

REPORT

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM REVIEW TEAM 2000-01

DECEMBER 2001

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

PREFACE

What follows is the final report of the General Education Review Team 2000-01 (GERT-2000-01). It is the product of a year and a half of hearings and meetings with faculty, administration staff and students. The Team completed its hearings and first round of deliberations in June 2001. In August, a draft version was submitted to Senate's General Education Policies/Graduation Requirements Committee for comment, as called for by Senate procedures. As well, the Senate made the draft available for comment to the larger campus community. The Team met again in Fall of 2001 to consider comments received and made several significant revisions to the draft report as a result.

REVIEW TEAM MEMBERSHIP

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

THE REVIEW TEAM WISHES TO THANK ITS TWO EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS, GAIL G. EVANS OF SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY AND JUDY PATTON OF PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY, WHOSE ENERGY, INSIGHTS AND PERCEPTIVE COMMENTS HELPED US IN OUR TASK ENORMOUSLY. GERALD HELLAND AND THE STAFF OF INSTITUTIONAL STUDIES ALSO RENDERED SIGNIFICANT ASSISTANCE TO THE TEAM. AS WELL, WE THANK PROFESSOR VIRGINIA KIDD OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES FOR FACILITATING A STUDENT FOCUS GROUP AND PREPARING A PARTICULARLY VALUABLE REPORT ON ITS OUTCOME. FINALLY, WE THANK PATTI ROBERTSON OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS FOR PROVIDING UNSTINTING AND TIRELESS STAFF SUPPORT.

**** Primary author of report

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY GERT 2000-01
[Arranged in order of interview]

Dr. Donald Gerth, President
Dr. Mary Ann Reihman, Chair, GE Committee-2000-01
Dr. Jackie R. Donath, former GE Coordinator
Dr. Greg Wheeler, GE Coordinator
Dr. Tom Griffith, Director, Academic Advising Center
Ed Perhay, CSUS Academic Counselor
Vivian Llamas Green, Evaluations
Brenda Cager, International Admissions
Dr. Charlotte Cook, Office of Community Collaboration
Dr. Mark Hennelly, Chair, English
Dr. Amy Heckathorn, Writing Coordinator
Dr. Lewis Robinson, Chair, Foreign Languages
Dr. Bernice Bass de Martinez, Provost
Dr. Otis Scott, Chair, Ethnic Studies
Professor Sam Rios, Ethnic Studies
Community college counselors

- General Meetings were held with College Deans, Department Chairs, and interested faculty
- A student focus group was conducted by Dr. Virginia Kidd of Communication Studies
- External consultants and GERT-2000-01 co-chair met with students in three GE classes

External Consultants:

Dr. Gail Evans, Director of General Education Curriculum and Assessment, San Jose State University

Professor Judy Patton, Director, University Studies, Portland State University

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the central lesson we learned in our year of interviewing faculty, administrators, students and staff, listening to outside consultants, and studying countless documents^{****} is that there are *two* General Education Programs at CSUS. The first is a mythic ideal that enjoys universal praise, acceptance and value beyond any other dimension of undergraduate education at CSUS. It finds expression in a well-developed ethical rhetoric and exists for the most part in various policy statements. The second is the program that students actually experience, a program which we finally came to conclude aptly fits the description (expanded and in paraphrase) offered by one campus observer: “GE at Sacramento State is like a poorly remodeled house; it has some lovely rooms, but nothing really fits together and there’s no architect in charge. It’s the product of haphazard evolution and dubious compromise among special interests rather than serious design.”

We should be quick to point out that such a separation between the imagined and the real is not unique to CSUS, which could explain, by one recent estimate, why nearly 60 per cent of American universities and colleges are presently formally reviewing their GE programs.

Be that as it may, the Review Team came to be convinced that *this* campus at *this time* must make a fundamental and extraordinarily significant decision—and must make it sooner rather than later. Will we merely continue to let the GE program drift, and tolerate what can only be considered, ultimately, as academic hypocrisy, or instead will we take decisive action to deliver on the claim we routinely make to students and the larger community that GE is “the heart of the university” and that which distinguishes us from a trade school? For many members of the campus community, we discovered through our inquiry, the choice is clear and the need to change is urgent.

^{****} See Appendix [<http://www.csus.edu/acse/>] for a schedule of interviews and inventory of documents and other Appendix items for pertinent reports and Team minutes.

I. ASSUMPTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

ASSUMPTIONS:

One of the principles on which a modern university rests is the assumption that there is an important distinction between learning to make a living and building the foundation for a life. While the first goal is important, the second is fundamental. How does a person build the foundation for a life that is worthwhile, interesting, and of service to him or herself and the larger society? A serious and successful general education program, we believe, does much to provide the answer.

In this regard, by focusing on the student's development as a whole and by focusing on what it means to be an "educated" person, a university distinguishes itself from a trade school. Indeed, it is precisely because of the qualities associated with GE that a university degree is so highly valued by employers and by the community at large.

Such a perspective holds that the goal of a university education is not merely the acquisition and application of knowledge, but the creation of someone who firmly grasps the worth of clear thinking and knows how to do it; who understands and appreciates the differences among peoples and cultures as well as their similarities; who has a sense of history and social forces; who can express thought clearly and has quantitative reasoning; who knows something about the arts as well as how to enjoy them; who can talk and think intelligently about the physical and life sciences, the humanities, and literature; a person, above all, who has the desire and capability for life-long learning. In this latter regard, we agree with scientist and writer Ursula Goodenough who has observed, "Human memory, they say, is like a coat closet: The most enduring outcome of a formal education is that it creates rows of coat hooks so that later on, when you come upon a new piece of information, you have a hook to hang it on. Without a hook, the new information falls on the floor."^{***} We would argue that GE provides the greatest number of such coat hooks.

Given these root assumptions, the Review Team began with the conception of a CSUS General Education Program designed to provide students with the coursework and exposure needed to become educated in the broadest sense rather than as simply a series of courses to complete or hoops for a student to jump through before he or she takes on the "more important" courses in his or her major. In this view, general education lies at the core of what a university education is all about. It fulfills the needs of students in a way that courses in the major, as valuable as they may be, simply cannot achieve and were never intended to.

^{***}Ursula Goodenough, *The Sacred Depths of Nature*, Oxford Univ Press, 1998, p. vii.

