

**The Ad Hoc Committee to Review General Education Program Review
Commendations and Recommendations
May 21, 2007**

This is the Summary Report of the Ad Hoc Committee to Review the General Education Program Review. Committee Membership: Kevin Baaske (Communication Studies), Miles Finney (Economics and Statistics), Valerie Kehm (Academic Advisement), Andrea Maxie (Curriculum and Instruction), Pedro Ramirez (Geological Sciences), Virgil Seaman (Technology) and Connie Utterback (Art).

Overview: In 2003 the General Education Subcommittee approved a plan to review the CSULA General Education Program. This was appropriate as significant revisions to the GE Program were implemented in five years earlier 1998 and the Program last underwent program review in 1988. A self-study was undertaken and a written report issued in November 2005. Two external evaluators visited the campus in winter 2006 and a written report was submitted. The Ad Hoc Committee met regularly throughout the winter and spring 2006 terms and then met as needed to review drafts of their report during the fall 2006 and winter 2007 terms. This report was submitted on May 21, 2007.

Program Goals and Objectives

Recommendations

1. Revise the Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes of General Education

The Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes are a valuable component of any program's review. That is particularly the case for the CSULA General Education Program. The authors of the Self-Study, the external consultants and the members of this committee agree that the current Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes need to be streamlined and clarified. The current package is not readily available, it is unwieldy and it fails to establish a unique character of and mission for this campus.

We recommend that the General Education Subcommittee (GES) begin its consideration of the Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes by attempting to identify the qualities of an educated person living in the twenty-first century in the nation's most diverse city. With an understanding of this goal it then becomes possible to identify the courses that would facilitate the development of these qualities in all of our students.

The Committee agrees with the external evaluators when they wrote: "The University seems to be missing a significant opportunity to bring the program's mission, learning goals and uniqueness to students' (both enrolled and prospective) attention" (Report of the External Consultants, p. 4). A vital approach to GE could help to establish the unique identify of CSULA.

The revised Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes should be the basis for reconsideration of the entire GE program and its operation on this campus.

2. After the revision of the GE Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes, the Committee wishes to encourage that these views be widely disseminated and systematically shared with new

students and new faculty—especially those faculty asked to teach GE courses. Faculty and students cannot be expected to understand and invest in GE unless they understand its importance to the academic mission of the University.

3. Evaluate current and proposed GE courses in light of the revised Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes.
4. The revised Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes should also complement and shape the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan.
5. Regular and continuous assessment of the revised Learning Outcomes should be instituted by GES and shared with the campus community.

Curriculum

The curriculum of the General Education program is designed to promote the development of students' intellectual curiosity, appreciation of a shared and diverse cultural heritage, and value toward community service. These organizing principles frame a program that is structured in blocks and themes and provides an integrated course within each block. Block A, Basic Skills, emphasizes communication and critical thinking courses, in addition to foundations courses in constitutional government. Blocks B through D are Area Requirements focusing on the natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences. Following these blocks, students take a course in Block E, Lifelong Learning, three courses that are linked by a topic in the Upper Division Theme, and two courses on diversity. On balance, the General Education program seeks to ground students in tools of communication and inquiry, to provide them with a flexible, integrated, pathway to breadth and depth in general education, and to help students build a relationship between the community and the curriculum of general education.

Commendations

1. The University is commended on a General Education program that seeks to provide breadth and depth in general education through integrative study.
2. The University is commended on a General Education program that addresses the multicultural dimensions of life in California and the global community.

Recommendations

1. Curriculum integration in the General Education program should be revisited. Emphasis should be placed on the feasibility of delivering a truly interdisciplinary program and on designs for achieving curriculum integration.
2. The General Education program should be examined for integrated curriculum and learning experiences, such as capstone courses, that allow students to bring interdisciplinary thought to bear on contemporary issues.
3. In the context of interdisciplinary study, strategies should be considered that develop students' understandings of the purpose of general education and the organization of the General Education program.

