

Response to the GE Program Review Recommendations

Date: April 6 2009

Prepared by: General Education/Graduation Requirements Policies Committee (GE/GRPC)

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INTRODUCTION

Background

During the 2006-2007 Academic Year, the General Education program at Sacramento State was the subject of a self-study report by the GE/GRPC, an external program review and, the campus review committee completed their review in the 2007-2008 academic year. The external and internal reports included 12 primary recommendations, common to both*, covering wide ranging issues associated with General Education and related topics such as advising and first-year experiences. This document is a response to those recommendations, authored by the GE/GRPC.

Although the earlier reports were divided into 12 major recommendations, many of those included further, more specific recommendations embedded in the text. The GE/GRPC has attempted to identify each recommendation and sub-recommendation and has addressed each separately (although several overlap or are linked to others).

The GE/GRPC has reached consensus on this response, as is indicated in the minutes of April 6, 2009, and supports the responses below, realizing that carrying out these initiatives will require participation of committee members as well as the larger university community who have a stake in the educational progress and learning outcomes of students in the General Education Program. The responses are indicative of the GE/GRPC's ongoing interest in programmatic coherence and faculty development and the committee looks to the Faculty Senate and the University community at large to support this important endeavor.

Response Categories

In responding to the recommendations, the GE/GRPC has identified three categories of response:

- **Response – Information:** In these instances, the GE/GRPC is reporting a decision that has been made internally that requires no further action. In some cases, this reflects an opinion that the recommendation is already being addressed by an appropriate group, has been addressed, or cannot adequately be addressed at this time.

- **Response – Referral:** Recommendations that the GE/GRPC has decided fall within the responsibility and authority of another committee or campus office.
- **Response – Action:** Policy proposals authored by the GE/GRPC that require action by the Faculty Senate. In these cases, prospective language for Senate action is included.

***Note:** In earlier versions of the program reviews, there is some inconsistency in the numbering and labeling of the recommendations. The numbering of this response document, and phrasing of some of the recommendations, is intended to be internally consistent and to accurately reflect the thematic content of those documents.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

1. The General Education Program should establish a process for developing and assessing student learning outcomes of the program as a whole and prepare a plan for improvement based on the results of those assessments.

The Academic Program Review Report requests that:

- a. An assessment plan is created for both the GE Areas and program as a whole with respect to evaluating educational effectiveness within a broader, University context.

Response - Information: The GE Assessment Consultant and Campus Assessment Coordinator will assist the GE/GRPC with development and implementation of a comprehensive assessment plan for the General Education Program to evaluate the student learning outcomes and provide an evidentiary base for improvement as a result.

- b. Any plan should investigate the applicability of the Baccalaureate Learning Goals as a framework.

Response - Information: The GE/GRPC, CPC, and Graduate Studies Policies Committee (GSPC) recommend the establishment of a joint taskforce to review and discuss the possible replacement of the Baccalaureate Learning Goals (BLG) with a set of Sacramento State Learning Goals consistent with the LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) General Education Learning Outcomes, endorsed by the Chancellor's Office in EO 1033 (<http://www.calstate.edu/EO/EO-1033.html>), the current Baccalaureate Learning Goals, Co-Curricular Learning Goals, and the newly developed Graduate Learning Outcomes.

This group may bring forth a recommendation to the Senate for Campus Learning Goals including GE, undergraduate, and graduate goals and a process for developing, approving, monitoring, and revisiting those goals periodically. The GE/GRPC recognizes that when the campus has determined a set of learning goals then the GE program, including area objectives should be aligned and supportive of these goals. Further discussion and possible recommendations for policy revision will occur at that time.

Furthermore, the taskforce would be asked to consider the goals and objectives in the context of the larger issue raised in number 7 of this response and with a view towards recommending a thematic approach for the General Education Program that is not exclusive to the upper division program.

Response – Action: The five-year cycle of GE Area course compliance reviews shall be suspended for one year, during AY 2009-2010, to facilitate consultation between the GE Course Review Subcommittee and the CPC Course Approval Subcommittee in examination of, and the possible revision of, the GE Area learning objectives. *Reviews will resume in 2010-2011 if unchanged or if changed, in AY 2011-201, based on the newly revised learning objectives.* The review is coordinated by the GE/GRPC in concert with the Faculty Assessment Coordinator and the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs.

Response - Information: See response to 1a.

- c. Assessment data is disseminated openly to foster discussion related to program strengths and weaknesses.

