

General Education Committee

**To:** Walter Yuen, Chair, Academic Senate  
Denise Segura, Chair, Undergraduate Council  
Muriel Zimmerman, GE Task Force Chair  
Aaron Ettenberg, Acting Provost

**From:** Harold Marcuse (History), 2001-2002 GE Committee Chair

**Cc:** Members of the 2001-2002 General Education Committee  
Barbara Holdrege (Religious Studies),  
Esmeralda Rendon (AS Representative)  
Katie Wallace (AS Representative)  
Larry Gerstein (Mathematics)  
Laurie Monahan (History of Art & Architecture)  
Nick Tingle (Writing Program)  
Omer Blaes (Physics)  
Paul Spickard (History)  
Peter Digeser (Political Science)  
Rodger Wood (Computer Science)  
Ursula Mahlendorf (Germanic/Slavic/Semitic Studies)

**Date:** September 18, 2002

**Re:** GE Committee response to GE Task Force report and supplements

At its April 18, 2002 meeting, the General Education Committee discussed the seven points below in response to the GE Task Force report of June 11, 2001, and to some of the more recent feedback about it. I note that Muriel received a draft of this memo and discussed it with me, and that she incorporated some of these recommendations into section 5.3 of the May 6, 2002 revised Task Force Recommendation Report, namely: #2 is reflected in the second item; #3 is reflected in the third item, and #5 and #6 are reflected in the seventh item in a general way, as well as in section 5.2A, Flexibility Option for the B.A. (Please note the corrected wording at the end of item #5, below: departmental liaisons would endorse petitions to be *reviewed by the faculty GE director* [instead of "approved by departmental liaisons"].)

Item #1, below, is a response to Dean Wyner's insinuation in his Oct. 16, 2001 memo to L&S executive committee chair Stephen Weatherford that the "alleged" problems with the present GE program outlined in the task force report are either inaccurate or undocumented (memo included as "appendix F" of the Feb. 15, 2002 Task Force feedback packet). The work of the GE committee over the past few years provides excellent documentation that those problems are very real.

Item #4 has been taken from the first item in my parallel April 2 draft memo suggesting some procedures for the implementation of the revised GE program.

Finally, item #7 supports the Task Force's section 5.1 on Leadership and Governance, which was already a part of the June 11, 2001 report. It represents an attempt to "supply some clear language delimiting the administrator's powers," as Eric Smith requested in his Oct. 1, 2001

memo to Muriel and Senate chair Richard Watts (included as "appendix E" of the feedback packet discussed by the GE Task Force on Feb. 15, 2002).

I will include a copy of this memo as an addendum to the GE committee's annual report, and I am requesting suggestions from Dean Wyner and Eric Smith about how we might address the problems they identify.

Here is the committee's response:

1. The GE committee endorses the findings of the Task Force regarding the current GE curriculum. Its structure, content and administration are badly in need of overhaul.
2. We would like to see an explicit list of the criteria courses should meet in order to be placed on the new GE list. These might include: having no prerequisites, being open to all non-majors during the first registration pass, explicitly teaching disciplinary methods as well as content, including instruction on writing and research skills, being offered at least once every year, etc.
3. We find that the more explicitly methodological descriptions of the areas C through G are more up-to-date and will help to determine which courses will satisfy those areas. However, we still see two difficulties: with explicitly interdisciplinary courses, and courses that overlap core areas 3 and 4 (historical studies and social sciences). Regarding the former, it would be expedient to designate a primary area that the course would satisfy.  
This issue is especially pressing with regard to the general distinction between areas 3 and 4, as the listings in the present GE booklet show. Should it be made explicit that the difference between the latter is between past and present, or qualitative vs. quantitative (or scientific) approaches? Some guidelines here would be beneficial.
4. The definitions of the proposed special requirements "ethnicity" and "Western civilization" are somewhat problematic. It would be helpful to have clear and specific criteria for the evaluation of required course content.
5. We are concerned that one of the pressures leading to the proliferation of courses on the current list has not been addressed by the proposed revisions: the need for students to have some alternative way of fulfilling a requirement if they have taken non-listed courses that clearly address the subject and method requirements of a given area, but for other reasons (as named in no. 4, above) are not on the list.  
We propose that a petition process *primarily at the department level* be set up, with each student who can demonstrate compelling reasons being allowed one petition. Petitions would be subject to GE administrative approval. We understand that hitherto departments have not been well informed about the requirements of GE, so that a petition process such as this would have been subject to abuse. Therefore:
6. We propose that each department name a designated *faculty* GE liaison as a standing service assignment delineated in its bylaws. All GE liaisons would, when appointed, be briefed by the committee or person overseeing the GE program. They would be responsible for advising students about the criteria a GE course must meet, and for endorsing student petitions to be reviewed by the faculty GE director.
7. We find further that in order to maintain the quality of a GE program, an administrative position (faculty director of GE) should in whole or in part be designated to oversee the

program. We suggest that information about the duties of GE administrative coordinators on other campuses be obtained for comparative purposes. At UCSB, this person would compile data on the courses students use to fulfill GE requirements, and inform departments of over- or undercapacity in their areas. This data could come both from the registrar, and from the reasons students use on their petitions for substitution to GE. The tasks of this position would include at least these 4 aspects:

- a. Ensuring that the courses on the GE list continue to meet the criteria under which they were approved.
- b. Working with departments on the development of new GE courses.
- c. Briefing departmental faculty and staff GE liaisons.
- d. Compiling data on capacity shortfalls or surpluses in various GE categories.