UMass Amherst General Education: Original Goals and Learning Objectives

FROM: Original 1985 General Education Legislation (Revised 2001 & 2005):
http://www.umass.edu/senate/fs_docs/SEN_DOC_NO_85-024B_GEN_ED.pdf

O: General Education Program Overall

OC: Gen Ed Courses/Curriculum Expectations:

1. Should encompass some reasonable fraction of the totality of human knowledge, insight, and interpretation.
2. Should involve critical or analytical thinking; writing and problem solving should be the norm rather than the exception.
3. Should provide contexts for questioning the larger society and the students' relation to it.
4. Address the complex ways in which societies and cultures differ from one another [from Social and Diversity Component discussion – but stated as a general goal for Gen Ed].
5. Provide all students with some enhanced capacity for analytic reasoning [from Analytic Reasoning section – but stated as a general goal for Gen Ed].

OL: Student Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge of the historical development of society
2. Awareness of one's society as it exists today
3. Awareness of societies other than one's own
4. Appreciation of science and the scientific method
5. Ability to reason mathematically and quantitatively
6. Ability to express one's thoughts in writing
7. Appreciation of literature and the arts
8. Breadth of Knowledge
9. [the best a student can expect from an U.G. course of study] is to learn how to learn &
10. Appreciate the value of learning
11. Students learn how natural scientists, social scientists, humanists, and performing artists think about their disciplines &…
12. How natural scientists, etc.,. view their work in relation to both history and contemporary society
13. Capacity for critical thought includes the ability to imagine the consequences of one's choices, to articulate those consequences, and to increase understanding of one's relation to the world of nature, work, and politics
14. Awareness of the world around them [from Biological and Physical World section, but stated as a general goal for Gen Ed]

OP: Educational Purposes (Application/Post-College Outcomes)

1. [appreciation of scientific method is advantageous] for survival and participation in the modern world
2. [appreciation of literature and arts]—fields that explore, interpret, and evaluate the life of the imagination
3. Development of an intelligent citizenry
4. [In section on Analytic Reasoning – but reflects broader applied goals]: Without certain basic skills in quantitative and analytic reasoning, full participation in modern society is difficult; indeed, an adequate appreciation of the information content of a daily newspaper often requires certain numeracy skills.

Social World

Overall

C. Pedagogy/Course includes

1. Focus on human beliefs and the fields of knowledge devoted to gaining insight into a world created by human beings with important consequences for their activities as individuals and as members of a larger group.
2. All courses in the social world should include a writing requirement because regular practice in writing encourages clear thinking and clear expression.

D. Learning Goals

1. Broaden students' understanding of humanity.
2. Understanding the social world that we have created and which constitutes our own social reality.

Social and Behavioral Sciences (SB)

A. Pedagogy/Course includes

1. Insights about the explanations for and causes of human behavior, the nature of human societies, the structure of social relationships, and the ways in which people and societies change [should help students think more clearly about their own human nature and the social worlds in which they live].
2. Introduce students to theory, methods, and results of systematic and critical inquiry about individual and social life;
3. Demonstrate the dynamic nature of both individuals and societies leading to an understanding of change as a natural process.
4. Stress the systematic quality of individual and social life.

B. Learning Goals

1. Educated individuals should have some understanding of this reciprocity (that people are both creatures and creators of their own societies).
2. They should appreciate the diversity that exists in human societies.
3. Students think more clearly about their own human nature and the social worlds in which they live.
4. Help them plan more effectively for their futures.
5. May help shape the future of our own society in positive ways.
6. Understanding of the complex relationship among individual behaviors, human situations, and social institutions.

Social and Cultural Diversity (U or G)

A. Pedagogy/Course includes

1. Encourage pluralistic perspectives.
2. Courses that focus on the different life experiences of women outside the mainstream of American culture, minorities outside the mainstream of American culture, and the poor also come within the scope of this requirement.

B. Learning Goals

1. Educated individuals should be guided by attitudes which value cultural differences.
2. Their perspectives on and communication with people of different cultures, both within their own society and in other societies, should emanate from an understanding of cultural diversity rather than from applying ethnocentric stereotypes.
3. Understand that different cultures and societies provide unique contexts for human experience.
4. Analyze and appreciate the ways in which norms and values differ across cultures and societies.
5. Sensitivity to social and cultural diversity.
6. Understanding of the dynamics of power in modern societies.

Social World (continued)

The Arts (AT & AL)

A. Pedagogy/Course includes

1. Courses consider the production, performance, function, and aesthetic evaluation of the arts – visual, aural, verbal, and plastic – in relation to one another and to the societies that have and will produce them.
2. Designed to provoke comparison and critical acuity.
3. May provide participatory experiences such as projects, performances, and attendance at plays, etc.,.
4. Encourage verbal expression through writing exercises.

B. Learning Goals

1. Appreciation of literature and the arts.
2. Explore, interpret, and evaluate the life of the imagination.

Historical Studies (HS)

A. Pedagogy/Course includes

1. Necessarily focus on human interaction in specific situations developing through time.
2. Offer a sufficient breadth of scope and time to consider the development of significant social, political, or economic institutions or ideologies.
3. Can encourage students to "do" history by enabling them to consider their personal, family, or community histories as an introduction to broader historical events and processes.

B. Learning Goals

1. Enable students to learn about significant historical developments and processes; &…
2. Gain an awareness of and appreciation of an historical perspective.
3. Expose students to historically important events, developments, or processes as a way of teaching them to understand the present and direct their futures.

Biological and Physical World (PS, BS)

A. Pedagogy/Course Includes

1. Exposure to the world of nature.
2. The ideal is for each course to provide students with the opportunity to do experiments, make observations, record facts, and evaluate and interpret data.
3. Therefore, at least one course must have a laboratory component
4. Include some historical material showing the evolution of the science and how its fundamental theories were formulated.
5. Illustrate the scientific method, giving some indication of the most fundamental facts and observations and how these are used to build general principles.
6. Address relevance of the science and its impact on society.

B. Learning Goals

1. A well educated person should have some knowledge of the biological and physical sciences and the theories that have been developed to explain and understand in a coherent way the great diversity of nature.
2. Appreciation of scientific method is advantageous for survival and participation in the modern world.

Analytic Reasoning (R1, R2)

A. Pedagogy/Course includes

1. A course in mathematical, analytic, quantitative, formal, or numerical reasoning is required.
2. Tier II courses include courses in formal logic, formal linguistics, computer programming or applications, statistics, quantitative research methods, data analysis, etc.; course is deemed adequate if it is demonstrably useful in: (1) advancing students' formal or mathematical reasoning skills beyond the level of basic competence; (2) increasing students' sophistication as a consumer of numerical information; (3) providing computer literacy. Normally, courses will also indicate something of the limits of formal, numerical, quantitative, or analytic reasoning and will discuss the potential for the abuse of numerical arguments.

B. Learning Goals

1. Increasingly the world is full of numerical information that every educated person must learn to process, evaluate, and understand.
2. Without certain basic skills in quantitative and analytic reasoning, full participation in modern society is difficult; indeed, an adequate appreciation of the information content of a daily newspaper often requires certain numeracy skills.
3. Demonstration of basic competence in college level mathematical reasoning (like computing area, solving linear equations, or manipulating fractions).
4. R2 courses may deal primarily with symbolic rather than numerical applications of analytic reasoning.