

To: Department chairs, divisional deans, Associated Students

From: Harold Marcuse, chair, General Education Workgroup

Date: Oct. 30, 2003

**Re: Proposed revision of General Education program,
discussion document for campuswide distribution**

Dear Colleagues,

The General Education workgroup has almost completed a thorough review and discussion of the June 2001 and May 2002 GE task force reports (all documents and many more resources are available at the workgroup's homepage: www.history.ucsb.edu/projects/ge). On most issues we have achieved consensus or near-consensus, while on others a range of options is still under discussion. We would like to present the results of our deliberations to date to the campus community, in order to initiate a campuswide discussion of the entire proposed program, and especially of the less consensual items. We expect that some feedback will focus primarily on issues that concern certain constituencies, but we hope that these constituencies will also consider the need to compromise between competing demands to come up with a coherent and balanced whole.

We encourage all members of the campus community to discuss this program with each other, and we welcome your feedback. Please send questions and comments to marcuse@history.ucsb.edu, with a copy to debra.blake@senate.ucsb.edu, and we will collate them and put them before the GE workgroup for discussion. Members of the workgroup are also available to attend department and divisional meetings to explain our suggestions and the reasoning behind their various aspects. If anyone wishes to request workgroup representatives, please send us the relevant information about your meeting, as well as your specific concerns. If you would like us to schedule campuswide forums on specific issues, please let us know that as well.

Deadline for comments. Ideally, we would like to receive your feedback prior to the Thanksgiving recess (**Nov. 26**), so that we can finalize our recommendations early next quarter. However, we realize that this may not be possible in all cases. If you are not able to make that deadline, please at least inform us of your intent to submit comments, and give us an approximate date. We thank you in advance for your efforts.

Purpose of GE. Before detailing the specifics of our proposal, we would like to recall to mind the intellectual rationale behind our GE program, as published in the University catalog:

"the General Education Program is the common intellectual experience of all UCSB students, whatever their majors. Through the General Education Program, students receive an orientation to a broad range of intellectual disciplines: the kinds of questions that are addressed, the methods for solving problems, and the strategies for communicating findings and conclusions. ... The ... program also provides opportunities to acquire university-level skills in writing, critical thinking, quantitative analysis, and foreign languages"

At the same time, as Acting Provost Ettenberg has written in the introduction to the separately published annual GE brochure, UCSB has historically endeavored to allow students "flexibility to follow their interests and individual needs" by providing "a wide range of approved courses."

This statement reflects an additional aspect of GE at UCSB, as it has evolved in practice: our program allows faculty maximum flexibility in determining the subject content of GE courses in each area, and students the maximum choice within the set of approved courses.

Resource implications. We would also like to mention a function of GE, which we feel should not be confused with its purpose. We realize that GE requirements can affect student FTE taught by departments, with resource implications for TAs and even faculty hiring. While we have studied possible effects of our suggestions and made some adjustments to minimize undesirable impacts, we feel strongly that our GE program should be based on didactic and pedagogic considerations, not on resource management issues. There are many ways of structuring and managing GE offerings to the mutual benefit of students and departments, and we look forward to working with departments and administrators to find optimal solutions that do not compromise the vision of our GE program.

This discussion document endeavors to be as brief as possible, while indicating all of the major considerations behind various aspects. Anyone interested in more information about our deliberations will find the workgroup minutes on our web site: www.history.ucsb.edu/projects/ge. Also, please note that this draft is for L&S B.A. degrees only. We are just beginning our discussion of modifications for the B.S., B.M. and B.F.A. degrees.

The main features of our proposal are presented below in the following order: changes to Core Areas are in #1-2, Special Subject Area Requirements in #5-7, and Implementation matters #8-11. At the end (#12) we raise a more fundamental issue that would begin to shift the nature of our GE program. All of these issues should be discussed by students, faculty and administrators within and among the L&S divisions MLPS, Social Sciences, and HFA so that the work group can consider campus sentiment in coming to a final proposal that the Faculty Executive Committees can review prior to submission to the Faculty Legislature.