In particular, the Review Team throughout its inquiry and deliberations kept in mind the following dimensions or principles:

- i. General education must be seen as a program in which the various parts are integrated in such a way as to produce a truly “educated person” (CSU Executive Order, #595). General education must not be seen, either by students *or* by faculty, as merely the sum of the individual parts, as boxes to be filled, as requirements to be satisfied. Rather, the *program* must be seen as a central mission of the university, and must be valued as such. General education must not just be advertised as the “heart of the university;” it must become so. It must become, as our own Faculty Senate states, “. . . no less important than the major programs in providing the kind of education university graduates should have.” (Senate Document, August 1991)
- ii. In the pursuit of the educational program leading to the “educated person,” several integrated objectives must be satisfied. In addition to acquiring appreciable knowledge about the natural and social worlds they inhabit, students must come to an understanding of the cultural legacies and modern contributions of civilizations—including racial, ethnic, and gender aspects of these legacies, of the relationship between themselves and nature, and of their own bodies and minds within these larger contexts. These objectives must be satisfied in an intellectual environment within which students learn to think clearly and logically, are able to communicate cogently in oral and written form, and can reason quantitatively. As well, students are to come to an understanding and appreciation of the methodologies, value systems and intellectual processes through which inquiry is undertaken. (Wording drawn from EO #595)
- iii. General education must promote interdisciplinary thinking. A successful program must convince students that, to correctly examine and evaluate an issue, they must see that issue in context. This context draws on knowledge and inquiry that has been and is being developed in many areas and in many disciplines. Cross-fertilization generates critical thought; and critical thought is more far-sighted than that which is developed in a unidisciplinary setting.
- iv. The purpose of producing an educated person is not only to allow one to live a more rewarding life but to promote a sense of duty to larger society. A well-conceived, well-executed program will permit more cogent examination of and more cogent proposals to deal with personal responsibility, moral, and societal problems.

- v. In addition to the acquisition of essential skills, the general education program must provide paths that introduce the student to modes of thinking about science, society--including the interrelationship of science, technology, and society--ethics, culture, and the nature of thinking itself. The successful program will be analytically rigorous and prepare the student to evaluate differing interpretations of phenomena. Such a program will not only broaden one's perspectives and enlarge one's horizons, it will assist in the production of a critical, curious, and socially conscious mind--an engaged citizen of the world. Such an aim takes on even greater importance in an institution such as ours, which has teacher education as a major responsibility.

OBSERVATIONS:

The last program review of General Education at CSUS (GERT-89), which included a report by an External Review Team (XRT), was undertaken in 1989. At the same time, the then Academic Senate's General Education Committee (GEC-89) conducted a self-study. Four years ago, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) included GE as part of its study for re-accreditation of the university. The GE Committee (GE-2000) completed its most recent self-study in May 2000.

A careful examination of these reports and supplementary documents, taken together with our own fact finding during academic year 2000-01, convincingly demonstrated to us that, at least among those who have studied GE most closely, a clear consensus on its troubled state exists—and has existed at least since 1989.

Conclusions rendered in the report by GERT-89, arguably the most thorough and important of the reports during this earlier period, ranged from the judgment that "it is quite possible for a student to complete the program requirements without having received instruction suitable to the goals of the program" (p.40) to "there is little evidence to suggest . . . that any broader view of the purposes and spirit of the GE program has shaped the course approval actions" (p. 43) and referred to a WASC concern that campus "politics" rather than academic goals was driving the approval process. The final report called for a number of significant reforms, including the creation of a director's position with strong, centralized authority, as well as a course approval and review process with teeth, and the clear and straightforward reformulation of a campus GE philosophy.

Yet, to quote the most recent GE Self-Study report, "At present, there appears to be little difference [between the program] as it existed in 1989 and the present program" (p.59).

After a year of careful examination of available evidence, listening to a wide range of opinion, and judging the existing program against the benchmarks in discussion on the preceding pages, our Review Team came to

precisely the same conclusion: the CSUS program is in need of immediate and long overdue reform. Over and over, we heard faculty, students, administrators, staff, and advisers call for a program that more clearly serves the ends of *general education*, not some other interest, and at the same time is more coherent and less complex.

It is worth quoting the GERT-89 report on one more matter: "Probably the one thing most needed, if improvement in the CSUS GE program is to occur, is simply a serious commitment to take the necessary steps to improve the program (p.6)" Members of GERT-2000-01 are in complete agreement. Absent the political and intellectual will on this campus to make meaningful changes, GE will continue as little more than an unrealized ideal.

One encouraging recent development is the commitment of the GE Policy Committee to re-certify courses. During academic year 2000-01, the committee undertook to examine course syllabi in Area B, and its energetic efforts, we believe, sent an important message to the campus: GE courses will be held to GE standards and criteria. A second encouraging development this year was the beginning of conversations by a GE Assessment Committee to identify specific learning outcomes for each area and appropriate assessment strategies. Both these endeavors, encouraging as they may be, need serious and sustained support if they are to succeed, let alone thrive. We hope the recommendations in this report will serve that purpose.

MAJOR CONCERNS IDENTIFIED:

- **The program is treated as a step child**
- **There is widespread concern about the clarity and coherence of the program**
- **Goals and objectives are not widely understood by students or faculty**
- **There is no clear cut identity for the upper division segment of the current program, yet this is the only part of the program wholly controlled by CSUS**
- **The campus has "hidden" graduation requirements that confuse transfer students in particular**

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that follow were framed in the context of principles laid out in the preceding section and resulted from a year-long inquiry and deliberations, the substance of which can be found in the Team's minutes (Appendix--<http://www.csus.edu/acse/>) It is also the case that the Team was

mindful throughout its deliberations (and the reader of this report should be as well) of the reality that fully 70 per cent of CSUS graduates take a significant part of their GE at community colleges. As well, all CSU and community college GE programs have code requirements in American institutions that are usually handled as part of the GE program. The Team genuinely believes the recommendations for change that follow can be achieved without adversely affecting employment patterns of full-time faculty and received assurances from the central administration to this effect. The *core* recommendations are presented in the order of importance assigned them by the Team.

CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 **Immediately following consideration and approval of any or all parts of this report we recommend that the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate establish a General Education Reform Implementation Group (GERIG) to begin work as soon as possible but no later than Fall Semester 2002. Its primary responsibility will be to implement recommendations called for in this document. Its faculty members should receive 3 units released time per semester during their period of service, which shall be decided by the Senate. Membership shall consist of one upper division student representative of ASI, two representatives of the General Education Review Team 2000-01, the GE coordinator, one representative of the GE Policy Committee, the campus assessment coordinator, and one faculty member at large. No two faculty members can come from the same college. The Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Programs will serve *ex officio*.**

Discussion and Rationale:

Our first *core* recommendation is merely a procedural one, but nevertheless a hugely important one. Early on in our deliberations we concluded that one of the main reasons the major reforms recommended in GERT-89 were not implemented is that there was no committee/team/group formed to oversee their implementation on an *on-going basis*. As a result, most of that Team's key proposals evaporated in extended Senate and campus debate and eventually wafted away on the air currents of special interests. Given that the conclusions reached by the 1989 team and this one and practically every other entity that has looked at GE in between are in essential agreement, we find it difficult to believe that the 1989 recommendations were so badly flawed that they deserved such a fate, nor do we believe the same of our own.

If there is to be any hope of serious structural change in GE at CSUS there must be a small cadre of committed members whose expertise in GE does not have to be acquired over a period of months and whose sole task is to examine closely the various recommendations in this study, assuming Senate approval, and how to most effectively implement them. Without such

a shepherd, there is no reason to believe the recommendations in this report won't wander away as have others in the past.

