Big Data
- Understanding and Serving Your Community

Teaching a course related to one of these topics? We'd love to add it! Email Jenni Gallagher (jennigal@vt.edu) to have your course included in the Pathways Course Showcase.

>Acknowledgments

With Thanks to Those Who Keep the Pathways Wheels Turning

The Office of General Education would like to thank the members of the Pathways General Education Curriculum Review Committee for their continued efforts in reviewing proposed courses and minors.

This committee consists of representatives from Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC), University Curriculum Committee for General Education (UCCGE), University Libraries, University Studies, and each academic college, with support provided by the Registrar's Office and the Office of General Education.

Sincere thanks to the members of the Pathways General Education Curriculum Review Committee:

- **Kim Carlson, Chair**, Pamplin College of Business
- **Chad Bolding**, College of Natural Resources and Environment
- **Alex Brand**, University Curriculum Committee
- **Matt Eick**, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- **Xinghua Gao**, College of Engineering
- **Gebre Gebremariam**, College of Science
- **Katlyn Griffin**, University Libraries
- **Kevin Jones**, College of Architecture and Urban Studies
- **Kerry Redican**, College of Veterinary Medicine
- **Nick Sano-Franchini**, University Studies
- **Annie Ronan**, University Curriculum Committee for General Education
- **Hannah Shinault**, College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
- **James Wilson**, University Curriculum Committee for General Education

Many thanks as well to the following for their support of the committee's efforts:

Gary Costello and the Registrar's Office staff

Curriculum Coordinators from each College

- **Anna Taylor** - College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- **Robert Jordan Jacks** - College of Architecture and Urban Studies
- **Tracy Sebring** - College of Engineering
- **Lisa Kathleen Burns** - College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
- **Cathy Barker** - College of Natural Resources and Environment
- **Robin Kay Panneton** - College of Science
- **Julia Acton** - Pamplin College of Business
- **Sara Vandyke** - University Honors

Save the Date! 2021 Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy

The 13th Annual Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy will be held online **February 3-5**. The conference showcases the best pedagogical practice and research in higher education.

Registration is open at
<https://chep.teaching.vt.edu>.

Save the Date! Summer Institute 2021

The **Summer Institute** will be held this **May 18-19**. It will again bring together folks involved with Pathways, FYE, and HHMI Inclusive Excellence for two days of high quality programming, networking, and sharing. The format will be finalized in the near future, but the event will likely be virtual.

Mark your calendars now... more information to follow in the coming weeks.