

**Academic Senate
Santa Barbara Division**

April 28, 2010

To: Department Chairs

From: Gerardo Aldana, Chair
Undergraduate Council



Re: Proposal to revise GE course distribution

In order to address the impact of the budget crisis on our campus, Academic Senate Chair Joel Michaelsen convened a joint administrative/Senate Committee on Curriculum and Budget. One of that group's two subcommittees was charged with considering the impact of reduced campus resources on UCSB's General Education Program. In the course of its work, the committee generated the attached proposal, which calls for a significant expansion of the courses that can be used to fulfill GE General Subject Area requirements and a revision of the operational guidelines currently used to determine GE articulations with non-UCSB courses. The proposal was forwarded to the Undergraduate Council (UgC) during winter quarter with a request that the Council support its immediate implementation.

UgC endorsed the second aspect of the proposal, and two of its members have been appointed to serve on a small task force that will update the existing guidelines to ensure consistency across campus. However, following substantial consideration, UgC has decided that the first proposed revision is of a scope meriting wider consultation. We are well aware of the heavy workload inherent to spring quarter and sincerely regret adding to that load, but the Council believes that it is in our students' best interests that we make a decision (either way) on this proposal as soon as possible. We therefore request that you consult with your curriculum committee or entire faculty, as appropriate in your department, and send us your departmental comment by May 27.

In your discussions, please consider the proposed change from UCSB's primarily core area GE model to a broader distributional approach with respect to:

- i) how you expect the proposed revision would impact your department's course offerings and its approach to scheduling them;
- ii) what your department's thoughts are on moving further toward a distributional GE model;
- iii) whether it would be advisable to revise the GE General Subject Area definitions in concert with a move to a more distributional model.

Finally, please note that—as the proposal makes clear—the GE Special Subject Area requirements would not be affected by this proposal. If you would like a member of UgC or the GE Subcommittee to discuss the proposal with your faculty, please notify us as soon as possible in order to make arrangements.

Please email your department's response to debra.blake@senate.ucsb.edu.


CC: Gene Lucas, Executive Vice Chancellor
Joel Michaelsen, Chair, Academic Senate
Deborah Karoff, Executive Director, Academic Senate and Member, GE Subcommittee
David Marshall, L&S Executive Dean and Member, GE Subcommittee
Mary Nisbet, Acting Dean of Undergraduate Education and Member, GE Subcommittee
Rolf Christoffersen, Member, GE Subcommittee
Dan Montello, Member, GE Subcommittee
Melvin Oliver, Dean of Social Sciences, L&S
Pierre Wiltzius, Dean of Mathematical, Life and Physical Sciences, L&S
Larry Coldren, Acting Dean, College of Engineering
Glen Beltz, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, College of Engineering

Academic Senate

Santa Barbara Division

DATE: February 25, 2010

TO: Gerardo Aldana, Chair, Undergraduate Council

FROM: Joel Michaelsen, Divisional Chair 

SUBJECT: General Education Review Proposal

As you are aware, last fall, I convened a joint Senate-Administration working group, entitled the Curriculum and Budget Committee, to evaluate the undergraduate curriculum and educational program in relation to budget reductions. General Education is one of several areas upon which the group has focused its work.

Attached please find a proposal to set up a GE Task Force to review two components of the General Education program:

- 1) review and expand the current listing of courses that fulfill GE requirements within the existing framework of General and Special subject requirements
- 2) review and revise the current Guidelines used by the College of L & S to determine which courses are eligible for GE credit

I am pleased that the Undergraduate Council has already appointed two members to serve on the GE Task Force to work on the revisions to the Guidelines. I am hoping that the Undergraduate Council will consider the attached proposal and recommend that the same group undertake the review and expansion of GE offerings. I have also attached some information from Steven Velasco about GE enrollments and GE and non-GE course availability that provide some data on the current situation. You will note that the second chart, in particular, demonstrates a contraction of available seats which is something this proposal is attempting to mitigate.

Although it is entirely up to your discretion, I know that members of the GE Task Force such as Rolf Christoffersen, David Marshall, and Mary Nisbet are willing to attend a meeting to discuss this proposal with the Undergraduate Council.

Thank you for considering this request.

PROPOSAL TO REVIEW GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS **GENERAL SUBJECT AREAS A THROUGH G**

Introduction:

In the fall of 2009, Senate Chair Joel Michaelsen convened a joint Senate-Administration working group to consider the impact of budget cuts on the curriculum and on undergraduate education. The group was asked to consider both short-term and long-term measures that might be either necessary or helpful to preserve the quality of undergraduate education during a period of reduced resources. Although convened with a sense of urgency, the working group was not designed to bypass any normal Senate or College committees; rather, it was convened to identify areas of concern and possible solutions.