General Subject Area (Core) Requirements

1. The first set of recommendations concerns the structure of the core subject areas of GE.
Summary of numerical adjustments (reduce by 3 courses, add one back):
 - remain at 3 courses in area C, Life and Physical Sciences;
 - reduce from 3 courses to 2 in area D, Social Sciences;
 - reduce from 3 to 2 in area E, while focusing more directly on historical studies;
 - reduce from 4 total to 3 in areas F and G, Arts and Literature, while linking those two areas more closely;
 - add one new core area "I," Interdisciplinary Studies, with a one-course requirement.
- a) **New methodological names for core areas.** We reaffirm the GE task force's new descriptions of the core areas, with one modification. We recommend restoring the term "Technology" in the title "Science & Mathematics" for Area C. The suggested redefinition of area E to "Historical Studies" is the only significant change to the present classification system.
- b) **Total number of required core courses.** After consulting with department chairs and advisors from the departments whose students choose the B.S., B.M. and B.F.A. degrees, we recommend shelving the principle of "one GE program for all bachelor's degrees" suggested in the GE task force report. This recommendation eases the pressure to

dramatically reduce the total number of courses required for GE. Our program is on the high end of requirements among comparison institutions, but it contains numerous alternatives ("loopholes") that allow many students to reduce the number of GE courses they take at UCSB. In the interest of equity, clarity and flexibility, and to accommodate the new additional core and special requirements (one each) proposed below, however, we think it is important to reduce the overall number of courses required to satisfy the GE program for B.A. students. We feel that with greater care in the design and selection of courses approved for GE, departments can increase the quality of education in each respective area by requiring fewer courses, while ensuring that approved courses attend more fully to the goals of their GE area. Moreover, the combined overall course reduction and refinement in GE could decrease the time to degree for some students, thereby contributing to a broader campus and systemwide goal.

We have not yet discussed what modifications to our suggested GE program for the B.A. would be necessary for the B.S., B.M. and B.F.A. degrees.

Note also the proposal to use a modified distribution requirement mentioned in #12, below (namely that any course in a given field could partially fulfill a requirement), which would offer an alternative. This option would be even more attractive IF the campus decides that the overall number of courses should not be reduced.

- c) **Area C.** After consulting with the dean, chairs and advisors from the division of Mathematics, Life and Physical Sciences, we found that the pragmatic reasons for the task force's recommendation to reduce the Area C/Science and Mathematics requirement from 3 courses to 2 no longer apply. Thus we recommend keeping this requirement at 3 courses. (IGETC—GE for transfer students—also requires 3 quarter courses; for details see this work group's 1/24/03 minutes.)
- d) **Number of courses in core area D.** After careful examination of the courses students can use to fulfill area D, we feel that the quality of students' exposure to social science approaches can be improved by reducing the number of required courses from 3 to 2, while controlling more carefully the list of options from which those two courses can be drawn. For instance, currently 6 different high school AP courses, some of them very popular, can be used to fulfill this requirement. The policy regarding high school Advanced Placement (AP) credit recommended in no. 9, below, would raise the standard for such courses. Also, many history courses, such as the heavily enrolled US history survey (Hist 17A-B-C) can currently be used to fulfill area D. Such courses would move to the newly redefined area E, "historical studies." Given the substantial number of courses currently approved for area D that have relatively little specifically social science methodology, setting a higher standard for social science methodology in the list of approved courses will result in many students receiving *more* exposure to the social sciences with *fewer* required courses. Additionally, the proposed new interdisciplinary core area "I" would offer a new home to some courses currently listed in area D.
- e) **Number of courses in core area E.** After renaming area E from "Civilization and Thought" to "Historical Studies," we recommend a reduction from 3 courses to 2. This would for numerous students still result in greater exposure to historical methodology, since some of the large non-history sequence courses approved to fulfill the current area E-1 would be moved from that area.

Data analysis estimate from 10-year enrollments: Arthist 6: 600-800/quarter; CompLit 30: 150-230/quarter; Phil 20: 200-300/quarter; RelSt 80: 300-450/quarter, IN SUM 1250-1780 students/quarter enroll in the non-history sequences. Taking an average 1500/quarter times 3 quarters divided by 2 courses of each sequence per student yields about 2250 students each year who CAN fulfill E-1 with non-history courses [Arthist 6 is also for approved F, and CompLit 30 also for G]. That approaches half of all students in a given class year.

