

May 9, 2001

**Revised November 12, 2002 (see below)**

TO: General Education Advisory Committee

FROM: Scott G. McNall  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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Vice Provost for Academic Affairs  
Dean of Undergraduate Education

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Understanding: Administration of General Education Policy

Upon recommendation of the General Education Advisory Committee and the concurrence of the President, I approve the following criteria and procedures, effective fall 2001, to be used in the administration of the General Education Policy established by Executive Memorandum 99-05. This document supersedes AAO 90-13.

**Revised November 12, 2002 (see below)**

**ADMINISTRATION OF GENERAL EDUCATION POLICY  
California State University, Chico**

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The current policy for the General Education program at California State University, Chico is embodied in [Executive Memorandum 99-05](#), enacted during the fall 1999 semester. While EM 99-05 refers to the principles underlying CSU, Chico's GE program, this memorandum speaks to the implementation of these principles.

The criteria for implementation are the result of extended discussions by faculty, staff and students, which began in parallel with the development of EM 99-05 and have continued as the new policy has been put into place.

The procedures and guidelines which follow are arranged by five broad categories of application. These criteria pertain to all relevant courses identified by EM 99-05 and to the operation of the General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC), and conform to applicable State requirements contained in Title 5 of the *California Code of Regulations* and [Executive Order 595 General Education -- Breadth Requirements](#).

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1. The General Education Program: General issues affecting the whole of the GE program.
2. General Education Courses: Criteria specific to course offerings.
3. Approval and Review: Procedures to be used when proposing new courses, Upper Division Themes, and Breadth Clusters, and for submitting materials for periodic review of the GE program.
4. GEAC Responsibilities: Guidelines for GEAC activities.
5. GEAC Composition: Procedures to be followed for election of GEAC faculty representatives and for periodic formation of course review subcommittees.

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### 1. The General Education Program

1.1. The program will exhibit a diversity of courses taken by the students.

1.2. The program will allow reasonable use of double counting (e.g., a course which concurrently satisfies GE and major program requirements), making certain no skill or content goal is systematically neglected for any group of students.

1.3. Students may apply to their GE requirements no more than two courses from any one department in either Area C or D.

#### **General Education Program, Size Limitations**

1.4. The Core and Breadth Areas are collectively limited to 175 different courses (not individual course sections). Standard limitations are provided for individual GE Areas and which account for 155 courses.

#### Core

1. Area A: 15 courses maximum

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#### Breadth

- Area B: 25 courses maximum
- Areas C and D: 50 courses maximum, each
- Area E: 15 courses maximum

Up to a total of twenty additional courses above the sum of these categorical limitations may be proposed by faculty, recommended by GEAC, and approved at the Provost's discretion.

1.5. The following procedures will be followed when counting courses in each category:

- Breadth Cluster courses and limited-term courses will not be counted (although no more than twenty limited-term courses may exist at any given time);
- for sequential courses, only the first course will be counted (e.g., SPAN 001 is counted, but SPAN 002, 003 and 004 are not);
- cross-listed courses will be counted as one course;

- Honors courses having associate non-Honors courses will not be counted; and
- courses designed to meet specific programmatic needs will not be counted.

A course will be defined as meeting a programmatic need if the course serves a special student audience while there is a similar course for general student enrollment (e.g., PHYS 004A is programmatic, while PHYS 002A is not) or if the course solely serves a specific program (e.g., EFL courses).

1.6. There is no specified limit to the number of Upper-Division Themes, Theme courses, and non-GE Cultural Diversity courses. In these cases, the number will be limited by student demand and the need to make an essential contribution to the GE program. A proposed addition will be considered essential if it satisfies a previously unmet need and satisfies all relevant criteria.

## 2. General Education Courses

The GE program described by EM 99-05 consists of GE courses which fall into one of three specified categories: Core courses, Breadth courses, and Upper Division Theme courses. Some of these GE courses may also be designated as Cultural Diversity courses, and must concurrently satisfy applicable GE and Cultural Diversity criteria. However, other Cultural Diversity courses satisfy only the Cultural Diversity criteria, and are commonly referred to as "non-GE" Cultural Diversity courses.

The following course criteria are organized so as to reflect their applicability to the following categories:

- all courses in the General Education program -- including GE courses and non-GE Cultural Diversity courses;
- General Education courses -- excluding non-GE Cultural Diversity courses; and
- Cultural Diversity courses -- including all Cultural Diversity courses, whether GE or non-GE.