Of particular concern was the ability of students to graduate in a timely fashion and to meet requirements for majors, General Education, and Minimum Cumulative Progress at a time when budget cuts and significant over-enrollment are reducing the number of available seats in classes and the number of courses being offered. Budget cuts have forced departments to eliminate many courses for non-majors that satisfy GE requirements. Reductions in TA FTE have forced departments to reduce the number of sections in many large GE courses.

Concerned with the ability of students to fulfill requirements in a timely fashion, the working group quickly focused on the General Education program. As available seats in many current General Education courses are reduced due to resource and budget constraints, we need to maintain and if possible increase the number of available seats in General Education courses so student progress toward graduation will not be impeded. Although the group was tempted to revisit the entire General Education structure, which all agree is currently an imperfect hybrid of requirements and educational philosophies, it concluded that such an enterprise was too complicated and lengthy to take on at this moment.

The working group therefore concluded that it would be most efficient to work within existing GE definitions and categories. Within this context, it proposed to update and thereby rationalize the working guidelines that are used to provide GE credit for transfer students (“Guide to Evaluation of Transfer Courses for General Education”) and to expand the number of course that will fulfill GE areas. No changes are proposed to the current structure of the General Education Program, including the current subject areas and their definitions, or to the required number of courses to be completed in each area.

Proposals:

Every regular undergraduate course (upper and lower division) should satisfy a General Subject Area requirement (while continuing to fulfill any Special Subject Area requirement for which it already has been approved).

There are two reasons to allow all regular courses to fulfill GE General Subject Area requirements: (a) Although in theory a GE program based on a set of lower-division courses makes sense, UCSB's current GE structure (and the variations across departments in the classification of upper- and lower-division courses) does not constitute a core curriculum or introductory sequence of courses. It was felt that if a student could gain admission to an upper-division course, there is no reason not to allow GE credit. Why should an advanced course of a subject area not count toward General Education requirements? (b) This change would greatly expand the number of courses that potentially could count as GE requirements, thus helping both incoming freshmen and transfer students.

Update and revise the working guidelines used by the College of Letters & Science to determine which courses qualify for GE credit.

A document established years ago, the "Guide to Evaluation of Transfer Courses for General Education," contains obsolete and outdated language that unnecessarily limits and restricts potential General Education course options for students. Hundreds of student petitions for GE credit are denied on an annual basis. Many transfer students are forced to repeat lower-division courses after they believed that they had fulfilled GE requirements.

The combination of these two changes would greatly expand the number of options that students have to fulfill GE requirements, even if no additional courses are added to the curriculum, and even if we continue to reduce the number of seats available to undergraduate students.

Logistics:

(a) If these proposals are approved, each department would be asked to review its curriculum and assign a General Subject Area to each course. It is assumed that in most departments, in almost every case it would be obvious to both the department and to reviewing agencies which subject area was appropriate.

In the event that a course appears to meet the criteria for inclusion in two areas, the department would be obliged to decide which single area is most appropriate from a pedagogical perspective. The department, consulting with instructors when appropriate, could decide which single area the course fits into, assuming that the majority of the material covered matched that area.

Departments would be allowed to request that a course be exempted from inclusion in any of the General Subject Areas solely for academic reasons, and not for budgetary reasons; departments would be required to provide a written justification for the exclusion of a course from the GE program in a process similar to that which is now used for requesting inclusion of courses.

Current prerequisites and procedures giving priority to majors in individual courses would not have to be changed.

It is assumed that these changes would require very little additional work from either departments or standing Senate committees. A very small number of cases are anticipated from

departments requesting exemptions. It will be presumed that departments have the knowledge and authority to place their courses in appropriate areas. A simple post-audit could be conducted to identify any obviously inappropriate or questionable assignments.

(b) A small GE task force consisting of two members each from the L&S Executive Committee and the Committee on Undergraduate Academic Programs and Policy (CUAPP) would be constituted, with staff support provided by the Academic Senate and the College of Letters and Science. Using the current definitions, this task force would review and where appropriate revise the working guidelines for classifying courses into the General Subject Areas. The main task of the group would be to update the language and parameters of the working guidelines and (consistent with the current categories and definitions) rationalize and enlarge the current list of GE courses.

The updated guidelines would then be submitted to both the Faculty Executive Committee of Letters and Science and CUAPP for approval.

Time Table:

- 1) Winter Quarter, 2010: GE Task Force reviews current guidelines for classifying GE courses
- 2) Winter/Spring Quarters, 2010: Undergraduate Council and Faculty Executive Committees review guidelines and either request revisions or adopt guidelines
- 3) Spring, Summer and Fall 2010: departments review courses
- 4) Winter, 2011: GE Task Force reviews and finalizes list of courses from departments that meet GE requirements
- 5) Academic Year 2011-12: implement use of newly defined GE course options for incoming and continuing students.