4. Linkages between the lower and upper division blocks of the program should be explored and/or developed.
5. The diversity requirement in the General Education program should be re-examined with attention to the definition used to designate diversity courses and the number required in light of the revised Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes.
6. Block E should be examined to determine if it is fulfilling its intended purpose and providing a meaningful contribution to student learning, and if not, propose a redesign of the area or its elimination.
7. Each department/program offering GE courses should designate an individual to assure consistency and quality in instruction in the program's GE courses.

Writing Goals and Objectives

An important goal of the GE program is the development of students' writing skills. The program links the ability to reason logically with the capacity to convey ideas in organized written form. "The General Education program develops the ability of students to think clearly and logically, to find and examine information, to communicate effectively in oral and written form..." The GE program uses a number of strategies to develop writing skills. ENG 101 is dedicated solely to improving the writing skills of students; ENGL 102, although formally not part of the GE program, is a university requirement that develops students' skill at persuasive writing. In addition, GE requires every class taught in the program to have a writing component with an opportunity for instructor feedback on writing assignments.

Commendation:

The GE program is commended for its focus on improving the writing skills of CSULA students, using strategies for instruction that are spread throughout the program.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure that every GE course adheres to the writing requirement of GE.
2. Make recertification of courses in GE contingent on evidence that the courses are following GE guidelines regarding writing.
3. Routinely disseminate to department chairs the writing policy GE courses must follow.
4. Provide workshops for faculty participating in GE to provide information on the expectations of writing and discuss teaching strategies on writing.
5. In light of the writing requirement, class size should be limited or sufficient support should be provided for larger classes.

Oral Communication Goals and Objectives

The GE program uses COMM 150 almost exclusively in developing students' oral communication skills. There is no mandate that courses outside of Block A promote the development of this skill. Resource scarcity, especially class time, appears to be the largest impediment to the skill being taught throughout the program.

Commendation:

The GE program is commended for recognizing that oral communication skills can be an important part of a student's intellectual development.

Recommendation:

Given the cultural variety of the CSULA student body, the GE program should investigate the sufficiency of the present amount of communication instruction. Do CSULA graduates have sufficient oral communication as they exit the University? If not, other ways to increase oral communication skills through GE should be investigated. Is the writing across the curriculum approach a model that might be successfully employed for oral communication too? Information on the possible benefits of additional instruction should begin by assessing the present level of skill among CSULA students within the GE program.

Critical Thinking Goals and Objectives

The GE program recognizes that a primary definition of an educated person is the ability to think independently and critically. The initial description of the GE program within the faculty handbook spells out this idea: "The General Education program enriches the lives of students as they acquire knowledge, learn to think critically, and use methodologies of the various disciplines."

Commendation:

The GE program is commended for acknowledging explicitly and dedicating GE units for one of the fundamental missions of an educational institution.

Recommendation:

1. The current GE program does not acknowledge the extent to which critical thinking is closely tied to writing. Critical thinking courses should require writing and writing courses should require critical thinking. The self study report cites critical thinking classes that, according to syllabi, apparently do not require any writing.
2. Assess students across critical thinking courses to assure the achievement of the critical thinking learning outcomes.

Quantitative Reasoning Goals and Objectives

The GE program states that students should master quantitative skills, among other skills, “so that they may achieve academic excellence.” The present Block A requirement includes one course in mathematics or quantitative reasoning.

Commendation:

GE is commended for recognizing that developing quantitative and mathematical reasoning skills is important to academic achievement.

Recommendation:

1. Assess students across quantitative reasoning courses to assure the achievement of the quantitative reasoning learning outcomes.
2. Given that the retention of math skills declines over time, students requiring remediation should be placed on a track that automatically moves them immediately from one course to the next in the sequence of courses until the GE math requirements are met.