Response - Information: Information gathered from any assessment tools will be accessible via the General Education webpage (<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/ge/>) as is currently the practice of the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

2. The University General Education/Graduation Requirements Policies Committee in consultation with the University Academic Policies Committee and the Registrar should bring the campus' upper-division GE requirement into compliance with CSU Executive Order No. 595. (EO 1033)

Response - Referral: This was referred to the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies and campus policy has been corrected to match the stated system-wide directive regarding when a student can enroll in upper division courses.

3. The Faculty Senate should consider restructuring the General Education Program by reducing the number of courses that are accepted as satisfying GE requirements.

The Academic Program Review Report requests that:

- a. Consideration be given as to how to best utilize the resources available to the GE program.

Response - Referral: GE/GRPC is not a resource allocation body, however it is agreed that Academic Affairs should consider the best way to allocate resources within the framework of the recently created Academic Affairs Budget Advisory Committee (AABAC) and in consultation with GE/GRPC, including the feasibility of the formation of a GE "college" or another means of centralized funding of GE course offerings.

- b. A discussion of GE Area learning goals be undertaken

Response - Information: See response to 1b.

- c. Effective ways to promote real student engagement be undertaken

Response - Information: The GE/GRPC in conjunction with the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is sponsoring a workshop in spring 2009 entitled: "Engaging Students in General Education Courses". This was the first in a series of workshops. The 2009 CTL summer institute includes a strand focused on GE.

- d. Specific courses and other curricular structures that have the potential to meet GE goals as well as the Sacramento State's baccalaureate goals be designated.

Response - Information: See response to 1b.

- e. A new configuration of GE that reduces the number of courses that are accepted as satisfying GE requirements be undertaken.

Response - Action: After considerable discussion the GE/GRPC committee did not reach consensus on whether or not to endorse this recommendation. However, the committee proposes the following policy to assure currency of course listings.

The following policy regarding the declassification of GE classes shall be adopted:

1. All currently listed GE classes that have not been taught during 2005-2009 will be declassified as a GE class, unless a department successfully appeals directly to the GE/GRPC Committee.
2. Beginning in fall 2010, classes that are classified in GE must be offered, at a minimum, once every two years or be declassified. At the end of every school year, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies will undertake a review of courses, and departments will be notified, and classes that have not been taught in the two preceding years will be declassified unless a department successfully appeals directly to the GE/GRPC Committee.
3. The responsibility for scheduling and teaching the course rests with the department, as does the responsibility for appeal to the GE/GRPC.

4. The University should explore the potential of the student administration software in CMS to ensure a timely GE advising and as a support for transparency and consistency in the rational sequencing of GE courses.

The Academic Program Review Report requests that:

CMS Student Management Software should be configured to facilitate access to information on classes, schedules and GE area course options that are useful for both advisors and students.

Response - Referral: This recommendation lies outside the charge of the GE/GRPC and has been referred to Academic Advising.

5. The GE/GRP Committee should develop materials that organize the GE and graduation requirements simply, effectively, and graphically.

The Academic Program Review Report requests that:

A more interactive, on-line GE advising worksheet that ties the courses that meet each GE Area's criteria to catalog descriptions of the course and the class schedule be developed.

Response - Information:

1. The GE/GRPC notes that the current GE roadmap in the Student Registration and Advising Handbook is already but a single page long.
2. The GE/GRPC recommends organizing the upper division GE courses into themes (*see the response to recommendation number 7*) that would improve the ability of students to select a set of courses that are thematically related and also fulfill the upper division GE requirements.
3. The GE/GRPC recommends the development and publication of a similar roadmap for upper division GE in the Student Registration and Advising Handbook if the recommendations in number 7 are adopted.

6. The University General Education/Graduation Requirements Policies Committee, in consultation with the Curriculum Policies Committee and the English Department, should reconsider the possibility of subsuming the second semester composition requirement into Area A3.

Response - Information: The GE/GRPC recommends that this be deferred until academic year 2010-2011 at the earliest. English 20, the university's second semester composition requirement, underwent revision for 2009, refocusing the course toward a curriculum based more upon a "Writing in the Disciplines" approach. As the program review recommendation comes from review of English 20 materials before this year's significant pedagogical and curricular shift, the Committee wishes to allow the new version of the second semester composition requirement some classroom trial time before revisiting the topic of subsuming English 20 into Area A3. The Committee will request the University Reading and Writing Coordinator and the Writing Across the Curriculum Program Coordinator, and the English 20 Coordinator to report back after that trial period. The report will focus on the effectiveness of the new approach to English 20 in terms of direct and indirect evidence of student learning apart from course grades.

