



# CORE LEARNING 2017-2020

Review and Paths Forward  
Megan O'Neill, Core Academic Experience

- 2017: Core Learning Committee charged with “enhancing the curricular coherence of the core learning experiences – defined as the First-Year Seminar (FSEM), Junior Seminar (JSEM), Senior Project, and Writing –along with articulating, developing, and strengthening that coherence”
  - 2017-2019 Studying archival material (origin documents, syllabi, course proposals, assessment results) and listening to faculty in focus groups, 1-1 interviews, and surveys.
  - 2017-2019 Strong reporting to stakeholders with considerable *agita* around the major problems.
  - 2017-2020 Significant impact on FSEM, JSEM, and Capstone (faculty leadership, alignment of goals, identification and articulation of coherent pathways)
- 2019: Committee recommended its closure in 2019

# Core Learning Committee 2017-2020

## Committee Membership

Grace Kaletski-Maisel

Colin MacFarlane

Stuart Michelson

Hunter Murphy

Megan O’Neill (Chair)

Daniil Zavlunov

(very detailed [documentation](#))

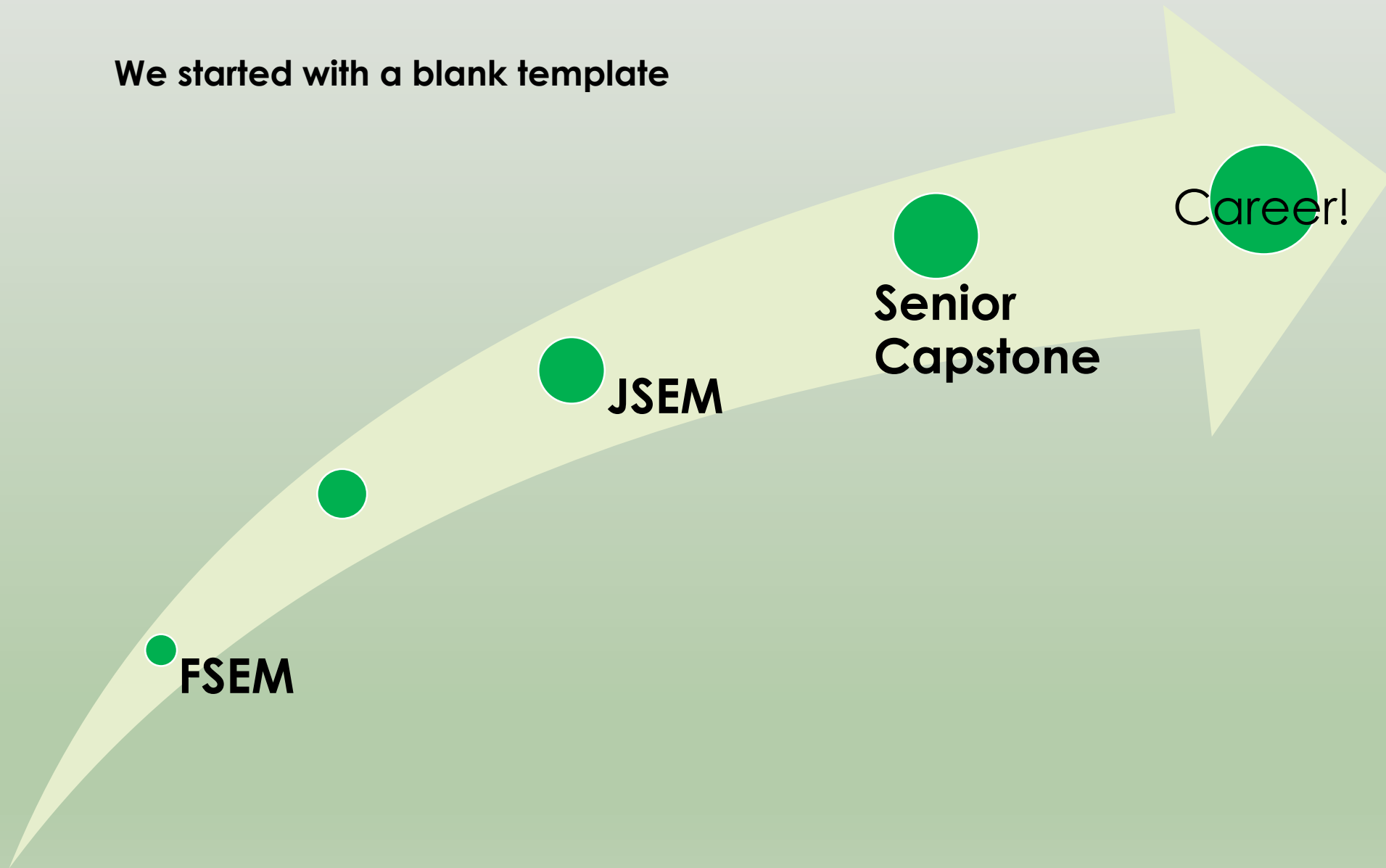
- **2017:** A&S Team sent to AAC&U Summer Institute on *Integrative Learning and Signature Work*. Result: “A Path for Increasing Curricular Coherence In General Education”
- **2017-2018:** Task Force For Educational Coherence and Effectiveness (chair, Alicia Slater)
- **2017-19** Stetson University General Education Curriculum Map (origin 2009)
- **2017-2020:** Core Experience Learning Outcome Grid (aligning and scaffolding GLOs, Core Courses, and Community Practices)
- **2009-2019** Critical Skill (Gen Ed) Assessment: A Decade of Flat Results
- **2016-2020** Four Year Cohort Writing Study/Assessment
- **2019-2020:** Undergraduate Research Capstone Proposal (UGEC)
- **2017-2018** (draft) Proposal for University Assessment Committee (IRE)