Information Competence Goals and Objectives

One of the qualities GE seeks to advance in students is, according to the GE mission statement, the ability to “find and examine information.” This goal is closely tied in the mission statement to the writing and critical thinking goals. In addition, the University is committed to information competence. This includes the skills necessary to: 1) formulate a research question or problem, (2) determine its information requirements, (3) locate and retrieve that information effectively, (4) organize, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize that information critically, and (5) be able to communicate and present that information in a coherent fashion.

Commendation:

The GE program is commended for acknowledging the importance of students acquiring the ability to manage information competently across contexts.

Recommendation:

1. The capacity to manage information competently is arguably a skill that is growing in importance. Language should be added to the program more clearly defining the goal of the program in this regard.
2. Just as writing is required in all GE courses, information competence should be required in all GE courses.

Assessment

The General Education program developed an assessment plan in 1999 and submitted the plan to GES in fall quarter 2000. The University Educational Policy committee accepted the plan in 2002. An assessment coordinator was first appointed in 2000-01. Preliminary programmatic assessment of Upper Division themes has been completed and assessment of Block B of the GE program is underway. The self-study lists a wide variety of tools used for assessing learning

outcomes. These tools were developed in consultation with faculty teaching GE. Recommendations to improve upper division GE themes were made based on analysis of assessment data collected.

Commendations

1. The General Education program is commended for the development of a variety of tools to assess learning outcomes and for the preliminary assessment of upper division GE themes.
2. The General Education program is commended for beginning the assessment of Blocks A and B of the GE program.

Recommendations

1. Update the timeline for assessing the GE program. The assessment plan includes a general timeline (p.12 appendix E) for applying assessment measures, but does not provide a clear time frame for GE other than to state that GE assessment should begin in Fall Quarter, 2001.
2. Fully implement recommendations resulting from data gathered through assessment of upper division GE themes (p26 self study report). Some recommendations have been implemented e.g. de-certification of theme courses, but most have not.
3. Develop and implement embedded assessments in critical thinking, mathematics/quantitative reasoning, and American Institution classes. The use of embedded assessments or other appropriate methodologies within GE courses generally should be encouraged. In addition to the courses identified by the external consultants, such techniques could be utilized to make assessments across the GE blocks and the other basic skills courses.
4. Develop a clear strategy for dissemination of results of GE program assessment to faculty, administrators, and students.

Faculty and Instruction

The faculty designs and implements the General Education Program. While this effort has demanded extensive faculty participation, and although much has been accomplished, there is still the need for continued involvement of faculty to assure that the General Education Program achieves its ultimate objective — the improvement of the baccalaureate experience for all undergraduate students at CSULA.

The faculty who teach General Education courses are from many academic departments, and include tenured, tenure-track, and part-time. According to the Self-Study Report, of the 310 faculty who teach lower division GE courses, 49% are part-time instructors. Of the 74 faculty who teach upper division GE Theme courses, 38% are part-time instructors.

The dependence on part-time instructors to provide the fundamental curriculum of the university demands that particular attention be paid to the preparation and on-going support on these instructors.

Commendation:

The faculty members who teach in the GE program and who participate in the GE governance process through service on GES are commended for their commitment and dedication to the program.

Recommendation:

1. Communicate General Education objectives and policies to faculty more effectively and consistently.
2. Faculty who teach GE courses should receive adequate information and guidance regarding the goals and learning objectives of the GE program. Possible methods to accomplish this are:
 - A. Orientation workshops for faculty who teach in the GE program for the first time to assure that there is a consistent philosophy and structure in the courses.
 - B. A training program for faculty who teach GE (possibly coordinated by CETL) that includes development of collaborative activities, information competency and service learning.
 - C. A GE Faculty Handbook that includes GE policies and course expectations.
 - D. A review process for faculty who teach GE, which verifies that the course meets the GE guidelines for content and instruction mode.
3. RTP documents should specifically emphasize that teaching and curricular development in GE is valued in category A by the University.
4. Hire more tenure track faculty, as called for in Assembly Concurrent Resolution (ACR) 73, as this would result in more tenured and tenure-track faculty teaching GE.

