

GENERAL EDUCATION NEWS

From the California State University, Sacramento Office of Academic Affairs

Notes from the Chair

By Janet Hecsh, Associate Professor of Teacher Education and Chair of the General Education/Graduation Requirements Policy Committee



GE and the Hippocratic Oath

Reflecting on the dozens of conversations, hundreds of emails and thousands of references and electronic links of the past three years as Chair of the GE/GR Policy Committee, I continue to be impressed with and proud of Sacramento State's educational program. Last week, together with my fellow Senators, we honored student scholars, as part of the Faculty Endowment Scholarship Program. Those scholars repeatedly referenced our faculty as mentors, instructors and advocates. General Education plays a principal role in their achievement, and the achievement of our undergraduates, in that

almost half of our undergraduate education takes place in General Education.

I have come to recognize that the General Education program---its effectiveness and coherence--- is key to retention and graduation, the first priority of our Strategic Plan. As we move ahead in our responses to the Academic Program Review, our committee is arriving at consensus and will be reporting to the Faculty Senate this spring. We will be endorsing an initiative to revisit and reform campus learning goals, outcomes and GE objectives to provide a more coherent liberal education program for students that continues the Sacramento State tradition of responsive and responsible teaching and makes possible future GE program reviews that will be informed by the results of student learning. Additionally, we will recommend an examination of resources devoted to General Education and an open discussion of alternative structures to best achieve the common goals of General Education, retention and graduation.

We will also be encouraging support for faculty development related to

General Education and the development of attractive pilot programs for both native and transfer students. Our Compass Project, part of a national initiative, will provide faculty with honoraria for development/repurposing of GE Courses that are consistent with high impact practices that have been shown to increase retention and graduation rates. Such practices include undergraduate research, global education, integrated course work, etc.

Here is where the Hippocratic Oath comes in. I am committed to making our GE Program even better than it already is in terms of providing a liberal education for young people while not "harming" departments and colleges. "First do no harm" requires that changes or reforms in GE be sensitive to existing funding concerns and not in any way negatively impact creative and innovative faculty curricular achievements.

I expect that there will be some changes, as I already noted above, with the advice and consent of the Faculty Senate. By taking advantage of interested faculty, and the pilot structures we have in place, new pilots may be

developed, studied, evaluated and discussed--- as we have done this past year---in open forums, in small and large, formal and informal group settings.

It is an honor and a privilege to participate in this endeavor. I am so appreciative of the Deans and Department Chairs and those in Academic Affairs, including Greg Wheeler, Mike Lee and Joe Sheley, and most of all, the GE/GRPC Committee and General Education faculty who have made chairing this committee a worthwhile and challenging adventure.

The Focus is on Placement: Our New GEAR

By Fiona Glade, Assistant Professor of English and Coordinator of the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement Program

This summer, our GEAR (Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement) will employ a new process that involves not only increased student choice, but also increased writing assistance for upper-division students. Beginning in July, students will meet the GEAR using a two-step process.

In the new GEAR, English 109W/English 109M is a required course for students who have from 60 to 74 units; however, students may elect to

challenge this course by taking the Writing Placement for Juniors (WPJ), a 2-hour essay examination. Students receive help in making this choice in several ways: in English 20, at Transfer Orientation, and on the WPJ Online Registration page prior to each WPJ date. By taking English 109W/English 109M or the WPJ, writers receive a placement into upper-division writing coursework based on their readiness for succeeding in the Writing Intensive (WI) course recommended for their major. GEAR Placement is a prerequisite for enrolling in a General Education (GE) WI course: now, a passing grade in that course is what certifies the GEAR.

A 3-unit placement means that the writer is ready to move straight into the upper-division GE WI course. A 4-unit placement means that the writer needs some assistance in order to succeed in the GE WI course, and so is required concurrently to enroll in a 1-unit Credit/No Credit writing tutorial: English 109X. A 6-unit placement means that the writer is required to take English 109W/English 109M, and then to take the upper-division WI course. A 10-unit placement means that the writer is required to take LS86, then English 109M, then the upper-division WI course.

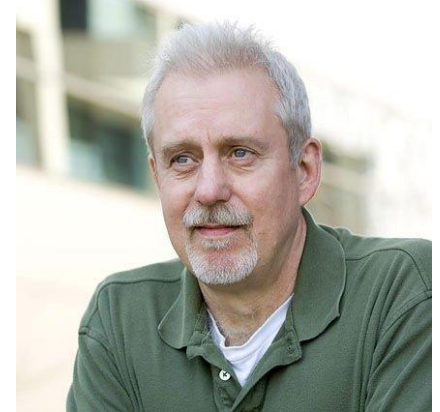
In this way, as we continue to involve WI course faculty

as readers, we'll be providing more timely writing assistance for those students who need it, and a faster time-to-graduation for many.