Question: Which area would be most appropriate for the Phil 20 and RrlSt 80 series?
Perhaps new area I?

f) **Number of courses in core areas F and G.** Possible reduction from 4 courses to 3.

With 2 courses each in areas F and G, UCSB is on the high end of comparison schools and IGETC (GE equivalency certificate for transfers between 2-year colleges, CSU and UC), which has $3 \times 15 = 45$ course weeks in "arts and humanities," where we have $(3+2+2) \times 10 = 70$ course weeks (the IGETC category includes our area E as well).

Given our goal of streamlining the GE program and having more uniform requirements for all students, some reduction here can be considered as well. One way to achieve this would be to create a single "Arts and Literature" area with 3 required courses. This area could be subdivided into two parts, with at least one course required in each area.

We note that a substantial proportion of UCSB students on campus already take 3 or fewer courses in this area. Ca. 17% of all students complete GE with IGETC, and 16% graduate with the B.S. degree, which requires only one course each from areas F and G. All students majoring in arts and literature departments (ca. 10% of undergrads, but some are IGETC students) will continue to overfulfill these areas, so that they will also be unaffected by this change.

Question: What is our rationale for requiring so many more HFA courses than courses from other divisions, and more than from most other UC or comparison institutions?

2. **A new core area "Inter- and Multidisciplinary Studies:" 1 course.** One purpose of a GE program is to ensure that all students at an institution are exposed to the unique features offered by that institution. UCSB prides itself on its emphasis on interdisciplinarity (see the 2003 draft Academic Planning Coordinating Committee document, www.apcc.ap.ucsb.edu, password 'framework'). Additionally, the GE committee is faced with an increasing number of courses that do not fit neatly into any of the existing GE core areas, although they may otherwise be ideally suitable for GE. Also, the GE task force report (5/6/02, pp. 2,4,5) names as a goal: "to encourage divisional thinking about GE, so that more courses reflecting cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary divisional interests will be offered." However it makes no structural provision for such courses, stating only that "Interdisciplinary courses ... may be listed in more than one area of the core, although students may not use any single course to satisfy more than one area." This suggestion presents problems for the management and clarity of the GE program, which we would like to avoid. In our discussions around campus we found considerable support for a new requirement that would focus on multi- and interdisciplinary approaches. It would reflect and enhance our distinctiveness in this area, and be perceived as a real strength by prospective undergraduate students and their families. After weighing the difficulties and merits of special subject area requirement vs. a new core area, we opted for the latter. We discussed several models for defining and gauging interdisciplinarity, which are laid out in a discussion document on the GE website. We have developed a working description for such a core area:

Inter- and Multi-disciplinary Studies. Includes courses that devote significant attention to topics, concepts, theories, and/or methods drawn either from at least two core areas, or from at least two sufficiently distinct disciplines within one core area.

Special Subject Area Requirements

3. **Quantitative Reasoning.** No change.
4. **Writing Requirement.** We recommend leaving intact the current writing requirement of six courses. The task force proposed integrating intensive writing into the core. Given the nature of course creation, design and funding at this institution, our divisional discussions have led us to think that this goal is not currently feasible. (One of our implementation recommendations, published in a separate document, is designed to move in this direction.) Instead, we recommend keeping the current six-course requirement, but modifying the definition of suitable writing assignments to allow instructors across the disciplines more flexibility while maintaining rigor. We have three recommendations: require papers to meet conventions of the discipline, remove the requirement that writing courses have a separate final examination, and strive for a limitation of class or section size to 30. The current language would be replaced by the following:
 - a) The course requires one to three papers totaling at least 1,800 words exclusive of elements like footnotes. (Timed writing pieces, such as midterms and finals, do not count as papers.) Papers must give evidence of sustained exposition.
 - b) Where appropriate, papers should give students some experience participating in the discourse of the discipline. (To write using APA style, for example, would give students some understanding of how social scientists create and share knowledge).
 - c) The paper(s) are a significant consideration in the assessment of student performance in the course. They must constitute at least 25% of the grade.
 - d) The class/section enrollment for W course should be no more than 30. If it is larger than 30, departments should provide an explanation of how the evaluation of the papers is managed.