Effective Retention Strategies

The General Education program utilizes a number of strategies that affect retention. Advisement and articulation are the most important pieces of this. Prior to Fall 2003 General Education advisement took place in each of the Colleges, primarily at the College Advisement and Outreach Centers (AOCs). Articulation with feeder schools is continuing.

In Fall 2003 there were major budgetary cutbacks in the AOCs and thus in advisement. Schools/Departments/Divisions are now providing the bulk of the advisement and availability is much more limited and is being done by a faculty who may have limited experience with GE advisement. That coupled with the time it takes for the University to evaluate the transcripts and get the information into GET has impacted the quality and timeliness of advisement for both GE and the major. For students who bring unofficial transcripts with them to advisement that indicates fully GE certified or Block certified the adviser is able to help students move forward. The ability to check articulation agreements though ASSIST also facilitates timely and accurate advisement.

Commendations:

1. The campus development of IHE courses provides support for the GE program, especially related to EO 665 because of the required advisement component and advisement is a crucial component of retention.
2. The University has made good efforts to establish and maintain articulation agreements with feeder schools related to GE thus providing assurance to transfer students about requirement completion.
3. The Title V project with three feeder community colleges (PCC, ELAC, LACC) to send and evaluate transcripts electronically which will speed up evaluations

Recommendations:

1. Provide GE advisement on a regular and consistent basis for undeclared students through an adequately funded University Academic Advisement Center (UAAC) and the Teacher Preparation Advisement Center (TEPAC). Such advisement will assist these students in understanding the purpose and requirements of GE.
2. Provide college-based advisement centers with adequate funding so that they may be responsible for initial advising of all first time and transfer students and serve as the principal source for GE advisement of majors in their respective colleges.
3. Increase participation of faculty in GE advising including having a strong presence at student orientations, especially during the summer.
4. The Undergraduate Studies office should coordinate the IHE/THE courses to ensure comparable experiences and that the courses compliment and reinforce the overall goals of the GE program.
5. Conduct “Stop-out/Drop-out” surveys annually on fall cohort groups to determine why student are not present the following fall. Utilize this information to improve GE as warranted.

Program Satisfaction

Commendations:

1. The GE program is commended for providing students with an understanding of people of other racial, ethnic, gender, and class backgrounds.
2. For providing students with an understanding of thematic issues from different disciplinary perspectives.
3. The staff of the Office for Institutional Research is commended for conducting both the GE Alumni Survey (440 responses) and visiting classrooms to administer the GE Student Survey (708 students completed the survey).
4. GES is commended for identifying/approving the eight (8) goals for student learning outcomes and for developing the four surveys (faculty survey, alumni survey, student survey, and department chair survey) to collect data for the GES Self Study.

Recommendations:

1. In order to identify potential roadblocks and impediments to graduation, and in order to facilitate better scheduling of GE courses, the Office for Institutional Research should provide annual data on the following:
 - A. The length of time it takes first-time freshmen to complete their GE requirements;
 - B. The percentage of transfer students who have completed their lower division GE prior to admission to the University;
 - C. The time it takes transfer students with partial GE certification to complete their GE requirements.

2. Provide, as recommended by the External Reviewers, future External Reviewers with the opportunity to meet and converse with students in both lower division and upper division GE courses. Because this did not occur under the current review, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, or his designee, should attempt to assess student understanding of GE.
 - A. Do students at CSULA understand why GE is required?
 - B. Do students accept the goals and objectives as important?

Resource Management

An essential element in ensuring the success of the General Education program is strong administrative support. In order to improve the quality of the General Education Program, appropriate resources and opportunities must be available to departments and schools that offer courses in the GE program as part of the instructional budget.