The Senate's GE Policy Committee might be able to undertake this assignment were it not for the enormous press of its regular "day-to-day" business. There would simply be too many distractions and not enough time for the GE committee to add the major chore of implementing reform to an already full agenda. To be sure, the current GE committee would have representation on GERIG. How members for GERIG are to be appointed, of course, remains for the Senate to determine, but we would strongly urge it to confer with the chairs of the GE and Review Teams in making the appointments. As well, we would recommend that the faculty member-at-large have had extensive experience with GE either through committee work or, say, as a former coordinator.

As for its tasks, GERIG should begin work as soon as possible after Senate approval of all or part of this document and undertake to accomplish the following:

- Address primarily those issues, uncompleted tasks (e.g., in recommendations 3, 4, 7, 8, and 11) and unresolved questions in this report specifically assigned to the implementation group. Upon the completion of GERIG's work, its recommendations together with the consensus recommendations of GERT-2000-01, should be forwarded immediately as a package for the Senate's consideration
- Weigh and consider the worth of GERT-2000-01's consensus recommendations in terms of their possible effect on departments and faculty, particularly in fiscal terms. (The Team's assumption throughout was that the present and forthcoming surge in enrollments will "protect" full-time faculty members from any adverse consequences of GE reform)
- Make certain that reforms effectively and seamlessly dovetail with current area re-certification and assessment efforts
- Develop an operational budget for the GE Director and his/her office appropriate to the scope and intent of the reforms in this report
- Give further consideration to the issues raised by the Team that carried no recommendations but which in the Team's judgment are deserving of additional deliberation and make recommendations to the Senate if need be.

Assuming GERIG can begin its work early in the Fall 2002 semester (or sooner, if possible), the group should periodically report to the Senate, perhaps monthly, on its progress. The Team agrees with the External Consultants that GERIG's tasks are sufficiently important and demanding that its *faculty* members receive released time for the assignment for at least the first year of implementation.

2. **We recommend the university create the position of Director of GE which, in keeping with the importance of the GE program, shall be a full-time MPP position with retreat rights reporting through the office of Academic Affairs. The GE director would have responsibility for coordinating and providing direction to the GE program, including assessment activities, learning communities, and the freshmen seminars, in accordance with policy determined by the GE Policy Committee and the university. While FTES shall remain with departments offering coursework, the Director in conjunction with the GE Policy Committee would have ultimate authority over the program's (1) course offerings and scheduling and (2) over whether courses and instructors meet GE objectives, area learning outcomes, and course standards as provided for in whatever new course approval and review process results from this report. As a reflection of the importance of GE on this campus, the Director should be included (*ex officio*) in meetings of the College Deans, and other significant policy-making bodies when appropriate. The General Education Reform Implementation Group (see Recommendation No. 9) will be responsible for developing and recommending a budget appropriate for the effective operation of the GE office.**

Discussion and Rationale: At least since the report of GERT-89 a serious argument has been advanced to centralize general education authority on this campus. A dean's position was created and filled from 1990 to 1995. Most recently, the program has had a coordinator with six units released time.

Generally speaking, despite often heroic efforts, since 1995 the GE coordinator has been reduced by circumstances to a weakened, part-time caretaker whose diminished authority has left the program pretty much at the mercy of far narrower vested interests, whether faculty or administrative. Without ultimate authority over course approval or review of program offerings, lacking a budget to respond to unforeseen scheduling challenges or initiate truly interdisciplinary offerings, absent even symbolic equivalency to other important academic administrators, the GE coordinator is expected to preside over a program consisting of more than 400 courses with neither the power nor the resources usually associated with a chair in the smallest of academic departments. The name of the coordinator does not even appear on the Directory in Sacramento Hall. Given present circumstances, the GE Coordinator, at best, can provide only superficial oversight, minimal accountability, and virtually no vision. Such an arrangement has no hope of guiding GE toward the kind of coherence, relevance, and excellence the campus says it wishes for a program which is ritually proclaimed as "the heart of the university."

In addition to giving the GE leadership position the kind of prominence and authority it merits and without which the program will continue to languish, our recommendation would consolidate several key GE tasks that

are now sub-contracted out, specifically GE assessment and coordination of the learning communities.

We should point out that our recommendation is in complete accord with the thinking of GERT-89, the recommendation of this Team's external consultants, and the most recent self-study of the GE Committee.

Although it is not part of the formal recommendation, the Review Team strongly urges that should agreement be reached on this recommendation in the near term, the present coordinator assume the duties of Interim Director, perhaps with the beginning of Spring semester 2002, while a search is conducted for a permanent director.

3. We recommend the General Education program at CSUS be divided into two parts: a 39-unit *Foundations of GE* (lower division) segment and a 9-unit *Advanced GE* (upper division) segment for a total of 48 units (SEE GRAPHIC ON NEXT PAGE), and that within the constraints of various executive and code requirements and assuming articulation on relevant issues, CSUS shall honor the 39 units offered by individual community colleges and impose no further "local" lower division requirements. [The Foundations GE program for "native" students would be similar] The upper division experience should follow an approach that while singular to CSUS provides a measure of common experience for students. Each of the present areas shall be renamed to reflect the outcomes with which they are associated (see Appendix item for suggested approaches--<http://www.csus.edu/acse/>). While the Team reached consensus that no upper division courses should be included in Lower Division Areas A-D, we were far less certain about excluding upper division courses from Area E and recommend that GERIG further consider this issue.

Discussion and Rationale: Time and again we heard from all concerned that especially for the 70% or so of students who transfer from community colleges, the General Education Program at CSUS is "confusing," "unnecessarily complex," "has hidden requirements," is "out of step with the rest of the world," and so on. If this lament were only coming from students, it might be dismissed as the complaints of those whose own failings explain why they arrived at CSUS with incomplete or ill-conceived GE transfer packages. But throughout our inquiry we also heard these claims repeatedly from advisers and evaluators whose opinion carried particular weight with Team members. Part of the confusion, of course, stems from the additional campus-specific Graduation Requirements which we recommend be eliminated (Recommendation No 6 below) and part of the confusion can be traced to, for example, CSUS area designations that don't correspond to those at community colleges. But there are other dimensions that we felt needed addressing as well. For instance, we recognize and insist on a difference between lower and upper division courses in the major, as reflected in our course numbering system and in each major's requirements. If this is the case, then it follows that there ought to be completion or near completion of lower division work before upper division work is attempted.