## Contributing Depth and Perspective

*We drew on as many existing documents and projects as possible, relying on a number of good projects that stalled for any number of reasons.*

*We're grateful for the colleagues who did that work—it made ours much easier.*

We started with a blank template



# FSEM Course Description

*“... improve students’ ability to **read, think, and write critically and coherently** about knowledge and ideas. The intent is to increase their ability and their desire to engage enthusiastically in intellectual conversations. These courses are designed to help students develop skills in **Writing, Information Fluency, Speaking, and Critical Thinking**...*

*They are discussion-based and writing-intensive, encouraging students to engage actively, both in and outside of class, with course materials. They involve substantive writing and speaking assignments, with feedback and opportunities for improvement.”*

(Stetson Catalog, <https://catalog.stetson.edu/undergraduate/general-education/>)

# 2017-18: FSEM

## **2017: Surveys and interviews revealed:**

- Faculty dissatisfaction
- Lack of faculty leadership
- Widely varying student perceptions
- Significant inconsistencies in expectations across sections
- Inconsistent, ill-timed, or unnecessary faculty development
- Disconnect between FSEM and FOCUS

## **2017-18 CLC Recommendations:**

- **Leadership, dedication, vision, consistency, perceptions** Ranjini Thaver appointed Director (2018) and Martin Blackwell appointed Asst. Director (2020)
- **Regularized, purposeful faculty development** (in place since 2018)
- **Faculty involvement in FOCUS planning** (improvement since 2018)

# JSEM Course Description

◦  
*“...invite students from all majors to consider complex questions that foster the development of **personal or social responsibility**. Students bring sophisticated critical and intellectual skills to the study of a new discipline in order to advance students’ abilities in **critical analysis, coherent reasoning, effective expression, and integration of learning**. They are writing-intensive and discussion-based. Every Junior Seminar is open to students in all majors, whether within or outside of the discipline in which it is being taught.”*

(Stetson Catalog, <https://catalog.stetson.edu/undergraduate/general-education/>)

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# 2018-19: JSEM

## **2018: Surveys and interviews revealed:**

- A lack of shared understanding around a set of definitions important to JSEM (specifically, “interdisciplinary” and “integrative”)
- A disparity across JSEM sections and syllabi in terms of academic expectations
- A wide disparity across JSEM faculty in terms of preparation, support, and resources
- A clear desire among less experienced JSEM faculty for a sense of community

