

# Essential Education Transformation: Interim Proposal Report

## Executive Summary

- Innovative pathway model integrates perspectives from across disciplines and Colleges
- Inaugural pathway theme of **Artificial Intelligence** reflects real-world challenges
- AI pathway courses will begin Fall 2026
- Additional potential pathway themes: entrepreneurship, wellness
- Faculty-led process

## Essential Education Framework

**Curriculum Structure** | The 30-credit hour program maintains a clear four-element structure and shows promise for the integration of Essential Employability Skills, which is work currently in progress:

| Element    | Focus                          | Credits | Proposed* Essential Employability Skills (EES)        |
|------------|--------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Element 1A | Written Communication I        | 3       | EES 1-communication; EES 8-collaboration              |
| Element 1B | Written Communication II       | 3       | EES 5-change; EES 1-communication                     |
| Element 1C | Oral Communication             | 3       | EES 6-professionalism; EES 4-interaction              |
| Element 2A | Mathematics                    | 3       | EES 3-quantitative reasoning; EES 2-critical thinking |
| Element 2B | Natural Sciences               | 6       | EES 10-decision making; EES 8-collaboration           |
| Element 3A | Arts                           | 3       | EES 7-civic life; EES 1-communication                 |
| Element 3B | Humanities                     | 3       | EES 2-critical thinking; EES 5-change                 |
| Element 4A | Historical & Global Dimensions | 3       | EES 4-interaction; EES 2-critical thinking            |
| Element 4B | Social/Behavioral Sciences     | 3       | EES 7-civic life; EES 10-decision making              |

\*The EES listed here are provisional and will be revised with faculty input from the campus community

## Pathway Implementation Strategy

**Pathway Definition and Requirements** | A General Education pathway consists of a collection of courses from different Essential Education elements that examine a real-world problem from various disciplinary perspectives. Examples might include entrepreneurship, or wellness.

### Pathway Criteria:

- Minimum of 5 courses committed to the pathway theme across at least 3 Elements
- Interdisciplinary appeal
- Broad, timeless topics with sustained relevance
- Demonstrated student interest and career applicability

### Pilot Program Launch: Fall 2026

Our committee selected **Artificial Intelligence** as the inaugural pathway theme, which satisfies the above criteria. Additional pathways will be developed following the procedure described below.

## Development and Approval Process Map

### Pathway Approval Process

#### Phase 1: Pathway Theme Approval

1. **Faculty propose pathway theme** - Ideally a group of faculty from at least 3 Elements who intend to teach pathway courses
2. **UGEC Preliminary Approval** - Initial pathway concept review
3. **Documentation Development** - Comprehensive pathway proposal (details TBD)
4. **Stakeholder Input Period** - Broad campus and community feedback (stakeholders TBD)
5. **UGEC Final Approval** - Formal committee vote on pathway establishment

**Phase 2: Individual Course Approval** | Once pathway themes receive approval, individual courses follow standard curriculum processes.

## Resource Optimization

The pathway model capitalizes on existing resources through:

- **Faculty support:** FCT&L and other units support faculty for Pathway course (re)design and Essential Employability Skills integration
- **Resource-Based Expansion:** New pathways added only as faculty and administrative capacity supports (1-2 new pathways per year maximum)

## Quality Assurance and Review

**Five-Year Pathway Lifecycle** | Each pathway will undergo comprehensive review every five years to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.

## Implementation Timeline

**Fall 2025:** Pathway course development workshops begin

**Spring 2026:** All pathway course approval process

**Spring 2026:** Faculty development for Essential Employability Skills

**Fall 2026:** All pathway pilot launch

**Spring 2027:** Call for additional pathway themes

**Fall 2028:** Full integration of Essential Employability Skills

## Student Recognition and Assessment

**Pathway Recognition** | Students completing pathway requirements will receive formal recognition on transcripts. The specific format will be determined by feasibility within DegreeWorks programming constraints.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

This proposal reflects extensive committee deliberation and aligns precisely with your transformative vision while ensuring practical implementation. The pilot approach with the Technology pathway allows us to demonstrate success before expansion to other pathways. The committee requests your approval to proceed with the Technology pathway, positioning ECU for the successful launch of Essential Education in Fall 2026.

## EETC members:

|                 |             |                 |           |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------|
| John Brent      | CJSMS       | Jeff Reed       | CEAHS     |
| Alison Buck     | CLASS       | Jade Robinson   | CEAHS     |
| Anne Cizmar     | CLASS       | Leah Simpkins   | CHS       |
| Malina Gaworski | Student rep | Kendall Simpson | CSTEM     |
| Todd Gooch      | CLASS       | JP Stearns      | CoB       |
| Jami Higdon     | CJSMS       | Ben Wicker      | CSTEM     |
| Dana Kendrick   | Libraries   | John Williamson | Dean K-12 |
| Mike Lane       | CHS         | Matthew Winslow | CLASS     |

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