Comparison between the Current GE Program and the New GE Program

Current GE Program		CSUS	CSU System	CC Transfer	New GE Program			
Area	Units	Units	Units	Fundamental Program		Advanced Program		
				Area	Units		Units	
A. Basic Subjects	9	9	9	A. Basic Subjects	9			
A1. Oral Communication	3			Oral Communication	3			
A2. Written Communication	3			Written Communication	3			
A3. Critical Thinking	3			Critical Thinking	3			
B. Physical Universe & Its Life Forms	12	12	9	B. Physical Universe & Its Life Forms	9			
B1. Physical Science	3			Physical Science	3			
B2. Life Forms	3			Life Forms	3			
B3. Laboratory requirement				Laboratory requirement				
B4. Quantitative Reasoning	3			Quantitative Reasoning	3			
B5. Additional Course	3					Science, Technology and Society	3	
C. The Arts & Humanities	12	12	9	C. The Arts & Humanities	9			
C1. World Civilizations	3					Arts, Humanities and the World	3	
C2. Introduction to the Arts	3			Introduction to the Arts				
C3. Introduction to the Humanities	3			Introduction to the Humanities\				
C4. Further Studies in Arts & Humanities	3			Foreign Language (elective or requirement)				
D. The Individual & Society	15	12	9	D. The Individual & Society	9			
D1. A. Social Sciences	3-6			Social Sciences	3			
B. World Cultures	0-6							
D2. Social Issues	3					Social Issues of the 21st Century	3	
D3. American Institutions	6			American Institutions	6			
E. Understanding Personal Development	3	3	3	E. Understanding Personal Development	3			
ENG 20 and Foreign Lang Requirements	6							
(Program includes Advanced Study & Race & Ethnicity Supervenient Requirement)				(Program includes Race & Ethnicity Supervenient Requirement)				
					39		9	
Total with graduation requirements	57	48	39	Total with graduation requirements			48	

Perhaps more significantly, the upper division segment is the only segment of GE that CSUS requires for *all* students and it made sense to us, therefore, that this portion of the program ought to be seen and treated as separate from the LD segment down to and including the grouping of courses according to whether they are lower or upper division. We discuss the shape of a new Advanced GE package, which we see as the key element of needed content reform, in the following recommendation.

4. **We recommend that the Advanced GE package shall consist of three upper division units in each of these three areas (broadly defined): *Social Issues of the 21st Century*; *Arts, Humanities and Society*; and *Science, Technology and Society*. Every effort should be made to encourage the program to explore how courses in the Advanced GE package could (a) incorporate service learning where appropriate; (b) encourage interdisciplinary or intradisciplinary approaches, specifically by linking courses; (c) address issues of race, ethnicity and gender whenever feasible; and (d) promote a global perspective.**

Discussion and Rationale: Given that 85.3 per cent of our graduates did not start at CSUS as freshmen, it follows that the only piece of the General Education program over which CSUS has complete control for all of its students is the upper division segment. Yet as things stand now there is no distinct dimension to the upper division experience required of CSUS students. Rather, a hypodermic assumption holds sway, in effect that shooting students with three units here and there serves the professed goals of a general education. Under the present program, which is a distributive model of sorts organized primarily around area requirements rather than a lower division set of foundation courses and a thematic upper division advanced set, upper division coursework is a hodgepodge, usually selected by students for reasons that have little to do with a unifying intellectual experience. In the words of one department chair, it is little more than a smorgasbord and in the words of another, a shopping mall. Under this approach, we are convinced that it is highly unlikely students will make connections between disparate ideas and fields. In the end, we are giving our students pieces of an intellectual puzzle without benefit of the picture on the box top so they may begin assembling it in useful fashion.

To be fair, this state of affairs is hardly unique to CSUS, but it is hardly reassuring that it so closely matches this description from the early 1990s of the state of GE in the U.S.: “. . . general education, as currently implemented, is only minimally effective. Rather than being a poorly articulated collection of courses, as is now the case, it should consist of offerings specifically designed to encourage students to explore connections between disparate fields of study.”***

***Steven M. Richardson, “Undergraduate Education,” a Strategic Planning Position Paper at Iowa State University, 1994 [<http://www.iastate.edu/~president/2000/papers/16richardson.txt>]. The paper is an excellent overview of the broad challenges facing undergraduate education and is particularly good in its discussion of General Education. It is as timely today as it was when it was written.

GERT--2000-01 is convinced that unless we move in a decidedly different direction, we will continue to reinforce the notion among students that general education is merely a set of requirements rather than a program with educational goals and learning objectives. Perhaps the fundamental programmatic weakness of the current scheme is its lack of coherence, a judgment that many faculty, students and administrators who met with us seemed to share. In the view of the Team, this is a fatal flaw. In the words of one writer on the subject, "this drawback commonly breeds a cynical attitude among students, who treat general education as a distraction from the 'real' work of the major, a pointless barrier to be leaped on the way toward graduation. Far from developing habits of and tastes for independent thinking, students learn that general education requirements are to be endured, usually as expeditiously as possible."^{***} In sum, a collection of "stand-alone" courses, no matter how brilliantly taught, which exist in isolation from one another and are not part of a comprehensive program is the formula for the sort of malaise that currently characterizes the CSUS approach.

Under our proposal, a student would be required to take three units in each of these three areas (broadly defined): *Social Issues of the 21st Century, Arts, Humanities and Society, and Science, Technology and Society*. It is our belief that small as this portion may be in comparison to those of major requirements, if carefully designed and held to high standards, it can provide a coherent and shared experience for our students that is unique to CSUS and is consistent with the principles announced at the beginning of this document.

In the Team's view, each of the three areas of the Advanced GE portion of general education should address the relationship between the specific area of inquiry and broadly defined social matters that speak to issues, problems, and questions posed in today's world. This contemporary dimension will be the unifying principle of this segment of the program. Each such course should be encouraged to include a limited historic element that introduces students to the ideas of major authorities who have influenced both current institutions and thinking, with the aim of developing a context within which the particular inquiry can then be developed and critically evaluated. Further, courses should strive to be of an interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary nature, linking inquiry in the particular subject area to inquiry in other disciplines. Objectives (learning outcomes) for each area should be drafted under the guidance of the GE Policy Committee, and these ought to include particular objectives that address this main, unifying principle of the upper division program. Assessment criteria should be developed that allow evaluation of each course in its fulfillment of this unifying principle and whatever additional objectives are developed within each area. In this regard, we enthusiastically

^{***} Richardson

endorse current efforts underway to bring assessment to the GE Program. The effort is badly needed and long overdue.

There is one further dimension bearing on general education coursework and upper division courses in particular under the current scheme that deserves mention, given the number of times it was raised in our inquiry and deliberations, and that is the sheer number of courses from which a student may choose. Perhaps the majority of those faculty, advisers and administrators who spoke with us argued that the large number of courses in GE was the source of the program's complexity. A slightly smaller number argued that the breadth of choice in the current program is one of its great strengths. Certainly, the number of CSUS's GE offerings is uncommonly large. At present, we offer some 439 different courses while by comparison, San Jose State's GE program has about half that number.

In the final judgment of the Review Team, size in and of itself was not the critical factor in our decision to recommend splitting the GE program into lower and upper division segments or to design the upper division piece around a common approach. So far as the Team is concerned, what is most important is (a) whether a course is designed to meet specific GE goals and learning outcomes, rather than those of a major; (b) whether courses are adequately monitored using appropriate assessment tools and reviewed and rigorously held to clearly articulated GE standards (c) whether upper division courses are part of a comprehensive approach rather than a haphazard collection of bits and pieces of curriculum; and (d) whether upper division courses in particular have a significant writing experience (see following recommendation). If courses meet and are held to these standards, in the final analysis it did not matter to the Review Team how many are offered. That said, it is a reasonable expectation that if the reforms discussed in this report come to be implemented, the number of courses will drop through a process of "natural selection."

