

JOINT SPECIAL REPORT

Of the

ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL

and the

GENERAL EDUCATION COUNCIL

concerning

MODIFICATIONS IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

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RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING MODIFICATION OF
THE GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

- I. **INTRODUCTION.** This is an initial report of the Academic Matters Council (AMC) concerning a review of the General Education Program. The review and a report were requested by the Rules Committee during the Summer of 1989. The Chancellor and the Provost endorsed the request.

Critical input and suggestions received by AMC from a large number of respondents reveal an overwhelming consensus in favor of the General Education Program across the Campus. The support is perhaps even stronger now than when the Program was established just four years ago (Sen. Doc. No. 85-024). The compelling arguments advanced in the submissions by faculty, students and administrators, and consultations with faculty and administrators in the Sub-Committee hearings led the Council to reiterate its strong support for the General Education Program, both in philosophy and programmatic structure (including the laboratory experience in the original proposal).

The respondents also brought a variety of concerns, issues and problems to the attention of AMC. The Council believes that these, in part, are due to inadequate funding of the Program even in its inception. It is true that the budget crisis, irrational as it is, has called for adjustments and sacrifices, and occasioned severe inconveniences; but none so serious as to suggest abandoning the Program. Particularly gratifying is a strong sense of continued commitment expressed by the faculty and administrators in spite of the fiscal crisis.

The AMC will present its findings and recommendations at different stages during the current academic year. **There is, however, one problem which demands immediate attention. Despite dramatic growth in the number of seats in available courses (see Table 1), the severe shortage of spaces in courses meeting the Historical Studies (HS) and Social & Cultural Diversity (D) requirements could affect the normal graduation dates of a large number of our students.** The General Education Council (GEC) has been concerned with this problem for quite some time. This Joint Special Report is the result of the strong overlap of perceptions and proposed solutions arrived at independently by both Councils.

The Report urges that two steps be taken now:

1. Broadening the process of designating the Diversity (D) courses. This would not change the philosophy and goals of the requirement nor the rigor in awarding the designation, but would recognize that more courses are worthy of the designation than current procedures allow.

2. Reducing the HS requirement from two courses to one. This recommendation, needless to say, is made with the greatest reluctance. It might tend to diminish the quality of undergraduate education. Given the budget crisis, one cannot expect, however, that sufficient new course spaces can be created in the immediate future. The Councils also recommend that an automatic review take place no later than three years after the implementation of the proposed change, and hope that the second HS course requirement can be reinstated as soon as possible.

The Councils and the Senate are operating under a time pressure. It is important to alleviate the problems of oversubscription of HS and D courses in time for the coming Spring 1990 semester; and December 1 is the deadline for the 1990/91 Undergraduate Catalog. We therefore urge speedy action.

- II. **DETAILED RATIONALE & PROPOSALS.** 1. Oversubscribed Courses. For the past few semesters, courses with HS and D designations have been highly oversubscribed. Most of the responses received by AMC have identified this oversubscription as the major problem of our General Education Program. Table 1 presents the evidence quantitatively. No serious problem exists in other areas. The course capacity level in these is either higher than attempted enrollment or the shortfall is relatively small. The two problem curriculum areas (HS & D) are addressed below.

2. Historical Studies Requirement. Course access in the HS area has been a serious problem, worsening progressively over the past five semesters. While a number of departments offer courses which fulfill the present two-course HS requirement, the bulk of the enrollment pressures have fallen on the History Department. Without the prospect of additional resources in the near future, it is unrealistic to expect that these pressures can be met within the currently available resources. We believe that the only reasonable solution for this particular problem is to reduce the Historical Studies requirement from two courses to one. We do not believe, however, that the number of General Education credits should be reduced. The current 12 course requirement would seem to be the minimum amount that we should require, and represents the minimum number of degree credits in General Education specified in the guidelines recently released by the Board of Regents.