## **2018-19 CLC Recommendations:**

- **Appoint a long-term faculty JSEM Coordinator** (Interim Coordinator as of 2018)
- **Establish a refreshed and shared vision of JSEM to build a community of practice** (Annual JSEM Meeting, est. 2019)
- **Adopt and maintain a shared set of definitions (especially around “interdisciplinary” and “integrative”)** (ongoing; 2-year project on JSEM integrative learning practices and assessments)



# General Education Seminar Outcomes

## **FSEM Core Learning Skills**

1. Writing
2. Information Fluency
3. Speaking
4. Critical Thinking

## **JSEM Core Learning Skills**

1. Writing
2. Information Literacy
3. Speaking
4. Critical Thinking
5. Integration of Learning

# Stetson Capstone 2019-2020

- A&S: “Drawing on liberal study in the College’s program of General Education and the knowledge and skills learned through a major curriculum, each senior undertakes a project appropriate to her or his field of study: an original research paper, an empirical study, development and analysis of a predictive model, a report on a laboratory experiment or field observation, gallery exhibition, a stage presentation, a computer program, a community-based project, or creative work”
- SoBA: MGMT 495 **experiential** learning course involving simulations that require students to **integrate** significant learning experiences in the **major**
- SoM: Senior Performance/Senior Recital requiring **research, analysis, critical thinking** across multiple specific paths

*(Stetson University Catalog descriptions)*

## Senior Project /Performance/ Capstone

- **Disciplinary study and general education must contribute to each other**
- No shared understanding of capstone experience
- No shared and formalized alignment across A&S, SoM, SoBA

**University Capstone Experience**

*“The vital coherence connecting FSEM to JSEM to Capstone must be the development of critical and intellectual skills, in alignment with course expectations, faculty instructional methods, and learning assessment goals.”*

*(CLC Final Report, May 2020)*

***Common Gen Ed Learning Goals in the Stetson Capstone:***

- Writing effectively
- Engaging with information effectively
- Speaking in an understandable, organized, and audience-appropriate fashion
- **Analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing data**
- Integrating learning in the discipline

## Capstone Common Learning Goals

All 3 academic units expect similar learning outcomes

Ongoing discussion about how best to articulate distinctions between *skills* and *applications* of those skills in capstone in the College.

*“All Capstones must demonstrate  
the following:*

1. **Research, analysis and interpretation** appropriate to the discipline undertaken.
2. **A physical artifact that meets the standards of the discipline.**
3. **Public oral communication** of the Capstone.

(quoted with permission from Kimberly Reiter, Chair, Undergraduate Research)

Proposal from  
Undergraduate  
Research:

*Creates a seamless trajectory  
from FSEM to Capstone*

*A university-wide agreement on  
description, requirements, and  
alignment across A&S, SoM, and  
SoBA*

*A true “Stetson Capstone” that  
**prioritizes** common goals and  
**retains** program, College/School,  
and disciplinary autonomy*

# One: Capstone alignment and common language in the Catalog

## Who is responsible?

- Deans, faculty, curriculum committees in A&S, SoBA, and SoM
- General liaison: Core Academic Experience Director

## Post-CLC: The Next Steps

1. Capstone description alignment and curricular reinforcement

## Two: Career and Professional Development

“While the Core Learning Committee was not charged with creating a pathway for such success, it is an obvious data point for indications of a successful Stetson education.”

*(CLC Final Report, May 2020)*

### Who is responsible?

- Career and Professional Development staff
- Student Success
- General liaison: Core Academic Experience Director

## Post-CLC: The Next Steps

2. Preparing for the professional markets

## 3. Strengthen the Core

“While the **superstructure** has been identified and largely agreed upon in the community, the work of implementing the **infrastructure** must continue.

“Stetson can only strengthen the core by **adding and integrating learning** along a horizontal axis in addition to the general education vertical alignment.”