- 5. We recommend a 5,000 word "writing intensive requirement" replace the existing Advanced Studies requirement and that this requirement be satisfied either through a *certified* course in the proposed 9-unit Advanced GE package or in the student's major. In all writing exercises students are to be provided with instructor critique where the objective is to develop writing skills over the course of the semester. The GE policy committee will be responsible for certification of such courses. We also recommend that all other Upper Division General Education courses require significant writing assignments that include feedback to the student.**

Discussion and Rationale: Repeatedly throughout our inquiry we heard concerns expressed about the ability of the typical CSUS graduate's ability to write clearly. Majority opinion was that while strengthening general education's upper division writing requirements would hardly guarantee a solution, it might still serve as a significant step in the right direction. After listening to a number of specialists in teaching composition, particularly from

the CSUS English department, the Team concluded (a) an advanced writing requirement is most effectively fulfilled within the major; (b) such a course should include a multiple-draft approach that provides the opportunity for instructor editing and feedback; and (c) the course should be taken in sequence (i.e., *after* lower division writing coursework).

In regard to the first condition, the Team became convinced that the name change of Advanced Studies to “Intensive Writing” is more in keeping with the original intent of such courses. As well, the Team came to believe that students most readily improve their writing skills when they are writing about subject matter they are studying in content courses, i.e., their major.

Although it is entirely consistent with the Faculty Senate’s mandate that all departments must include a reading and writing plan at the time of their first program review subsequent to the Senate’s Fall 2000 mandate, we recognize that our recommended approach is not entirely unproblematic. Of course, disciplinary faculty may feel unqualified to address writing issues, per se, although present Advanced Studies courses, presumably, already do so. Therefore, it may be necessary to have the new University Reading and Writing Coordinator provide support and training for disciplinary faculty. GERIG could investigate how this might best be accomplished, perhaps by looking at what San Jose State has accomplished in this regard.

Of course, it would also be possible under this approach for a student to take any upper division *GE certified* intensive writing course should a student’s major not offer one.

Beyond our recommendation regarding an Intensive Writing course requirement, we are also recommending that all upper division GE courses have “significant” writing assignments, which we broadly defined as those including some sort of instructor feedback to the student. The GE course approval and review process ought to include consideration of such a requirement.

- 6. We recommend that the second semester English composition graduation requirement and the foreign language graduation requirement be absorbed into the General Education Program.**

Regarding the English composition requirement, the first option below is the one we *recommend*. However, we include two other possibilities as well.

- A. We recommend the current second-semester writing requirement be incorporated in GE Area A3. The requirement can be met by English classes that incorporate a significant critical thinking component or critical thinking courses that incorporate a significant writing component**

- **Option: The current second semester lower division graduation requirement be dropped entirely in lieu of the upper division “advanced writing requirement” discussed above in Recommendation 5. Students in departments not offering an intensive writing (IW) course would select a certified IW course from another discipline.**
- **Option: The current second semester lower division graduation requirement be included in Area A. [Of course, this option would *add* three units to the Foundations segment of GE, bringing the lower division total to 41 units]**

Regarding the foreign language requirement, two options are put forward:

1. **The current Foreign Language Graduation Requirement shall be incorporated into lower division Area C of the GE program. GE students must satisfactorily complete a language course at the 2A level or above, and coursework should include a significant cultural component. [This option would add a minimum of 3 units to the GE total under our proposals]**

OR

2. **The current foreign language Graduation Requirement shall be eliminated and incorporated instead as an elective into Foundations (lower division) Area C of the General Education Program. Coursework must be at the 2A level or above and include a significant cultural component. [This option adds no units to the GE total]**

Discussion and Rationale: Without a *single* exception, everyone from whom we heard agreed that this campus should remove the current distinction between general education and the second semester composition and foreign language graduation requirements—and the sooner the better. Equally clear was the consensus that if requirements of this sort are to be retained, they should be folded into the GE program. Unanimous agreement on these points came from individual faculty members, advisers, students, administrators, external consultants and the GE coordinator and committee.

The suggestion to eliminate such stand-alone requirements centered on (1) the confusion and resentment these additional “graduation requirements” trigger in transfer students, many of whom arrive at CSUS with the belief they have completed their basic programs at a community college and (2) the argument that the requirements logically belong in GE in the first place.

While there was remarkable agreement on the need to incorporate the two graduation requirements into GE, *how* best to achieve this was highly controversial.

SECOND SEMESTER WRITING REQUIREMENT: The Team came to be persuaded that any course intended to fulfill a writing requirement ought to be in General Education and ought to be perceived by students as within the context of a coherent, organic GE program rather than as merely another box to check, as many see it now. While there was disagreement on how best to incorporate the second semester composition requirement into the GE program, the Team ultimately reached the consensus that it did not require “stand alone” coursework (i.e., English 20) to accomplish. Rather, a second semester writing experience could be incorporated into courses designed to meet the critical thinking requirement.

There are several reasons why we came to agree on this recommendation, but two stand out. First, when English 20 was adopted as a graduation requirement, it was estimated that *three* FTE faculty would be sufficient to accommodate student demand, given the university’s mistaken assumption at the time that the majority of community college students would have completed equivalent coursework before transferring to CSUS. Yet the number of FTE faculty projected to teach this course during 2001-002 is 8.4, and still students say they have difficulty getting into sections. The Team came to question whether this was the best use of increasingly scarce campus resources, particularly given that for whatever reasons, 41% take English 20 in their Junior Year (Fall 2001) and 22% take it in their senior year (Fall 2001) while some 38% of students (Spring 1999) took English 20 *after* taking the WPE.

A second reason is that a number of community colleges have in fact already developed coursework that meets the U.C. second-semester writing requirement *as well as* the CSU critical thinking requirement. In our view, either critical thinking courses that include a significant writing component or second-semester English courses that include a critical thinking component could provide the kind of experience provided for under the current requirement. Composition and critical thinking are frequently taught in one course nationally, so redesign of English courses should not pose a significant problem *if* sufficient resources are made available for English faculty development in the area of critical thinking. The redesign of critical thinking courses to include a significant writing experience, if they do not already, might be more problematic, particularly in courses that address how critical thinking applies to a particular subject matter (e.g., Mass Media and Critical Thinking). That said, to be effective it would not be necessary for a critical thinking course to accommodate *all* of the objectives currently associated with English 20. As well, the soon-to-be established position of

campus Reading and Writing Coordinator, presumably, could assist in course redesign and development of effective instructional techniques.

Under the recommendations proposed here, by the time of graduation, a CSUS student will have taken English 1A, completed a lower division critical thinking course that included a writing component or a second-semester English course that included critical thinking, six units of upper division work that included significant writing assignments and three units of an upper division intensive writing course, in addition, of course, to having passed the WPE.