For further information, or to sign up as a paid WPJ Reader, please contact Fiona Glade at fiona.glade@csus.edu

G.E. R.E.A.D.S.

By Terry Underwood, Professor of Teacher Education and Faculty Assessment Coordinator



As part of the rethinking going on around General Education, G.E. R.E.A.D.S. is an assessment initiative that will be piloted next year. Here is its mission and goals:

“In the absence of shared learning goals and clear expectations, a college degree more frequently certifies completion of disconnected fragments than of a coherent plan for student accomplishment.”

Greater Expectations
(AAC&U, 2002, pg. x)

MISSION

G.E. READS is an assessment initiative that seeks to provide a coherent

set of student learning outcomes and rubrics to ensure that all Sacramento State undergraduates develop the reading habits, versatility, strategies, and dispositions that are a hallmark of liberally educated citizens in our democracy. G.E. READS recognizes that readers have a wide variety of purposes for engaging in reading events and that reading behaviors vary greatly depending on purpose. But G.E. READS assumes that all liberally educated readers share a core set of skills, values, and understandings.

Such readers are persistent and intentional, analytic and creative, active and reflective. They read among the lines carefully, between the lines thoughtfully, beyond the lines critically. Such readers welcome the obligation to make sense of culturally and intellectually significant texts despite difficulty, complexity, and ambiguity. Such readers interpret the word and the world and lead rich inner and public lives. Our mission is to fill the region, the state, the nation, and the world with such readers.

GOALS OF THE G.E. READS INITIATIVE

- Engage interested faculty in ongoing professional development in reading instruction and assessment;

- Build a library of assessments, lesson strategies, and curricular materials for faculty use;
- Assess student learning in relation to G.E. READS student learning outcomes as a basis for instructional experimentation and improvement

The Power of Community Engagement in GE

By Vanessa Arnaud, Instructor of Foreign Languages and Honors, and Jana Noel, Associate Professor of Teacher Education and Community Engagement Scholar Co-Coordinator



Writing Partners' Students in a First Year Experience course

Research has shown that community engagement increases students' commitment to their studies, the university and the community, and the likelihood of retention at the university. Participants have reported a greater awareness of community issues, understanding and acceptance of diverse races and cultures, and ability to get along with people of different backgrounds. These learning outcomes reflect the objectives of GE.

Community engagement has emerged as a transformative educational experience for students, while also providing the opportunity to work collaboratively with others for the common good. The CSU Chancellor's Office defines community engagement as "the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity." The Sacramento State Strategic Plan reiterates the value of community engagement with its Strategic Priority #5: "We have a tremendous opportunity and the potential to be a full and active partner in regional social, cultural and economic development."

Community engagement comes in varied forms, including service learning, community service, civic engagement, and shared experiential learning with members of the campus and regional community. As students learn to connect theory and practice, to connect classroom knowledge with experience in the community, there is a shift of roles in the classroom. Professors are no longer the sole sources of information, but are mentors or facilitators in the process of discussion and discovery. Students learn from their instructor,

fellow classmates, and community partners. This shifting role encourages larger student investment in and ownership of the learning process.

A variety of departments and programs, including the Community Engagement Center <http://www.csus.edu/cec/>, have information and resources to help you integrate community engagement in your courses.

Learning Skills Adjunct Program

*By Shelagh Nugent,
EDT/Adjunct Coordinator,
Learning Skills Center*



Megan McPhee with her History 50 adjunct class, LS 55A, section 2

The Learning Skills Adjunct program is an academic support program that uses Supplemental Instruction to

target students in historically difficult courses. Students sign up for a one-unit Academic Study Skills class (LS 55A-H) that meets twice a week, is taught by student instructors and is connected to one section of large GE classes in Chemistry, Economics, History or Government. Carefully chosen student instructors model study strategies appropriate for mastering the course content, promote group interaction for practice and review, monitor student success and establish an atmosphere of trust which encourages networking among the students. In addition, the faculty teaching the GE classes meet weekly with the student instructors to direct the content covered in the SI classes and to discuss the academic needs, progress and performance of the students. Over the past three years, the Adjunct Program has grown from a handful of student instructors in Government and Chemistry to twenty student instructors teaching SI classes in courses such as History 17A, 17B, 50 and Economics 1A and 1B.

Benefits to the students who use the program include increased retention of information; better time-management skills; active review and preview of materials; immediate feedback from the group and student instructor; and a safe and supportive learning environment. Moreover, the GPA of students enrolled in the adjunct program is often close to one whole grade point higher than the students not participating in the SI classes. Supplemental Instruction works, and the data tell the story (see below).

GPA Comparisons

Term	Class	SI Students	non-SI Students
F07	GOVT 1	3.06	1.95
F07	HIST 50	3.09	2.95
S08	ECON 1A	2.1	1.5
S08	HIST 17B	2.7	1.6

GE NEWSLETTER

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