*(CLC Final Report, May 2020)*

### Who is responsible?

- Deans
- department chairs
- curriculum committees
- General liaison: Core Academic Experience Director

## Post-CLC: The Next Steps

### 3. Build the Core:

**Horizontal** alignment across A&S, SoBA, and SoM capstone

**Vertical** alignment through core learning (Gen Ed goals) and program learning (disciplinary goals)

Skill assessed	Year Assessed	Methods	Results
Critical Thinking	2008	CLA*	80 <sup>th</sup> percentile
Writing	2009	Embedded, authentic FSEM samples	82% proficiency FY 76% proficiency SR
Speaking	2010	Embedded, authentic samples	66% proficiency
Quantitative	2010		55% proficiency
Integrative Learning	2012	Embedded, authentic JSEM samples	60% proficiency
Information Literacy	2013	SAILS (all FY students)	15% proficiency
Speaking	2013		50% proficiency
Writing	2014	Embedded, authentic samples	82% proficiency FY 95% proficiency JR
Critical Thinking	2014		86 <sup>th</sup> percentile
Quantitative Reasoning	2014	Embedded, authentic exam	56% proficiency
Information Literacy	2016-19	Embedded, growth from FSEM to JSEM	44% proficiency
Writing	2018	Embedded, authentic samples	45% proficiency (pending confirmation from AAC&U)
Quantitative	2019		
Critical Thinking	2019	Embedded, authentic	Pending
Speaking	2019	Embedded, authentic	Pending
Integrative learning	2020	Embedded writing samples	Pending



### Stetson University General Education Curriculum Map

Revised: July 31, 2019								
Originally reviewed, revised, and approved by General Education Assessment Committee, April 16, 2009								
	<b>Learning Outcome</b>							
	1.1	2.1	3.1	4.1	5.1	6.1	7.1	8.1
<b>General Education Area</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Information Literacy (Fluency)</b>	<b>Speaking</b>	<b>Critical Thinking</b>	<b>Quantitative Reasoning</b>	<b>Knowledge of Cultures &amp; Natural World</b>	<b>Values (Formerly, Personal &amp; Social Responsibility)</b>	<b>Integration of Learning</b>
<del>First-Year Seminar (FSEM)</del>	I,D	I	I,D	I, D				
Writing	I,D	I,D		I, D				Disciplinary approaches are introduced throughout the curriculum.
Quantitative Reasoning					I, D, M			
Knowledge of Cultures & Natural World: A=Creative Arts B=Culture and Beliefs H=Historical Inquiry L=Modern Languages P=Physical and Natural World S=Individuals, Societies, and Social Systems						I, D,M		
Personal & Social Responsibility: D= Human Diversity E=Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry J=Social Justice R=Environmental Responsibility W=Health and Wellness				I, D			I,D,M	
<del>Junior Seminar (JSEM)</del>	D	D	D,M	D,M			I,D,M	I,D,M
<del>Senior Capstone</del>	D,M	D,M	D,M	D,M				

I = Introduced

D = Developed & practiced with feedback

## 4. Rethink the assessment map

Balancing the weight of Gen Ed assessment in FSEM and JSEM with additional GLOs in other Gen Ed and program courses

Recognizing where core skills are being taught that are not represented on the assessment map

### Who is responsible?

- UGEC
- Curriculum committees
- Program faculty and Chairs
- General Liaison: Core Academic Experience Director

## Post-CLC: The Next Steps

Update map to accuracy and transparency

Rethink assessment strategy

Plan for QEP

## 5. University Assessment for Alignment and Excellence

Supports and empowers vertical alignment through core learning (Gen Ed goals) and program learning (disciplinary goals)  
Supports and empowers “closing the loop” procedures

### Who is responsible?

- UGEC
- curriculum committees
- Assessment coordinators
- Institutional Research and Effectiveness
- General Liaison: Core Academic Experience Director

