

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kris Mullendore, Chair, ECS/UAS

CC: Robert Adams, Chair, UCC
Wendy Wenner, Dean, Brooks CoIS
Carol Griffin, Director, GE Program
GES Members

FROM: General Education Subcommittee—Roger Gilles, Chair

DATE: April 19, 2009

SUBJECT: GES Annual Report

The General Education Subcommittee of the University Curriculum Committee met 23 times this year (Mondays 2:30-4:30 p.m.) and can report on significant work in five areas:

Curricular Proposals: We considered 18 curricular proposals, approving nine and requesting amendments from nine. Two of the amendments are still outstanding, and we currently have two additional proposals ready for consideration.

Program Assessment: We continued into our third year of program-wide assessment, focusing this year on developing an effective and efficient way to respond to the Course Assessment Reports that faculty from some 180 GE courses have now completed. Roy Cole, a former GES member who worked extensively with GE assessment over the past several years, was assigned time to draft the initial CAR responses (or revise those drafted last winter and summer by Maria Cimitile), and we met with Roy several times both to improve the forms we have been using and to clarify the committee's practical and rhetorical intentions with the CAR responses. We discussed some of Maria's responses from last year, and Roy drafted some model responses, and the committee responded to them. Once we had all agreed on our approach, we began a process of sending each of Roy's drafts to two GES members for comments and approval. In this way, we have been able to respond to 80-100 CARs with a unified committee voice. Our next step in the assessment process is to begin drafting "category reports" that reflect on the assessment of all courses in each GE category or theme.

GES/GEC Proposal: We worked with ECS/UAS and UCC to complete our successful proposal to change the name and status of our group from a subcommittee to a regular standing committee of ECS/UAS. We appreciate the help and support from all involved, and we look forward to beginning the 2010-11 academic year as a regular committee.

Integration of GE and Basic Skills: Part of the GES/GEC proposal was to clarify our committee's relationship—in terms of oversight and assessment—with Basic Skills, so we also worked toward a fuller integration of GE and the university basic-skills requirements. As chair of GES, I met with the department chairs of Mathematics and Writing, and then the committee considered MTH 110, WRT 150, and WRT 305, as well as the SWS program, in our larger efforts to revise and possibly streamline the GE program and the GE assessment plan. We look forward to continuing this work next year.

GE Program Revisions: Much of our work this year focused on pursuing the three basic charges we received from ECS/UAS in August 2009: we continued considering 1) "plausible structural changes to the General Education program, taking into account the recent series of campus discussions concerning student success, time to graduation, and resource efficiency"; 2) "efficiencies on behalf of students by evaluating various program expectations"; and 3) "ways in which the program might broaden its notion of

themes including the possibility of adding appropriate minors or other alternatives—while adhering to the program’s core principles” (ECS memo, 8/28/09).

In December, we sent an interim report to ECS on our work in these areas. There, we reported that we had returned to the original 1998-2000 documents related to the development of the current GE program and gauged our commitment to the various goals and components of the entire program, in particular the Themes program. We then considered a number of possible structural revisions to the program, including those floated in 2008-09 by Larry Burns and the Student Senate. We also invited Brian Kipp, chair of a task force to develop an interdisciplinary minor in the Health Sciences, to a GE committee meeting to explore the details of using such minors as Themes. We then developed a very general draft proposal to revise both the structure of the Themes and the way various skill and content goals are implemented within the GE program.

Also in the Fall semester, in response to suggestions made at the faculty forums we held in March 2009, we worked with Maria Cimitile in the Provost’s office to survey all programs and departments on campus about the extent to which they teach and assess the current GE skill and content goals, as well as several AAC&U LEAP goals not currently a part of GE, within their majors. The committee discussed the survey results late in the Fall semester and early in the Winter semester.

Going into Winter semester, then, our intention was to develop a draft proposal with five broad goals:

- 1) significantly revise the upper-level component of the GE program
- 2) integrate the current Basic Skills goals into the GE program as a whole
- 3) continue to integrate AAC&U high-impact educational practices into the GE program (for more on this, please see <http://www.aacu.org/leap/hip.cfm>)
- 4) add four AAC&U LEAP goals (teamwork, problem-solving, civic engagement, and ethical reasoning) to the GE program
- 5) redistribute the teaching and assessment goals of the GE program so that individual courses can focus on fewer goals even while the program pursues more goals overall

Over the course of the semester, we discussed many possible structural models, continually reflecting back on our program goals. At each step, we considered ways to streamline the program, achieve program goals more efficiently, and possibly reduce the overall number of credits students need in order to achieve the goals of the GE program. We are still considering two or three broad possibilities, and we have resolved to assign a task force of four or five GES members the summer job of more fully researching and articulating the strengths, weaknesses, and realities of each element of the models under consideration. We believe that this summer work will allow the committee as a whole to reach a consensus fairly quickly in Fall 2010—and at that point we will be ready to report again to ECS/UAS and, most importantly, initiate a broader conversation within the larger university community.

Before closing, I would like to note that our work this year has been helped immeasurably by the addition of Krista Rye as a COT with time assigned to the GE program. Last year, GES decided to alter the style of its minutes, adopting a more discursive and detailed format, and Krista has handled that transition for us. She has also helped us keep track of the many brainstorming ideas we have generated over the course of the year.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the fine work done by Charlie Lowe of the Writing department as he served as Interim Director of GE in Fall 2009. Charlie used his organizational skills and document-design expertise to help us make our assessment materials more useful and efficient. And, as always, we wish to thank Carol “Griff” Griffin, Director of GE, for her constant support and encouragement.

We look forward to continuing our work in 2010-11.