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### All Courses in the General Education Program

2.1. Courses will be numbered at levels 1-199.

**2.1 Revised** (2-4-04; for courses effective fall 2005) Courses will be numbered at levels 100-399, i.e., Core courses will normally be numbered at level 100-199, but with justification may be numbered at level 200-299; Breadth courses will normally be numbered at levels 100-299, but with justification may be numbered at level 300-399; Upper-Division Theme courses will be numbered at level 300-399; non-GE Cultural Diversity courses will be numbered at levels 100-399. Other protocols for course numbering also apply to courses in the GE program (EM 03-21).

2.2. Core, Breadth, and non-GE Cultural Diversity courses should rarely have prerequisites, while Upper Division Theme courses should be limited to prerequisites associated with the Theme (such as a foundation course) and/or completion of a GE Breadth Area or Sub-Area. (EM 99-05 specifies that

completion of the GE Core is prerequisite to enrollment in any Upper Division Theme.)

2.3. Each course will preferably be taught every semester but will minimally be taught every academic year. Any course not taught for any continuous two-year period will be automatically dropped from the program.

2.4. Enrollment in each course section will normally exhibit a diversity of students from different majors.

2.5. Each course section will ordinarily be available for enrollment by any qualified student, regardless of major. Enrollment priority, either explicit or implicit, for any special group is not acceptable, unless a course solely serves a specific program (e.g., EFL courses and courses in the GE Course Link program).

2.6. Each section of multi-sectioned courses must meet all applicable criteria, have multi-section coordination, and have its faculty meet regularly to ensure uniformity in meeting program requirements. Courses will also have coordination from semester to semester to ensure long-term uniformity, both in content and rigor. (These requirements do not imply that different offerings of a course must be identical.)

#### **Course Assessment**

2.7. Each course in the GE program will have an assessment plan, which will evaluate whether students achieve the learning outcomes identified for the course. The assessment plan will be employed each time a course is offered. As course assessment is also valuable to the overall assessment of the GE program, summary evidence of course assessment will be provided during periodic GE program reviews.

2.8. The goal of course assessment is, ultimately, to improve the quality of the learning environment. Faculty should consider what practical information they will need to determine whether or not course objectives and learning outcomes are met.

2.9. Course assessment will address applicable categories of learning outcomes: subject matter learning goals; GE program goals; fundamental GE Core and Breadth goals; specific Sub-Area goals; Upper Division Theme and Theme course goals; and Cultural Diversity goals. Subject matter learning goals will be determined by the host faculty of the course, while all other goals are determined by EM 99-05. While GE courses must address all pertinent GE learning outcomes, non-GE Cultural Diversity courses need address only applicable Cultural Diversity learning outcomes.

2.10. Each course assessment plan will contain the following identifiable components: collection of assessment information; summary and analysis of assessment information; and application of the assessment results to the betterment of the learning environment and of the assessment plan. A variety of different assessment means and sampling techniques should be considered (e.g., written and oral student surveys, portfolios, student and faculty reflective writings, summaries of discussions by course faculty). A course assessment plan does not need to provide an exhaustive assessment each time a course is offered, but must provide a cumulative comprehensive assessment between periodic GE program reviews.

## **General Education Courses**

**2.11.** The syllabus for each GE course section will include, but will not be limited to, the following information: the GE requirements satisfied by the course, the significance of the course with respect to relevant goals and objectives of the General Education program, any special course requirements which may be dictated by the GE program (e.g., the writing requirement, attendance at public events for Area C courses), a listing of course topics, and descriptions of relevant expectations and grading policies.

**2.12.** Each GE course section will have a writing requirement (at least 2500 words, total, for each three units of credit), or comparable problem or laboratory requirement, in the genres and forms appropriate to the discipline. This requirement is intended to engage students in a rigorous study of the bodies of knowledge represented by the course, including the ways in which writing constructs and communicates knowledge. Multiple graded writing assignments are required, at least one of which is to be returned to students prior to the due dates of the later assignments. ([link to additional information](#))

**2.13.** Each GE course section will require some significant, written work the first week of each semester, or as soon as is reasonable, and the work will be returned to students with informative feedback as soon as is practical. This requirement is intended to collect information from students about their entry skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes, and to provide students initial feedback on coursework expectations.

**2.14.** GE Breadth Clusters will incorporate purposeful coordination of content, focused on a prevalent topic viewed from different disciplinary perspectives, and will consist of a course block or a group of courses addressing multiple GE Breadth Areas and Sub-Areas.

**2.15.** It will be the responsibility of the coordinator of each Upper Division Theme to ensure Theme integration and to sustain an understanding among faculty about the role their courses play in the Theme. This may be accomplished by individual or group consultation with Theme faculty, or by holding Theme faculty meetings to share syllabi and ideas on topics, focus, and other issues beneficial to student learning and integration of the Theme, including course assessment.