## Post-CLC: The Next Steps

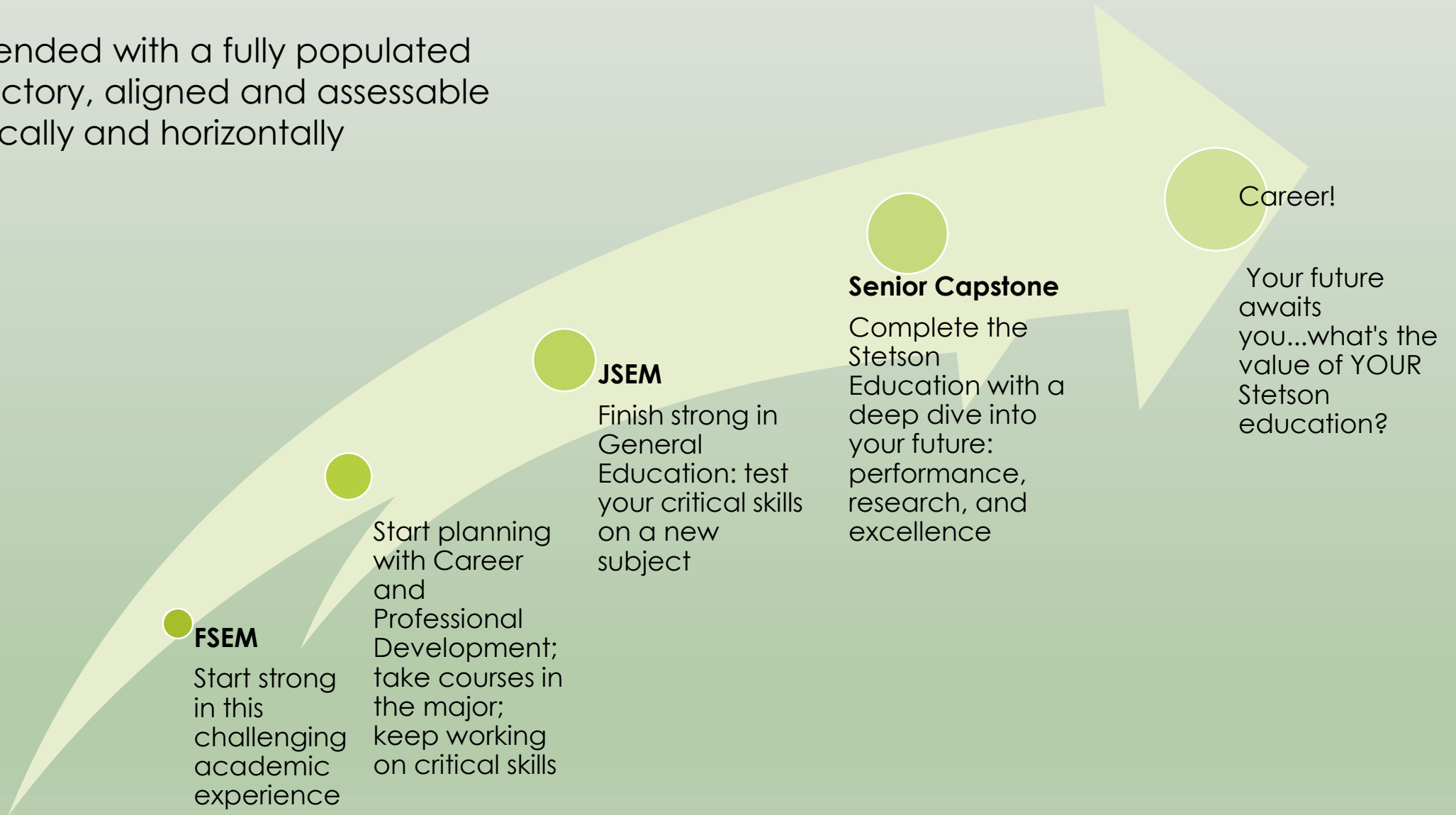
**Assessment for institutional  
excellence**

*(Proposal for University  
Assessment Committee from  
IRE)*

Establishes a University faculty  
body empowered to oversee  
and direct

Establishes a structure to bear  
the weight of the QEP

We ended with a fully populated trajectory, aligned and assessable vertically and horizontally



There's always more to come. Stay tuned.

# Questions and/or Comments?

- *Thank you to every individual faculty member, tenure-track, non tenure track, adjunct, lecturer I've spoken with over the last three years. Your time is much appreciated.*
- *Thank you to the Core Learning team for putting in all those early morning hours and never asking to be taken off the committee.*