Recommendation:

1. Provide adequate funding and administrative support for GE. The fundamental relationship between the university's strategic plans, its mission and the GE program need to be expressed in meaningful, official ways by the administration. The GE program is central to the university and needs to be supported by financial decisions that reflect a commitment to its success.

2. Abolish the voluntary Theme Coordinate position and establish a Faculty GE Program Coordinator who provides appropriate leadership, program advocacy, and on-going oversight. This should be a full-time 12 month faculty position. Drawing upon the successful UAAC and TPAC models, the responsibilities of the Coordinator should include:
 - A. Facilitate the proposal and review process for LD GE courses and UD GE Themes.
 - B. Monitor GE course scheduling to avoid curricular bottlenecks that may cause students to attend additional quarters to graduate.
 - C. Monitor the relationship between instructional mode and enrollment cap in GE courses to assure that the quality of interaction between faculty and students maximizes learning outcomes.
 - D. Facilitate coordination among the programs sponsoring theme courses, including course scheduling.
 - E. Oversee the review of student course substitution petitions and waivers.
 - F. Facilitate faculty development opportunities in GE.
 - G. Prepare and disseminate information about the GE program to students and faculty.
 - H. Act as a representative for the GE program to the university and the community.
 - I. Report to the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

- J. Serve as a member of the General Education Subcommittee (GES).

Summary of Recommendations

Program Goals and Mission

1. Revise the Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes of General Education.
2. Widely disseminate and systematically share with new students and new faculty the revised Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes.
3. Evaluate current and proposed GE courses in light of the revised Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes.
4. The revised Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes should also complement and shape the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan.
5. Regular and continuous assessment of the revised Learning Outcomes should be instituted by GES and shared with the campus community.

Curriculum

1. Curriculum integration in the General Education program should be revisited. Emphasis should be placed on the feasibility of delivering a truly interdisciplinary program and on designs for achieving curriculum integration.
2. The General Education program should be examined for integrated curriculum and learning experiences, such as capstone courses, that allow students to bring interdisciplinary thought to bear on contemporary issues.
3. In the context of interdisciplinary study, strategies should be considered that develop students' understandings of the purpose of general education and the organization of the General Education program.
4. Linkages between the lower and upper division blocks of the program should be explored and/or developed.
5. The diversity requirement in the General Education program should be re-examined with attention to the definition used to designate diversity courses and the number required in light of the revised Mission, Goals and Learning Outcomes.
6. Block E should be examined to determine if it is fulfilling its intended purpose and providing a meaningful contribution to student learning, and if not, propose a redesign of the area or its elimination.
7. Each department/program offering GE courses should designate an individual to assure consistency and quality in instruction in the program's GE courses.

Writing Goals and Objectives

1. Ensure that every GE course adheres to the writing requirement of GE.
2. Make recertification of courses in GE contingent on evidence that the courses are following GE guidelines regarding writing.
3. Routinely disseminate to department chairs the writing policy GE courses must follow.
4. Provide workshops for faculty participating in GE to provide information on the expectations of writing and discuss teaching strategies on writing.
5. In light of the writing requirement, class size should be limited or sufficient support should be provided for larger classes.

Oral Communication Goals and Objectives

1. Investigate the sufficiency of the present amount of oral communication instruction.

Critical Thinking Goals and Objectives

1. Critical thinking courses should require writing and writing courses should require critical thinking.
2. Assess students across critical thinking courses to assure the achievement of the Critical Thinking Learning Outcomes.

Quantitative Reasoning Goals and Objectives

1. Assess students across quantitative reasoning courses to assure the achievement of the Quantitative Reasoning Goals and Objectives.
2. Given that the retention of math skills declines over time, students requiring remediation should be placed on a track that automatically moves them immediately from one course to the next in the sequence of courses until GE math requirements are met.

Information Competence Goals and Objectives

1. The capacity to manage information competently is arguably a skill that is growing in importance. Language should be added to the program more clearly defining the goal of the program in this regard.
2. Just as writing is required in all GE courses, information competence should be required in all GE courses.