## **Cultural Diversity Courses**

**2.16.** Cultural Diversity courses will continue to be designated as either "Ethnic" or "Non-Western," where an Ethnic course will focus "on one or more U.S. ethnic groups that are distinct from the dominant U.S. culture" and a Non-Western course will focus "on non-U.S. culture(s) distinct from the dominant U.S. and European experience," per EM 99-05.

### **3. Approval and Review**

The following criteria apply to all components of the GE program, including non-GE Cultural Diversity courses.

#### **Proposal Process**

**3.1.** Course, Upper Division Theme, and Breadth Cluster proposals will be accepted cyclically as each component of the GE program is scheduled for review.

**3.2.** After a proposed course has acquired all other university approvals applicable to a new course, it must then be submitted to the General Education Advisory Committee for review. GEAC will refer the course to the relevant course review subcommittee, which will in turn advise GEAC on how well the course fits the applicable criteria and goals.

**3.3.** Out-of-sequence proposals may be brought forward at the discretion of the Provost or designee, but only when specific circumstances exist, i.e., the proposal is experimental, unique, and/or essential.

**3.4.** Proposals for out-of-sequence review must be submitted to the Provost or designee by the end of the eighth week of the semester in which the review is requested, following which all out-of-sequence reviews will be conducted concurrently by GEAC, with completion prior to the end of the respective semester.

**3.5.** Faculty may propose "limited-term" GE courses. These courses may be proposed as 098 or 198 courses by means of existing approval processes and University guidelines, followed by GEAC review and recommendation, and the Provost's determination. This avenue should be considered for courses addressing transient topics and for experimental courses. In order to continue in the GE program, experimental courses must procure comprehensive curricular approvals prior to conclusion of the experimental term.

#### **Materials to be Submitted to GEAC**

**3.6.** In order for a course to qualify for consideration or continuation in the General Education program, the host department must:

- demonstrate that the course satisfies all relevant criteria and goals for GE program categories targeted by the course;
- provide a description of the course objectives and requirements, assignments, a reading list, a course syllabus, and a course outline;
- provide samples of graded student work exhibiting a range of achievement and illustrating assignments addressing all relevant GE program content criteria; and
- provide a course assessment plan and summarized results from application of the plan.

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Previously untaught courses need not provide sample student work nor assessment results (although an assessment plan is required), and will normally be considered only for experimental status. Courses previously taught outside of the GE program need not provide assessment results, although an assessment plan is required. Multi-sectioned courses, including co-listed Honors courses, must provide samples of materials (i.e., syllabi, student work, assessment) representative of all sections.

**3.7.** In order for an Upper Division Theme or a Breadth Cluster to qualify for consideration or continuation in the General Education program, the responsible

faculty must provide evidence, including an analytical narrative, describing how the Theme or Cluster satisfies all relevant content and organizational criteria.

**3.8.** Courses designated as GE Honors courses must meet all applicable GE program criteria and, additionally, must provide enrichments and enhanced quality appropriate to high achieving students. GE Honors courses must clearly demonstrate the distinct nature of the Honors experience.

### **Reviews**

**3.9.** GEAC will rank courses, Upper Division Themes, and Breadth Clusters by category (e.g., recommend, recommend with reservations, and not recommend) for inclusion in the General Education program and will provide the list to the Provost, who then makes the final determination.

**3.10.** Any course in the General Education program may be reviewed at any time by GEAC for compliance with the goals and criteria under which the course was originally approved. Any major change in an approved course must be reviewed by the committee. (The definition of "[major course change](#)" may be found in the [Academic Department Manual](#).)

**3.11.** In the course of its deliberations, GEAC may invite the faculty, the department chair, the college dean, and/or others associated with a course to discuss the course either with the committee or the appropriate course review subcommittee.

## **4. GEAC Responsibilities**

The General Education Advisory Committee will:

### **Periodic Review Cycle**

**4.1.** conduct a comprehensive review of each component of the General Education program, minimally every five years but at an interval not to exceed seven years, in the following sequence:

#### Scheduled Task

- a. Review Areas A and B
- b. Review Area C
- c. Review Area D
- d. Review Area E and Upper Division Themes
- e. GE Programmatic Assessment
- f. cycle repeats ...