We recommend that another requirement should be substituted for the second HS course. In particular, we propose that such a substitute be an elective from the Social World courses or those with an Interdisciplinary (I) designation. This policy does not preclude students from taking 2 HS courses. It broadens the possibilities. The flexibility thus provided should significantly help alleviate the present problem.

3. Social & Cultural Diversity Requirement. The Diversity component of our General Education Program has been a unique and valued feature. It has

brought us national attention and acclaim. We believe that everything within reason should be done to maintain the current two-course requirement in Social & Cultural Diversity.

As noted above, the course oversubscription in this area is a serious problem. Approximately 2400 students (Table 1) could not obtain access to a Social and Cultural Diversity course during the current semester (Fall 1989). It should also be noted (Table 1) that the capacity of D courses has more than doubled since Fall 1987, as additional courses have been approved and capacities of courses have been increased. Nevertheless, some action must be taken to increase capacity in Social and Cultural Diversity offerings if the requirement is to remain in effect.

Part of the problem stems from the fact that Social and Cultural Diversity (D) is a second designation within the General Education curriculum as mandated by Fac. Sen. Doc. 85-024. Before a course can be considered for the "D" designation it must first receive approval for a specific Social World designation (Social and Behavioral Sciences, Arts, Arts/Literature, or Historical Studies) or for the Interdisciplinary designation. On several occasions in recent years, this dual designation requirement has resulted in course proposals being turned down for General Education because they did not meet the guidelines of the primary designation, despite the fact that they would have been able to fulfill the requirements for a Diversity designation alone.

Consequently, we believe that the shortage of capacity in Social and Cultural Diversity courses could be eased if there were a single designation alternative in addition to the current dual designation possibility. We, therefore, propose to allow for a stand-alone Diversity (D) designation, which could be attached to any appropriate departmental course (with the approval of the General Education Council). This allowance would not change the current system of dual designation or the dual designations that have already been granted. It would permit departments to propose a single Diversity (D) designation on additional courses, which students would then be able to choose as a way of fulfilling the Diversity requirement. For some students, but clearly not all, this option might be valuable. We are also proposing that students be allowed to use only one Diversity course in their own major (with a single or dual Diversity designation) to fulfill the Diversity component of General Education.

The original reason for dual designated courses in the Social World was not that diversity courses could be taught only in those areas. The rationale was that students would not have to take more than a limited number of courses to satisfy the General Education requirements. Therefore, allowing for stand-alone D courses does not violate the philosophy nor the rigor of the Diversity requirement. Since the dual designation will continue, and such courses will continue to be taught, no student should find it more difficult to satisfy the

Diversity requirements as a result of the new policy. In fact, the new policy may make it easier for a number of students to complete the requirement by being able to use a stand-alone D course. This policy would have an added advantage in that it encourages departments to incorporate issues of Social & Cultural Diversity into their curricula when feasible, and to propose additional stand-alone D courses should they so desire.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS. The AMC and GEC recommend unanimously that the current Social World requirements of the General Education Program be modified as follows (the changes denoted in bold face):

A. SOCIAL WORLD. Six courses are required, distributed as follows.

- (i) One course in Literature (AL).
- (ii) One course in the Arts (AT) or a second course in AL.
- (iii) **One course in Historical Studies (HS).**
- (iv) Two courses in the Social & Behavioral Sciences (SB).
- (v) **A sixth course which may be any Social World (AL, AT, HS, SB) or Interdisciplinary (I) course.**

B. DIVERSITY. Two courses with a Diversity designation are required.

- (i) This requirement may be satisfied by two dual-designated courses: ALD, ATD, HSD, SBD or ID.
- (ii) **An alternative means is to use stand-alone D course(s).**
- (iii) **Students using stand-alone D courses must still satisfy the 6-course Social World requirements as stated in III.A. above.**
- (iv) **Only one Diversity course in the major may be applied toward satisfying the two-course Diversity requirement.**

C. In addition to Junior Writing, only one other course in the major may be counted toward fulfilling the General Education requirements in the areas of Analytical Reasoning (R2), Biological & Physical World, and the Social World.