We recognize that our recommendation is not unproblematic but we feel that solutions can be found to make the proposal work. First, there is the potential problem of sequence. Obviously, it would not make sense for “native” freshman to take English 1A and a critical thinking course simultaneously, in essence fulfilling their first and second semester writing requirements at the same time. We do not believe this will be a major problem, however, largely because few entering freshman take critical thinking in their first semester; typically they sign up for 1A and oral communication. And any problems of this sort could be eliminated by making English 1A a pre-requisite to critical thinking courses as it already is for English 20. The second matter, should our approach be adopted, would involve the need for a plan to monitor community college courses, both in terms of the expectations for combined composition-critical thinking coursework and the sequence issue.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT: No issue taken up by the Team elicited more controversy than the question of how best to incorporate the current foreign language requirement into the GE Program. Proponents argued that this is no time to abandon a foreign language requirement given the exigencies of globalization and the demonstrated need to better understand other peoples and cultures. In their view, the U.S. lags far behind most industrial democracies in foreign language instruction and we do our students no service by following such a trend. Opponents of a requirement (as opposed to an elective) questioned (a) whether a “seat-time” language requirement actually produces *proficiency*, which the current requirement calls for; (b) whether skills courses actually produce cultural awareness; and (d) student resentment toward a requirement that many of them feel they will never use.

One measure of the controversy is that Review Team members split evenly on the question of whether to require or make optional a foreign language in GE, which explains why two options are presented above.

Whichever option eventually is adopted, we urge that foreign language coursework in GE offer a significant cultural component

7. Assuming that the programmatic recommendations of this Team are accepted, GERIG should develop a timetable and a process of certification of courses for the new program. This certification process must first and foremost reflect the aims of the GE program and its goals only and should be grounded in redesigned Course Approval and Review procedures that are based on clearly articulated objectives, assessment outcomes, and course design criteria. Lower division courses in general education areas left unaltered by recommendations contained in this report will not require such re-certification.

A. Final decisions on courses and faculty in the GE program will rest with the GE Policy Committee and the Program Director

- The initial level of such a redesigned process should require Colleges to routinely report to the GE Committee about how courses within their disciplines are (a) being monitored; (b) meet the goals and expectations of the GE program in general and the objectives of a given area in specific; (c) and are engaged in ongoing assessment. GERIG should explore and develop an approach for how this might best be accomplished, perhaps through annual reports to the GE Committee in addition to statements accompanying new course proposals. Whatever approach is finally adopted, it should stress *qualitative* issues and not merely provide quantitative data.

B. GERIG should develop and recommend a workable timetable for course re-certification, perhaps at five-year intervals

Discussion and Rationale: Perhaps no other area of our inquiry raised more troubling questions than the matter of course oversight. Based on conversations with faculty, department chairs, deans, external consultants and GE coordinators past and present, we could only conclude that a meaningful course approval and review process has been all but non-existent, at least until some promising but still tentative steps were taken by the GE Committee during the past year. We also came to agree that there is absolutely *no* possibility of significant program reform unless and until this benign--and at times malignant--neglect is reversed.

Despite the call in GERT-89's report for a rigorous course approval and review process (p.18), which was spelled out in considerable if somewhat convoluted detail, nothing really came of it over the ensuing decade, until last year. Indeed, no one appearing before our review team this year could recall a *single* course, once approved, ever having been removed from the program for due cause, although some observers could cite one or two courses that failed to receive initial approval. (On the positive side, last year's GE Committee demonstrated what can happen if the approval and review process are taken seriously. While the subcommittee approved seven new

classes, it denied five classes, and its review of course syllabi in Area B appears to have had a significant impact, not the least of which is that three instructors decided to withdraw from the program and two classes were dropped from the category. There is good reason to believe that courses in other areas will be withdrawn as well as departments come to realize that they can not withstand scrutiny, assuming, of course, that such scrutiny is sustained.)

To take only one piece of evidence of the extent to which GE syllabi at least has fallen in terms of compliance with GE standards and criteria, last year's re-certification efforts by the GE Committee of Area B courses, which comprise 59 courses and 271 sections, revealed that only about 5 to 6% of the course syllabi were in compliance with long-standing GE requirements for such material. Most had to be returned to departments for revision, even though the GE Coordinator had given ample warning about the forthcoming review process and what would be required. Frequently missing were such basics called for in GE criteria as formal course titles, specific learning objectives, testing schemes, and writing assignments. Most recently, these syllabi requirements were sent to departments in 1992, and departments were asked to identify coordinators who would oversee GE in the department. But in the words of the current campus coordinator of GE, time has passed, faculty have retired, new faculty have been hired and so on. Even if department controls were ever put in place, and it is uncertain how widespread such efforts actually were, it is often the case today that there is no oversight of GE offerings, requirements have been long forgotten, and there is no built-in continuity. As a result, new faculty are left to drift until there is some sort of formal review by the GE Committee.

It may also be the case, at least judging from comments heard repeatedly throughout our inquiry from a wide range of observers, that a kind of rugged individualism has created a culture in which efforts to monitor GE courses for compliance with GE goals are viewed unfavorably by departments and faculty. To some degree, this seems to have resulted from concerns about academic freedom but in larger part from the budgetary role played by GE in the fortunes of departments. To paraphrase one former department chair about this latter possibility, GE has become a vast academic feedlot on which department cash cows graze without fear of the meat inspector.

As reflected in our recommendations regarding course approval and review above, the Team believes the only way the current state of neglect can be reversed is (1) for the GE committee and Coordinator/Director to hold ultimate authority over decision making; (2) for both entities be willing to wield this power in the face of narrow self-interest and on behalf of GE standards and goals; (3) for departments and colleges to take seriously their roles for monitoring coursework; (4) and for the campus to recognize that a willingness to comply with GE goals, identify learning outcomes, standards and

requirements is a condition for inclusion in the program—not an infringement on faculty members’ right to teach a course in the way they judge best. The distinction is as critical as it is frequently overlooked.

Beyond anything else, all concerned must realize that a meaningful course approval and review process has to have consequences—or the program loses all credibility.

The Team urges the GE Course Review Subcommittee to continue and expand its current re-certification program; there is nothing inconsistent in our recommendations with this important effort. We urge the subcommittee to also include an expectation that student learning outcomes and assessment strategies will be specifically identified on the syllabus. At the same time, we encourage the subcommittee to investigate new and diverse ways of ascertaining what goes on in a given course beyond looking at syllabi. The research consensus is clear: the more types of data used in evaluating courses, the better.

Equally important, we urge that the conversations now underway with GE faculty to identify appropriate learning outcomes and ways of assessing them be continued. Beyond the fact that developing useful and *appropriate* assessment goals and techniques ought to part of a vibrant GE program, it is also the case that the CSU system has set deadlines for having such programmatic assessment goals in place and for producing results, thus rendering the argument moot that we are “moving too fast” in this area.