The information provided by this latter provision should help to determine resource implications for future policy formation with regard to this requirement.

5. **Ethnicity requirement.** We have also discussed at length and consulted with various constituencies about the GE special subject area requirement in ethnicity. Several problems had arisen: new faculty have been proposing courses that dealt with ethnicity in a more theoretical or comparative (non-US) context, and students would like to see issues of gender and sexuality explicitly included in the GE curriculum as well. Additionally, many students feel that one course is too little (the initial proposal at the time of implementation was for 2 courses), and would like to see the requirement increased to two courses, with the second course encompassing theoretical approaches and/or additional groups as well. In our discussions we used the abbreviation "QGE" for "Queer, Gender and Ethnicity Studies," to denote this new requirement.
 - a) We found that among the faculty currently offering ethnicity courses, there is little support for broadening the definition of the ethnicity requirement to allow comparative courses, as proposed by the task force—if that requirement remains at one course. We did not ask whether a broadening would be acceptable if the requirement were increased to two courses.
Question: In order to avoid confusion with the second, more broadly defined ethnicity requirement, would it be appropriate to rename the existing requirement to "US ethnic groups" (US-ETH)?

- b) We discussed various ways of including ethnicity as a new core area, and rejected them because the study of the named ethnic groups cuts across the disciplines and core areas. It would be very difficult to provide sufficient enrollments for a core area with two required courses.
 - c) We considered several models for including in GE recently proposed courses on ethnicity in theoretical or comparative (non-US) contexts, as well as courses on gender and sexuality. Our favored alternative would be to have two distinct ethnicity requirements, with the second focusing primarily on these additional issues. However, since it would not be possible at this time to offer sufficient enrollments to satisfy demand for the second requirement, we recommend that students be required to take one course in US-ethnicity, and one course in either US-ETH, or QGE.
 - d) The description for this student-proposed special subject requirement might read:
"Queer, Gender and Ethnic Studies Special Requirement.
This requirement strives to incorporate the experiences of intersections of traditionally oppressed queer, gender and ethnic identities within, but not limited to the United States. A course within this requirement will examine social structures through exploration and analysis of critical discourse, theory, and research.
6. **Western Civilization.** The GE work group discussed the GE task force's recommendation that the core "Western civilization" area E-1 be transformed into a special requirement. The GE work group recommends that this requirement should be made symmetrical to the present "non-Western culture" special subject requirement. Because of the problematic nature of the term "Western," we recommend renaming this requirement "European traditions."
7. **Non-Western culture (NWC).** The May 2002 GE task force report eliminated this requirement entirely. The May 2001 report, section 4.2, proposed to integrate NWC into the core by requiring that all core courses attend to NWC "where appropriate." That proposal changes the nature of the requirement, which aims at in-depth study of a different culture. It would also mean that teaching would be shifted away from faculty with primary expertise on those cultures, to instructors whose research emphasis is elsewhere. That would reduce the quality of instruction on this subject matter.
The GE work group is unanimous that the current requirement should remain as is, but with a new name. We suggest the term "non-European traditions," which does not reify the problematic term "Western" in our GE curriculum. "World Cultures" was also proposed. It offers the advantage of not defining a category by the absence of something. We welcome suggestions of alternative names for this requirement. (Information about comparison schools can be found on the GE work group website.)
8. **Advanced Placement (AP)** (see catalog p. 114 or www.catalog.ucsb.edu/gechart.htm). While examining the quality of courses that satisfy GE requirements, we discussed the use of high school AP courses to fulfill GE requirements. Given the age of the student populations of those courses (which can be taken as early as the sophomore year in high school), and the probable dearth of research experience of the high school AP instructors, we affirm the Task Force's recommendation that the practice of granting GE credit for AP courses should be curtailed (5/6/02, p. 5). We recommend the following changes to policy:

- a) First, only those AP courses that are equivalent to a specific UCSB course that is approved for a GE area may satisfy GE. (This policy would not apply to GE core areas A and B.) In practice, this would only affect four courses in area D (American History, Comparative Government and Politics, Macroeconomics, Microeconomics), and one course in area E-2 (European History).
Moving in the opposite direction, certain other courses not currently acceptable for GE might count towards the writing-intensive special requirement. An example of this would be the International Baccalaureate certificate, which includes a year-long research paper project. This would have the benefit of supporting the inclusion of writing-intensive courses in high schools.
- b) Second, a minimum score of 4 (not the present 3) would be necessary for a course to satisfy a GE requirement. In order to avoid increasing confusion and complexity, raising the minimum test score would have to apply to the specific course equivalency as well. Thus for example, students scoring 3 on the American Government and Politics AP exam would still have to complete the UCSB equivalent PolSci 12 for the PolSci premajor. Students scoring 3 on an AP exam would still earn unit credit towards graduation. We note that differential credit is already granted in English and foreign languages. We have requested data from the registrar to assess the impact this might have on Math 3AB and 34AB.
- c) We note further that UC Berkeley and UCLA now exclude all AP courses from fulfilling their GE requirements. Based on feedback from UCSB departments that have had positive experiences with AP students, we felt that such a blanket policy would not be appropriate. It might create enrollment bottlenecks, and it would limit the flexibility of talented students to progress rapidly through our degree requirements.

Implementation.

9. One difficulty with the GE Task Force reports was that they did not address implementation issues with enough detail that potential effects of some of its recommendations could be assessed. The GE work group spent substantial time discussing implementation details and developing recommendations, some of which are now being implemented by CUAPP. These recommendations are published separately on the GE work group web site.
10. We have yet to work out details for the task force's other recommendations regarding implementation. There are two main issues:
 - a) The position of a **faculty director of GE** who would coordinate and monitor GE offerings.
 - b) Another important aspect of implementation is the issue of a **petition process**. The GE committee's past practice of allowing exceptions for individual students only if the course in question is suitable to be placed on the GE list was one of the main causes of proliferation of courses on the list. In light of the formal criteria laid out in the implementation document (some of which are already being implemented by CUAPP), which would exclude many pedagogically appropriate courses solely on formal grounds, a petition process with appropriate standards to ensure the quality and manageability of the GE program will be necessary. (See document "pros and cons of a petition process," on web site). Another way of dealing with the bulk of this problem is described in #12.

11. **GE recognition on bio-bibliography.** As a means of raising the visibility of GE among the faculty, and rewarding faculty who take the time and effort to offer GE courses, we recommend the inclusion of a faculty member's participation in GE on their bio-bibliography, with appropriate consideration during advancement and promotion. We have yet to contact CAP about this.

12. **Use of non-listed courses to satisfy GE requirements.** One problematic aspect of the current GE program is the large number of approved courses on the list. Many, especially upper division courses, are perfectly suitable on didactic grounds, but cannot or do not meet the formal criteria (frequency of offering, only GE prerequisites, etc.). GE programs based on a "breadth requirement" principle (also referred to as "distribution" or "cafeteria style") avoid this problem, but at the expense of the coherence of the program and the ability to control its quality. Such programs are most appropriate for institutions with responsible and intellectually mature student bodies (or institutions unwilling to invest the resources to administer a meaningful GE program). As UCSB's academic profile rises, some movement in this direction will provide the flexibility to accommodate more independent and higher achieving students.

Allowing students to choose essentially any (upper or lower division) course from the offerings of certain departments to fulfill *one* of the course requirements in specific areas (esp. D, E, F/G) would meet this need and help to solve the management problem. If this provision is implemented, the following issues must be considered:

- a) In our discussion of implementation details we noted that this provision would require the one-time review of all courses at UCSB to determine their GE appropriateness (for instance, 195-199 independent study courses might not qualify) and core area suitability.
- b) This provision might apply to some core areas, but not others.
- c) This alternative would be more appealing if the numerical reductions outlined in #1 above are not implemented. It would be a smaller step if only one course in three, not one course of two, in a given core area would not be subject to GE scrutiny).

Sincerely,
Harold Marcuse