(these reviews are called for by EM 99-05, which states that "regular assessment and evaluation of the General Education program as a whole and of its major components is necessary to ensure quality and guide its development");

**4.2.** review all Cultural Diversity courses within each complete program review cycle (each Cultural Diversity course, whether GE or non-GE, will be reviewed at the same time as the associated Breadth Area or Upper Division Theme);

**4.3.** review Breadth Clusters against Cluster criteria during the same academic year as the GE programmatic assessment;

4.4. review courses contained in Breadth Clusters against Breadth criteria at the same time as the review of the associated Breadth Area (in instances where Breadth Clusters are not composed of individual courses fulfilling distinct GE Breadth Areas, the Cluster will be evaluated against Breadth criteria during the Cluster criteria review);

4.5. review the Freshman General Studies Thematic program and the GE Honors program, including the course HNRS 149 Seminar with an Outstanding Professor, during the same academic year as the Upper Division Theme review;

#### **Other GEAC Responsibilities**

4.6. recommend GE program revisions to the Academic Senate;

4.7. advise the Provost concerning General Education (items for consideration may be initiated by either the Provost or GEAC);

4.8. develop course approval and review guidelines and forms based on established criteria, to be used in the committee's deliberations;

4.9. review requests from high-unit major degree programs for exceptions to General Education Breadth requirements, and advise the Provost regarding such requests (final approval is at the discretion of the Chancellor, as specified by Executive Order 595 *General Education - Breadth Requirements*);

4.10. make an annual report to the Academic Senate, summarizing GEAC's activities over the previous year, including a tabulation of courses recommended for inclusion in or deletion from the General Education program.

#### **5. GEAC Composition**

As specified by EM 99-05, the General Education Advisory Committee will consist of nine members:

- five elected faculty representatives of the colleges;
- one selected faculty representative of the Educational Policies and Programs Committee;
- one student appointed by the Provost in consultation with the Associated Students; and
- two ex-officio members (one Provost designee and one member of Academic Advising Programs).

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#### **Election of Faculty Representatives**

5.1. The five elected faculty representatives will be determined using the following process. Elections will be completed by May 1st.

- Colleges of BSS, HFA and NS: As the term expires for each individual representative from the three liberal arts colleges, the corresponding college will conduct an internal election for a new representative from a slate of candidates from within that college.
- Colleges of AGR, BUS, CME and ECT: As the term expires for each of the two representatives from the four professional colleges, the three

colleges not represented by the continuing professional college representative will conduct an election for a single representative from a slate of candidates from within those three colleges. Each college will contribute no more than one candidate to the election slate. A concurrent election will be held internal to each of the colleges using a common ballot, and using the normal election procedures for each individual college.

The ballots will list the names of the qualified candidates, their department (and college) affiliation, and include a short narrative of interest and experience provided by each candidate. In all cases a majority of the total votes cast will determine the winner. In cases where no candidate receives a majority of the votes, a run-off of the two top candidates will be conducted.

### **Course Review Subcommittees**

5.2. Each elected GEAC faculty member will in turn chair a course review subcommittee, with each subcommittee convened only during the periodic review of the respective GE category:

- Sub-Areas A1-A3: Professional college faculty member
- Sub-Area A4 and Area B: Natural Sciences faculty member
- Area C: Humanities and Fine Arts faculty member
- Area D: Behavioral and Social Sciences faculty member
- Area E: Professional college faculty member

Upper Division Themes, Theme courses, and Breadth Clusters will be reviewed directly by GEAC.

5.3. In addition to the chair, each subcommittee will have three members, with no more than two from any one college. It is strongly recommended that a member from a college curriculum committee of the main disciplinary area be included.

5.4. The members of each subcommittee, other than the chairs, will be appointed for one-year terms by the Provost in consultation with the chair of the Academic Senate and the deans of the academic colleges. Appointments should be from areas of relevant expertise.

### **Added November 12, 2002:**

The following criteria will be used in evaluating program proposals seeking GE modifications.

6.1. Programs should not be afforded GE substitutions when there are sufficient units of free electives in the program to accommodate the GE program. For example, a program designed with HIST 050 and POLS 055 applying against GE must have no more than two units of free electives. In this case, "free electives" are defined as units having no restrictions placed on them by the program.

6.2. Preferably, non-GE courses used as substitutes should have characteristics that correspond to the GE requirement for which they are proposed. This would apply to issues both of content and pedagogy (for example, the GE writing requirement).

**6.3.** When programs propose use of one or both courses from the American Institutions Requirement (HIST 050 and POLS 055) against Areas C and D, respectively, the program must still afford students a breadth of coverage in the GE Areas against which these courses are substituted. This breadth should be reflected by the two remaining GE courses in each Area and should be supplemented by other, non-GE, courses from the program. For example, a program which substitutes POLS 055 against Area D should also contain in the program at least one course, outside of GE, that significantly addresses topics from the behavioral and social sciences.

**6.4.** Requests for GE modifications will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. When proposals for new programs or for significant changes to existing programs include GE modifications, a proposal for the GE modifications will be brought to GEAC immediately following introduction at EPPC. If significant changes are later made to a program approved for GE modifications, then the modifications should be reevaluated. In making requests for GE substitutions, the proposers must provide sufficient information for GEAC to perform an evaluation against these criteria, including justification for the lack of free elective units in the program.

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