Conclusion:

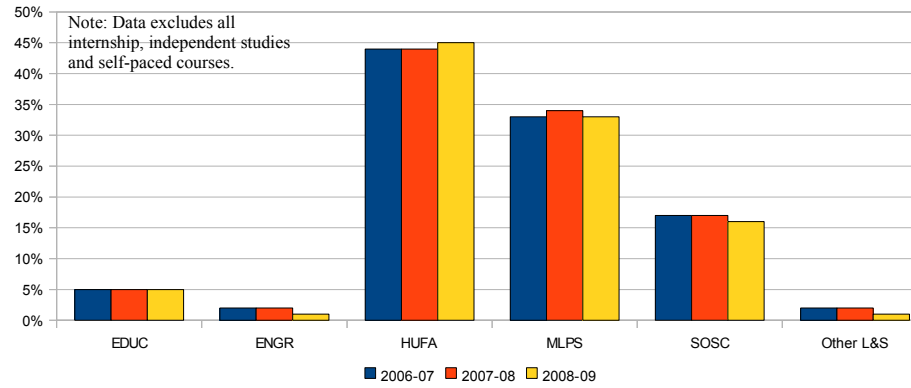
The working group believes that with modest revisions and a minimum amount of work on the part of departments and Senate committees, we can significantly increase the number of courses that fulfill GE requirements and the number of seats available in GE courses to students. This would help mitigate the impact of the budget cuts, which have reduced GE offerings, and make it easier for students to find appropriate courses that would help them fulfill Minimum Cumulative Progress and graduation requirements.

The proposed changes have the potential to make GE courses more rigorous since some upper-division courses could be used to satisfy requirements. They also would make the GE program more rational and consistent; less susceptible to the accidents and omissions of departments in requesting GE assignments; and less susceptible to the subjective interpretations of different committee members, advisors, and Admissions staff. GE assignments would no longer be constrained by anachronistic and increasingly arbitrary guidelines that have been used for years, without the knowledge of departments or committees. Language can be updated to make GE definitions more understandable and transparent to students.

The working group believes that expanding the number of GE options available to students also will expand the range of departments and disciplines that students will explore. It does not believe that departments are likely to seek to artificially assign GE subject areas to courses in its curriculum. A small number of departments might be able to choose among more than one subject area for its courses, but it is not likely that a significant number of students would be able to fulfill an inordinate number of GE requirements within a single department.

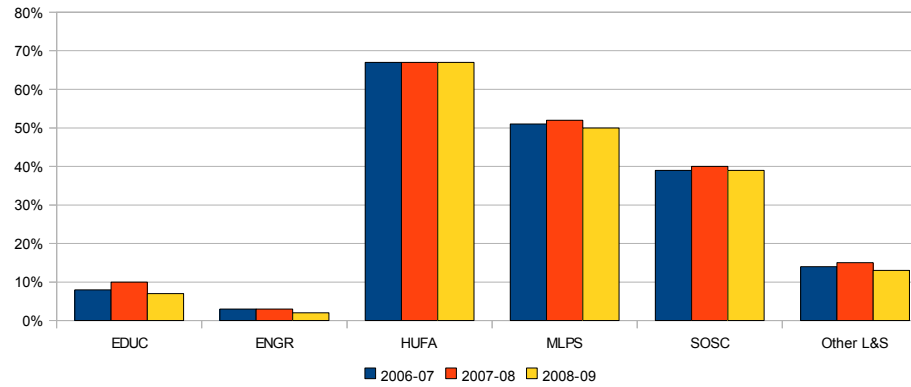
The proposals here take a modest step towards a distribution requirement system. There is widespread agreement that the current GE program is an unsatisfactory patchwork of educational philosophies, pedagogical strategies, articulation agreements, political compromises, and shifting disciplinary boundaries. The Senate may wish to undertake further review of the entire GE program; relevant issues may arise in the Curriculum and Education working group of the UC Commission on the Future. The current proposals do not either presuppose or preclude further review or revision of the GE program.

Percent of Each Division's Courses Meeting a GE Requirement
2006-07 thru 2008-09 Academic Year



Division	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Education	3	3	3
Engineering	4	4	3
Humanities & Fine Art	906	922	915
Math, Life & Phys. Sci	362	372	365
Social Sciences	191	178	164
Other L&S	2	2	2

Percent of Each Division's Course Enrollments Occuring in GE Courses
2006-07 thru 2008-09 Academic Year



Division	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Education	161	248	189
Engineering	299	292	200
Humanities & Fine Art	46,862	46,783	47,964
Math, Life & Phys. Sci	30,323	32,171	33,139
Social Sciences	24,732	25,165	26,010
Other L&S	304	333	361

Total Seats Available in GE and Non-GE Courses by Division and Year

2006-07 thru 2008-09 Academic Year (Excludes Internships, Independent Studies and Self-Paced Courses)