- 8. Given that the success or failure of any General Education program ultimately depends on an enthusiastic, competent and willing faculty, we make the following recommendations about faculty rewards, responsibilities and resources:**
 - **It is essential for the university to recognize and reward teaching and advising activities associated with GE. Specifically, GERIG should explore and recommend new and more effective ways to attract and reward those who are willing to teach (and advise) in GE, especially in the RTP and FMI processes. In matters of RTP, faculty teaching General Education courses should receive the same recognition as those faculty teaching courses in the major. A effort should be made to actively encourage full-time faculty to participate in the General Education Program**
 - **Special attention in this regard should be paid to innovation in coursework, particularly innovation that achieves interdisciplinarity.**
 - **Each department should have a designated GE adviser, but all faculty should have knowledge of the program. For this purpose, GERIG and/or the GE committee should develop and distribute a faculty GE Advising Handbook**

- **Resources for faculty who are willing to innovate, particularly in designing interdisciplinary and/or service learning coursework and developing new teaching strategies should be an important part of a new GE budget**
- **Departments who expect new faculty to teach GE courses should state this in vacancy announcements and at the time of interview. At the time of hiring, departments should acquaint new faculty with what is expected of them in the context of GE goals and objectives and course assessment outcome**

Discussion and Rationale: As should be amply clear by this point, our inquiry has convinced us that GE at best is a stepchild living on the kindness of largely indifferent relatives, if not complete strangers. Despite public and ritual celebration of its place on campus, the program is not really valued highly in terms of the things that finally matter: resource allocation, administrative support, and faculty commitment. We have already addressed two of these dimensions, but the third, faculty commitment, is at least as important if not more so than the other two.

We should be quick to say here that if faculty are far more concerned about their professional lives within a department than in GE, why should it be otherwise? The GE program has a weak identity, students often view it with dubiousness, its purposes are honored by departments and colleges more in the breach than in reality, and, last but hardly least, to all appearances GE teaching has little to do with decisions regarding retention, tenure and promotion, not to mention merit pay. Yet as we suggest in the preamble to our recommendations in this area of concern, without an enthusiastic, competent and willing faculty the general education program can never flourish.

The first and perhaps most important thing about faculty and GE that we discovered is that there is no *inherent* resistance to teaching in the program, but rather a feeling that to do so does nothing to advance one's academic career and simply takes time away from those activities that do. And we should make no mistake about it--these priorities are communicated to the student, frequently very loudly and very clearly. Until GE enjoys standing in the career of a faculty member similar to work in his or her discipline, the program will remain more hologram than reality.

As suggested in the External Consultants' report:

- Research shows that student learning improves when GE is valued on campus and this value can be demonstrated where faculty are concerned by including teaching in GE in position announcements, discussion of GE during the interview process, inclusion of GE responsibilities in individual faculty development plans, focusing on GE in new faculty orientation, and, perhaps most importantly, by including GE teaching evaluations and evidence of scholarship of

teaching and innovation in the review process for retention, tenure and promotion and merit pay decisions

- Support in the way of development funds for faculty to learn and to integrate new pedagogies needs to be available.

While our Team made no specific recommendation in this regard, both GERIG and the GE committee may wish to consider the external consultants' recommendation that the campus establish a GE Faculty Fellows program, which would provide the opportunity to teach and conduct research in general, education. (p.7)

Whichever approach the campus takes in this regard, if we are serious about building an identity among and regard for GE teaching faculty, there must be professional rewards. Absent such rewards, it is likely most faculty will continue to approach GE assignments as interruptions to their "real" work in the major, a situation that has in the past and will continue in the future to seriously undermine the program.

One area in particular that might benefit from a revised view of what work is worth doing at CSUS is interdisciplinary coursework. Over and over this year we heard the sentiment *cum* mantra that a viable GE program *must* provide students with the opportunity for interdisciplinary work. Yet very few GE courses could be identified as truly interdisciplinary in nature. To be sure, this in part is the result of institutional barriers and restrictions governing faculty use of time, but we also came to conclude that the absence of reward for curricular innovation in GE, per se, has even more to do with the problem, particularly where interdisciplinary course design and teaching are involved, given that these tasks are far more labor intensive than with stand-alone courses. If faculty willing to undertake this considerable effort are not rewarded, there is little reasonable expectation they will do so. We are convinced the same holds true for innovation in other areas of GE as well.

In other areas concerning faculty, the Team is convinced that major departments and faculty must take a far more active role in providing GE advising to students than is now the case. It became quickly apparent to us that the standard approach among major departments and faculty is to refer students elsewhere for GE advice with the rationale that the program is "too specialized or confusing." Continuing to send students pillar to post for GE advice will do absolutely nothing to strengthen the program's identity. On the contrary, major professors' ignorance of and/or confusion about the program merely signals students that GE is little more than an arcane set of requirements that must be endured. All of this said, the general education faculty need and deserve adequate advising tools if they are to be expected to help students navigate the program. These tools probably should include more effective and simpler on-line evaluation software and training in its use

than is now available. While we are recommending that departments have a designated GE adviser if they don't already have one, all faculty should have knowledge of the program. At the very least a straightforward advising handbook needs to be developed as soon as possible. Other possibilities might include expanding advising workshops for colleges and departments. It bears repeating, however, if such advising efforts do not in some way count in the evaluation of an individual's professional performance, they are not likely to receive the attention they deserve.

Finally, in regard to faculty and GE, we were greatly disturbed to discover that the campus average for GE sections taught by part-time faculty is 43.2 per cent. This trend has to be reversed. The "heart of the university" cannot be left in the hands of part-time caretakers, no matter their competence.

9. **We recommend that the next review of GE be conducted six years from the implementation of this report's recommendations, and that such a review be grounded in assessment results as well as the certification process called for in this report.**

Discussion and Rationale: In the judgment of the Team, ten or more years is simply too long a time to let a program as fundamentally important as GE go un-reviewed. Certainly, a shorter period ought to be the case after any major reforms are undertaken, if for no other reason than such restructuring can have unintended (and perhaps undesirable) outcomes despite the best intentions of reformers. In keeping, with the time frame applied to majors, we believe a six-year period is far more realistic. Whatever time period is agreed upon, future reviews should include a careful look at assessment results for each area.

RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS

10. **We recommend the Director of GE each year at new faculty orientation make a presentation on the GE Program's goals and objectives that stresses the importance of GE on this campus.**

Discussion and Rationale: This recommendation is in keeping with the Team's belief that GE needs to receive a prominent place in the socialization process of new faculty if the program is to prosper

11. **We recommend that the philosophy of General Education at CSUS be rearticulated in a concise statement written in easily understood language and that such a statement be incorporated into all materials distributed about GE**

Discussion and Rationale: One of the recurring themes we heard throughout our deliberations and a major point stressed by the External Consultants is the absence on this campus of a widely understood philosophy or goal for

GE, at least one that students or faculty could readily identify. Aside from a few lofty and sometimes obscure statements submerged in the catalog and similar materials, the typical student is left without a clear and direct discussion of *why* GE is at the center of their academic experience and required of all students, no matter major. The Team concluded that, absent a compelling and persuasive case for the value of GE which is widely disseminated, the program will continue to be viewed by many students as something to be endured rather than as the path to acquiring an entirely useful intellectual breadth and depth that the major simply can not provide.