7. The GE Program should consider structural changes to the upper division GE requirement to offer a more focused and integrated “capstone” to this portion of the curriculum.

The Academic Program Review Report requests that:

The GE/GRPC should work together to evaluate the Honors Program efforts to link upper division GE courses together. The GE/GRPC could propose changes to the organization and delivery of the campus’s upper division requirements.

Response - Information: The GE/GRPC has evaluated the structure of the Honors Program upper division program and acknowledges that the success of this program is due, in part, to cohorting of students who take the classes together at a prescribed time and semester as well as the collaboration of the involved faculty. The GE/GRPC encourages faculty to continue to explore interdisciplinary and thematic course offerings and supports incentivizing this through existing faculty development grants (e.g., Pedagogy Enhancement) and other avenues.

Response – Information:

In order to provide students with curricular focus and to encourage faculty integration across the curriculum, the GE/GRPC recommends an *alternate listing* of upper division courses on the GE website. This listing will be a thematic organization. The following list is recommended by the GE/GRPC. (See attachment B for a tentative listing of courses)

1. Science and Nature
2. Leadership and Civic Engagement
3. New California: Social Issues and Domestic Policy
4. Personal Wellness
5. Aesthetic Perspective/Performance of Culture
6. Livability and Sustainability (environment)
7. Global Experience: Africa, Europe, Japan, Russia, Latin America, Middle East, India, China
8. World Literature
9. Religious Quest
10. Women’s Study

Note: The committee recognizes that if the Response – Action policy proposal that addresses recommendation 3e passes, then the thematic list of courses may be reduced, but also notes that such a reorganization may encourage faculty development of courses as well.

8. The University should make the Freshman Seminar course mandatory for first time CSU Sacramento freshmen.

Response – Referral: The GE/GRPC finds that the recent position paper prepared by the First Year Programs Committee adequately addresses this topic and refers the matter to Academic Affairs.

(See Attachment C)

9. We recommend that the University increase the scope and impact of GE faculty advisement.

Response – Information: The GE/GRPC recognizes that advising, particularly with regard to GE requirements and learning goals and objectives, is a crucial part of student success and movement toward the timely completion of a baccalaureate degree. We support a more holistic approach to undergraduate advising through the development of a series of workshops on GE advising in conjunction with the Office of Academic Advising, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Academic Policy Implementation Team. These workshops will be geared toward academic advisors, faculty who serve as major advisors in their academic departments, department chairs, and interested faculty who may teach courses in the GE program and be interested in advising.

Response – Referral: The recent adjustments to the University policy on advising (FS 07-72/APC) require resources for successful implementation and so the GE/GRPC encourages the Administration to allocate adequate funding to increase the scope and impact of GE faculty advisement.

10. We recommend that the University launch a faculty development initiative focused on General Education.

Response-Information: Issues raised in # 10 will continue to be discussed by GE/GRPC during the rest of the academic year and further reporting and/or recommendations may ensue.

Response – Action: Committee requests that the allocation of Pedagogy Enhancement Grants to GE course improvement and development be commensurate with proportionality of General Education courses as represented among all courses taught at the University (at least 40 percent of student degree requirements).

11. The University should mandate transfer orientation and advisement and pilot a single unit transfer seminar

Response – Referral: GE/GRPC recommends the establishment of a Taskforce representing Academic and Student Affairs, to consider this recommendation, and refers the matter to the VP's of those divisions. GE/GRPC recommends that the substance of the transfer seminar include a focus on logistics and requirements as well as transfer students' self-assessments of their preparation in light of Sacramento State's learning goals and the GE objectives.

12. The University should offer more upper division General Education courses in the Summer Session.

Response – Action: This is not within the scope of GE/GRPC, but the committee suggests the following recommendation be made by the Faculty Senate;

The Faculty Senate encourages the Administration, at the campus and system levels, to investigate the possibility of offering summer coursework using the Continuing Education funding model, for classes that would not be supported in the State Support model by Departments and Colleges. Faculty involved in such a venture would be engaged on a self-selected basis and there would be no requirement to work on a pro-rated basis, although individual faculty may choose to do so as in the past. Also, the break-even point for a class to be successful may be lower in this model, allowing for more coursework to be offered even without the need to pro-rate. While this is problematic for students trying to take multiple classes across different tuition models, it does accommodate students seeking only one class at a time, and supports the easing of "bottleneck courses" and may decrease the time to graduation. The Faculty Senate encourages the Administration to consider this approach and report back their decision(s).