D. The modifications stated in III.A. & III.B above should be reviewed by AMC and GEC within a period of three years, and recommendations made as to whether such modifications should be continued.

**MOVED:
11-90** That the Faculty Senate approve the recommendations of the Academic Matters Council and the General Education Council regarding modifications of the Social World, and Social & Cultural Diversity requirements (Sen. Do. No. 85-024) of General Education as set forth in Sen. Doc. No. 90-015. Such modifications should be reviewed by these Councils within a period of three years. The modified requirements will be effective immediately and apply to all students who are under the General Education requirements.

Table 1

General Education Courses: Capacities and Attempted Enrollments

Curriculum Area	Fall 1987			Spring 1988			Fall 1988			Spring 1989			Fall 1989		
	Capacity	Attempt Enroll	Diff.	Capacity	Attempt Enroll	Diff.	Capacity	Attempt Enroll	Diff.	Capacity	Attempt Enroll	Diff.	Capacity	Attempt Enroll	Diff.
Arts/Literature	3,538	4,217	-679	2,706	3,364	-658	4,302	5,520	-1,218	3,704	4,451	-747	5,258	5,491	-233
Arts	3,695	2,902	793	3520	2,616	904	3,641	3,406	235	3,481	2,881	600	2,240	2,601	-361
Historical Studies	3,742	4,452	-710	3832	4,547	-715	4,701	5,321	-620	4,770	6,085	-1,315	4,934	6,244	-1,310
Social and Behavioral	11,781	11,652	129	11,723	8,497	3,226	11,304	11,325	-21	10,264	8,931	1,333	12,756	11,405	1,351
Social/Cultural Diversity (A)	4,484	5,102	-618	4,777	5,885	-1,108	6,067	7,336	-1,269	5,888	8,670	-2,782	8,449	10,828	-2,379
Physical Sciences	5,172	4,224	948	5,772	4,997	775	5,706	4,971	735	6,086	5,144	942	6,036	5,037	999
Biological Sciences	3,906	3,957	-51	3,329	3,044	285	5,467	5,413	54	4,586	4,177	409	5,793	5,238	555
Basic Math Skills/Tier I (B)	929	920	9	922	753	169	979	982	-3	802	736	66	935	999	-64
Analytic Reasoning/Tier II (B)	7,381	6,671	710	6,786	5,885	901	7,870	7,326	544	6,509	6,110	399	7,543	7,001	542
Interdisciplinary	683	587	96	385	230	155	441	389	52	280	262	18	1,166	773	393
GENERAL ED TOTALS (C)	40,827	39,582	1,245	38,975	33,933	5,042	44,411	44,653	-242	40,482	38,777	1,705	46,661	44,789	1,872

Sources:

Fall 1987: Final Management Report

Spring 1988: 12/04/97 Management Report

Fall 1988: Capacities Based on 8/31/88 Scheduled Counts, Attempted Enrollments Based on 7/23/88 Management Report

Spring 1989: 12/01/99 Management Report

Fall 1989: Final Management Report

(A) Social/Cultural Diversity: Includes courses with component designation in all Social World curriculum areas (Arts/Literature, Arts, Historical Studies, Social & Behavioral Sciences, and Interdisciplinary area.)

(B) NOTE: Capacities for Basic Math/Tier I and Analytic Reasoning/Tier II are derived from Scheduled Counts Reports from each semester, as the Department of Mathematics and Statistics significantly adjusts capacities to demand before the final scheduler is run.

(C) GENERAL EDUCATION TOTALS: Sum of all curriculum areas. The Social and Cultural Diversity courses are included in their respective curriculum area categories (Arts/Literature, Arts, Historical Studies, Social & Behavioral Sciences, and Interdisciplinary).