Whatever form a final statement of GE philosophy takes, it should receive wide distribution, serve as the keystone of handbooks for students and faculty, and consciously and systematically be used as the starting point in the course approval and review process. Team members drafted two approaches to rethinking the program's philosophy, which are included in the Appendix [<http://www.csus.edu/acse/>]. GERIG might also examine brochures and statements from Portland State University and San Jose State University.

Ours is not a new call for such a rearticulation of GE purposes and goals. GERT-89 made a similar recommendation, and in addition called for development of a handbook for entering students that, in addition to clearly spelling out requirements, makes a strong case for the rationale of GE. Our Team heartily endorses the idea of such a handbook, which was never developed but is long overdue. Perhaps a graphics or publications design course could undertake the task as a term project, keeping in mind that one of the historic problems with building an identity for GE is the often daunting way in which so much information about the program is presented to students. Far too frequently, handouts and advising sheets and catalog discussions of requirements have more in common with a Vehicle Code manual than a description of a vital academic program that is likely to excite intellectual interest.

- 12. We recommend that CSUS and community colleges make every effort to advise potential transfers that it is in their best interests to fulfill code requirements as part of their 39-unit transfer package, or else they will have to take additional coursework above and beyond the upper division GE requirements at CSUS.**

Discussion and Rationale: Under the reorganization of GE into two stand-alone packages (39-lower division units and nine upper division units in three specified areas) proposed above, there is no upper division "solution" as there is now for a transfer student who arrives at CSUS *without having* completed his or her code requirements. Presumably, most students who transfer in having completed area requirements at a community college will have met their code requirements in so doing, but a small percentage of students who are Intersegmental General

Education Transfer Certified [IGETC]^{***} or out-of-state transfers or community college transfers or who simply did not take appropriate coursework could discover on arrival here that code requirements have not been met, and under our recommended plan of reorganization, would therefore have to take additional coursework outside their major or GE. It should be understood, and must be made clear to students, that code requirements are imposed by the State of California, not CSUS or GE. Thus, technically speaking, they have nothing to do with GE, although historically GE included coursework that fulfilled this need. Under our proposed scheme, we would no longer be offering such coursework, at least at the upper division level.

Obviously, CSUS recruiting and catalog materials would need to clarify matters regarding code requirements, should our recommendations take effect, but for the great majority of transfer students, the best place to reach them is on the community college campus through advising. The CSUS GE program should make a special effort to urge community advisers to make these matters clear to potential transfers.^{***}

13. We recommend that a student must complete at least 33 units of lower division GE requirements, including Area A plus Area B4 mathematics, before enrolling in upper division GE coursework.

Discussion and Rationale: If there is to be a meaningful distinction between lower and upper division work in GE, as we propose there ought to be, course level and sequence are a matter of concern. We take our lead here from the historic logic of work in the major where it is commonplace (1) to clearly distinguish between lower and upper division courses and (2) to assume that certain building block courses ought to precede more demanding and specialized content. Why should it be otherwise in G.E.? Either there is some worth to the notion that intellectual skills are best developed in appropriate sequence, or there is not. We believe there is. Further, to blur the lines between levels of coursework in GE but observe them in the major simply sends another subtle message to students that the former doesn't really matter, while the latter does.

^{***} The IGETCE package does not include code requirement coursework because it is not required by the UC system, a party to the agreement.

^{***} Frequently during our deliberations we heard criticism of the quality of community college advising for transfer students, at least from CSUS sources. After meeting with advisers from several local campuses, the Team had a greater appreciation of the challenges they face. One representative estimated that the current counselor-student ratio is 1400:1 and readily admitted that merely handing out literature in addition to talking to a student, say, for 15 minutes is not a sure recipe for total advising success. As well, a number of students assume they will eventually transfer to a UC campus and pay no attention to CSU requirements or literature, but end up transferring to a CSU campus, whose GE requirements are quite different. All of this said, the Team heard convincing testimony that community colleges are making a systematic effort, including mandatory advising, to provide potential transfer students with the most accurate information possible. In addition, CSUS routinely sends representatives to community college campuses to assist in advising potential transfers.

14. We recommend the university work toward the goal of providing evaluations for transfer students at the time of admission.

Discussion and Rationale: The lack of timely evaluations for transfer students was a continuing complaint from faculty and students throughout our hearings, and we heard repeatedly that all too frequently a transfer student finds him or herself fashioning a program on faulty assumptions and inaccurate or incomplete information. According to one student advising official, “even with a preliminary evaluation from a trained adviser, you don’t know a student’s situation with full confidence until they get a paper evaluation. One problem is that too many students entering their second semester still do not have an evaluation.”

Different administrators and staff at different times assured us that either such a situation was inevitable, given the demands under which the evaluations office must operate, or it really is of no consequence in that most students received their evaluations by second semester of enrollment.

The Team concluded that having an evaluation available at the time of initial enrollment was self-evidently valuable for student and advisor alike, so the only real question for us is whether it is impossible for the university to provide one. Both External Consultants assured the Team that it is possible to do better. We should make it clear that our interviews with advising and evaluations staff members on this campus convinced us that they are doing everything possible to speed the process within the constraints of the resources available. Therefore, it seems logical to conclude that an increase in resources, particularly personnel, will be required to remedy the problem.

ISSUES REQUIRING FURTHER DELIBERATION

In the Team’s judgment, the following issues would benefit from further deliberation by GERIG or the GE Policy Committee.

- **Race and Ethnicity:** The Team considered at length the question of how best to insure that concerns regarding race and ethnicity are dealt with seriously and systematically in the GE program. Team consensus was that race and ethnicity issues are as important to today’s student as, say, learning French was in the 19th century. For the present, the Team decided that it supports the continuation of the requirement in its present form. However, the matter is deserving of further attention by GERIG. Several options ought to be considered: (a) increasing the R&E requirement to six units, three of which are taken at the lower division level and three in a upper division course; (b) adding a three unit upper division cultural diversity requirement in Advanced GE; (c) requiring that diversity issues be addressed in all of the three upper division areas. GERIG should begin its consideration by reviewing the original definition of R&E.

- Community college transfers who have not met their American Institution (code) requirements at the time of entry will need to do so by taking additional coursework beyond the upper division GE requirements. The assumption here is that American Institutions is a state requirement applying to all CSU campuses, not a GE requirement. Therefore, students should be systematically advised that it is in their best interests to fulfill code requirements as part of their 39-unit transfer package. (As we understand it, the majority of transfers *have* completed code requirements by the time they reach us). See recommendation No. 12 above.
- C1 World Civilizations (3 units), in the Team's view, was the most likely candidate to eliminate if we are to hold the lower division package to 39 units. Some of the courses could be redesigned and resubmitted for inclusion in the new upper division program, most probably in the Humanities and Arts category. Of course, it is always the Senate's option to add another area to the proposed program. However, such a decision would create a 12-unit upper division requirement and a 51-unit program, rather than the 48 units we recommend.

[For Appendix, See <http://www.csus.edu/acse/>]