

MEMORANDUM

TO: Figen Mekik, Chair, ECS/UAS

CC: Robert Adams, Chair, University Curriculum Committee
Maria Cimitile, Academic Program & Curriculum Development Officer
C. Griff Griffin, Director, General Education Program
Wendy Wenner, Dean, Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies

FROM: General Education Committee—Roger Gilles, Chair

DATE: April 16, 2012

SUBJECT: GEC Annual Report

The General Education Committee met 22 times this year (Mondays 2:30-4:30 p.m.) and can report progress in three areas:

GE Program Revisions: Our major accomplishment of the year surely was the UAS approval on January 27 of the proposal to revise the GE program. This was the culmination of at least three and a half years' work, and while in some ways it marks a "halfway point" in terms of actually implementing the revisions, we were nonetheless greatly relieved to have reached this point.

During the 2011-12 academic year, the GEC engaged in or sponsored many activities related to the proposal. In summer 2011, working groups comprising faculty from around campus developed materials related to the proposed goals of ethical reasoning, collaboration, and problem solving; a fourth working group persuaded itself (and GEC) to forego the civic responsibility goal that had been part of earlier drafts of the proposal. Then in Fall 2011, the GEC and FTLC co-sponsored workshops for faculty interested in learning more about the proposed goals. During this time, an *ad hoc* group proposed that we add the quantitative literacy goal, and members of GEC worked with that group to develop materials related to that goal. Once all of the proposed goals had been fleshed out, the GEC surveyed all units on campus to see how able and willing they were to teach each goal, and we used the results of the survey to develop a new "distribution plan" that provided individual courses with choices from among the various GE skills goals.

In October 2011, the GEC sponsored campus-wide forums on the proposed revisions to the upper-level "Themes" component. Based on earlier feedback as well as feedback from these forums, the GEC ended up proposing a new "Issues" component that would feature the skills goals of collaboration, problem solving, and integration. During this time, the GEC also met with representatives from the Study Abroad office and agreed on a plan to include Study Abroad as a possible substitute for the "Issues" component.

Throughout the fall, the GEC sponsored a Blackboard discussion board where faculty, staff, and students could respond to and ask questions about the evolving proposal. The GEC closely monitored this discussion, responding directly at times, and many of the comments and suggestions were integrated into the near-final draft proposal we posted on November 1. Then, after one more round of response and revision, we completed the final proposal and submitted it to UAS on November 28.

Since the proposal passed on January 27 and was subsequently approved by the provost, the GEC has turned its attention to the implementation phase and transition plan. Implementation consists of two simultaneous efforts: 1) helping units and faculty of Foundations and Cultures courses learn about and adapt their courses to the new distribution of skills goals, and 2) helping units and faculty learn about and

begin proposing Issues courses for the new upper-level component. The first effort is underway within GEC, and in Fall 2012 we will involve units and faculty, and our plan is to have all Foundations and Cultures courses teaching and assessing the new goals by Fall 2013. The second effort is also underway; in summer 2012, the GEC and FTLC are co-sponsoring a course-development process that will result in some 50-55 course proposals for new Issues courses that could be offered as soon as Fall 2013. Our plan is to add about the same number of courses for Fall 2014. The full program needs to be up to capacity by Fall 2016.

The transition plan can be summarized briefly: By Fall 2013, the Foundations and Cultures courses will have transitioned to the new distribution plan; each course will be responsible for two skills goals from a list of four possibilities. Also by Fall 2013, the first Issues courses will be available to students as an alternative to Theme courses. By Fall 2014, all entering students (incoming freshmen and transfer students) will be required to take Issues courses, not Theme courses (but of course the freshmen will not be ready for those 300- and 400-level courses for at least a year or two). By Fall 2016, we expect the full program to be up and running, with well over 100 Issues courses—and hundreds of sections—available for students. The original Theme courses will eventually be phased out of the GE program as pre-2014 students graduate.

Curricular Proposals: Perhaps because of the activity surrounding the proposal, 2011-12 was a slow year for GE curricular proposals. We considered just 12 proposals, approving eight on first consideration and requesting amendments from four. Three of the amended courses have now been approved, and one is still outstanding.

Assessment: We completed our fifth year of program-wide assessment. Joan Borst, a Social Work faculty member with significant assessment experience, was assigned time to draft responses to ongoing Course Assessment Reports from the first rounds of GE assessment. Because of the program revisions, we have agreed to suspend the assessment cycle for 2012-13 and return to it in Fall 2013, when the new goals will begin appearing in GE courses.

It was a busy and productive year. As we have in the past, we wish to thank Krista McFarland, GE Office Coordinator, C. “Griff” Griffin, Director of GE, and Maria Cimitile, our ex-officio designee from the provost’s office, for their efforts throughout the year to facilitate and support the work of the committee. And we also wish to thank past ECS chair Kris Mullendore and current ECS chair Figen Mekik for their help as we all navigated the complicated process of proposing these major revisions. Thank you.