Assessment

1. Update the timeline for assessing the GE program.
2. Fully implement recommendations resulting from data gathered through assessment of upper division GE themes (p26 self study report).

3. Develop and implement embedded assessments (or some other appropriate methodology) in critical thinking, mathematics/quantitative reasoning, and American Institution classes.
4. Develop a clear strategy for dissemination of results of GE program assessment to faculty, administrators, and students.

Faculty and Instruction

1. Communicate General Education objectives and policies to faculty more effectively and consistently.
2. Faculty who teach GE courses should receive adequate information and guidance regarding the goals and learning objectives of the GE program. Possible methods to accomplish this are:
 - A. Orientation workshops for faculty who teach in the GE program for the first time to assure that there is a consistent philosophy and structure in the courses.
 - B. A training program for faculty who teach GE (possibly coordinated by CETL) that includes development of collaborative activities, information competency and service learning.
 - C. A GE Faculty Handbook that includes GE policies and course expectations.
 - D. A review process for faculty who teach GE, which verifies that the course meets the GE guidelines for content and instruction mode.
3. RTP documents should specifically emphasize that teaching and curricular development in GE is valued in category A by the University.
4. Hire more tenure track faculty, as called for in ACR 73, as this would result in more tenured and tenure-track faculty teaching GE.

Effective Retention Strategies

1. Provide GE advisement on a regular and consistent basis for undeclared students through the University Academic Advisement Center. Such advisement will assist these students in understanding the purpose and requirements of GE.
2. Provide college-based advisement centers with adequate funding so that they may be responsible for initial advising of all first time and transfer students and serve as the principal source for GE advisement of majors in their respective colleges.
3. Increase participation of faculty in GE advising including having a strong presence at student orientations, especially during the summer.
4. The Undergraduate Studies office should coordinate the IHE courses to ensure comparable experiences and that the courses compliment and reinforce the overall goals of the GE program.
5. Conduct “Stop-out/Drop-out” surveys annually on fall cohort groups to determine why student are not present the following fall.

Program Satisfaction

1. In order to identify potential roadblocks and impediments to graduation, and in order to facilitate better scheduling of GE courses, the Office for Institutional Research should provide annual data on the following:
 - A. The length of time it takes first-time freshmen to complete their GE requirements;
 - B. The percentage of transfer students who have completed their lower division GE prior to admission to the University;
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2. Provide, as recommended by the External Reviewers, future External Reviewers with the opportunity to meet and converse with students in both lower division and upper division GE courses. Because this did not occur under the current review, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, or his designee, should attempt to assess student understanding of GE.
 - A. Do students at CSULA understand why GE is required?
 - B. Do students accept the goals and objectives as important?

3. Provide adequate funding and administrative support for GE.

4. Abolish the voluntary Theme Coordinator position and establish a Faculty GE Program Coordinator who provides appropriate leadership, program advocacy, and on-going oversight. This should be a full-time 12 month faculty position. Drawing upon the successful UAAC and TPAC models, the responsibilities of the Coordinator should include:
 - A. Facilitate the proposal and review process for LD GE courses and UD GE Themes.
 - B. Monitor GE course scheduling to avoid curricular bottlenecks that may cause students to attend additional quarters to graduate.
 - C. Monitor the relationship between instructional mode and enrollment cap in GE courses to assure that the quality of interaction between faculty and students maximizes learning outcomes.
 - D. Facilitate coordination among the programs sponsoring theme courses, including course scheduling.
 - E. Oversee the review of student course substitution petitions and waivers.
 - F. Facilitate faculty development opportunities in GE.
 - G. Prepare and disseminate information about the GE program to students and faculty.
 - H. Act as a representative for the GE program to the university and the community.
 - I. Report to the Office of Undergraduate Studies.
 - J. Serve as a member of the General Education Subcommittee (GES).