

California State University, Chico
Chico, California

February 22, 1999

EXECUTIVE MEMORANDUM

99 - 05

TO: Academic Affairs Distribution

FROM: Manuel A. Esteban
President

SUBJECT: General Education program

Upon recommendation of the Academic Senate and the concurrence of the Provost, I am pleased to approve the following revised General Education Policy, effective fall 1999. This document supersedes EM 92-18.

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM California State University, Chico

The General Education program at California State University, Chico provides a curriculum which is driven by and reflects the core values of the University, as outlined by the Vision and Mission statement. General Education initiates students into a lifetime of learning, thinking, and acting as healthy, informed, ethically mature, and productive people in a diverse and technologically complex world. They will be citizens who can sustain and nurture our historic democratic ideals.

Program Goals

The General Education (GE) Program has five goals:

- to improve reading, writing, critical thinking, discussion and speaking skills, mathematical reasoning, analysis and problem solving, and the ability to access, evaluate, and apply information;
- to instill efficient, effective learning skills that will keep the student on a path of perpetual intellectual curiosity;
- to enhance general knowledge and attitudes so that students have a well informed, integrated, and coherent picture of the universe and humanity, including the living and non-living physical universe; human cultures, societies and values; and the artistic and intellectual legacy of humanity;
- to broaden knowledge about the impact, perspectives, and contributions provided by cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, cognitive, and global diversity; and
- to provide, for each student, coherence, connectedness, and commonalty within broad areas of undergraduate education.

Teaching Goals

To these ends, all courses accepted as components of the General Education program, therefore, must meet the following foundation characteristics:

- Each course must be committed to the improvement of students' writing, oral, and thinking skills.
- Each course must present major contributions to understanding of the relevant GE Area and Sub-Area through the perspectives of one or more particular discipline(s), with some use of seminal primary texts. Each course must be able to stand as a sufficient and exemplary first and only course a student might ever take in that Sub-Area or Area. A student should acquire from each course in the GE program a distinctive sense of what a scholar in this GE Sub-Area or Area does by way of an intellectual endeavor, a sense of what it means to study and understand the world in this way.

- Each course must be demonstrably focused on student learning. Practices/approaches that are associated with good student learning include
 - student-faculty contact
 - cooperative work among students
 - prompt feedback,
 - active practice,
 - time on task,
 - high expectations,
 - respect for diversity among students and faculty.

- Each course must contribute to the ideals and goals of the vision and mission of the university as noted above. Where applicable, it should
 - connect with the residential campus community;
 - use innovative technologies and learning environments;
 - connect and apply learning to discipline perspectives and methods of inquiry;
 - demonstrate scholarship currency and rigor;
 - prepare students for life and work in a world of diverse ideas;
 - apply learning to public service; and
 - assess just how GE program, teaching, Area, and Sub-Area goals are met.

Organization

The General Education program is organized into three general areas: Core, Breadth, and Capstone. The fundamental skills -- writing, thinking, speaking, mathematics -- are the focus of the Core Requirements of General Education. The study of the natural, behavioral, and social sciences, literature, art, and humanities are contained in the Breadth Requirements, while the integration of those disciplines into a broader understanding of the world is emphasized in the Capstone Requirements. In every course, relevant skills of the Core must be applied as essential to the process of mastering content and making applications.

Outcomes

Graduates of CSU, Chico should be satisfied that General Education has given them a strong, broad, and effective foundational academic experience. In addition, they will

- communicate thoughtfully and clearly, both orally and in writing;
- think critically and constructively;
- be conversant and skilled in the basic undergraduate understandings of mathematics, natural science, literature, the arts, the humanities, and the behavioral and social sciences; and
- be conversant and skilled in an integrative, interdisciplinary understanding of issues likely to be important throughout the graduate's life.

The General Education Program

Students shall complete 48 units in General Education, including

- Core Requirements: 12 units, with three units from each of A1, A2, A3, and A4;
- Breadth Requirements: 27 units, with three units from each of B1, B2, C1, C2, C3, D1, D2, D3, and E.

N.B. As a general rule, no department should offer any more than two courses in the Breadth Areas of GE. By exception, more than two courses from a single department may be accepted into Breadth GE, provided that the additional courses satisfy any of the following criteria:

- interdisciplinary courses,
- courses devised to meet specific programmatic needs, and
- courses included in Breadth Clusters.

In the application of this rule, distinct academic disciplines within a single multi-disciplinary departmental unit will be treated as separate departments. Departments that house faculty representing distinct disciplines by virtue of training, background, or areas of teaching and/or research competence will qualify as multidisciplinary. Multidisciplinary status can be demonstrated by the named fields on the terminal degrees that faculty have that qualify them for their respective teaching assignments, by the presence of distinct program listings and program headers for courses in the University Catalog, or by other relevant evidence.

- Capstone Requirements: 9 units, all from one upper-division theme.

Breadth Clusters

Coherence of the curriculum resides in the pattern of courses which a student takes; it does not result from a core curriculum which requires that all students take the same set of courses. This recognizes that students have different needs and interests.

Students should be provided with advising patterns which allow them to choose sets of related courses which meet the General Education requirements from among the various Breadth Areas and Sub-Areas. Departments may recommend clusters that would extend students' abilities to view their majors in a broader intellectual perspective, expand career opportunities, or achieve coherence, breadth, and depth in an area outside their chosen field.

Students can come to invest intellectually and personally in their GE experience by choosing courses to fit their interests and needs. The strength of the GE program rests upon the significantly varied set of choices that allow students to formulate a General Education program that is best for them individually. Breadth Clusters will provide useful advising tools that Academic Advisers can employ to help students make well-informed choices. To work effectively to this purpose, Breadth Clusters need to be voluntary and flexible. Clusters will also work best by connecting GE Breadth courses in disparate disciplines with interconnecting but not redundant content.

Breadth Clusters will emanate from the faculty. The General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) will be responsible for the organization and clarification of suggestions provided by

faculty or departments. Efforts will be made to create Clusters wherever faculty so desire and where viable connections exist among courses in different Sub-Areas.

The breadth requirement of the General Education Program suggests that a core of knowledge should characterize the baccalaureate graduate. This basic knowledge should be offered from a variety of disciplinary perspectives to encourage intellectual diversity, but no student of this university can be considered broadly educated without a general understanding of the historical development of world civilizations and their relations to each other. Therefore, GEAC will encourage the creation of Breadth Clusters that address the major themes, issues, and controversies of Western Civilization and its interactions with other world civilizations.

Core Courses (Area A -- Skills)

The principal charge to this area of General Education is to provide students opportunities to learn and demonstrate

- effective reading, writing, thinking, listening, and speaking;
- effective mathematical reasoning;
- fundamental links between thinking, writing, speaking, and mathematical reasoning;
- current technology where appropriate to gather and convey information; and
- their ethical obligations as communicators.

It is strongly recommended that students complete their Core Courses as early as possible in their undergraduate careers.

Oral Communication (Sub-Area A1)

Students enrolled in courses meeting the oral communication requirement must

1. devote substantial class time to preparation, practice, and participation in oral communication, including providing and receiving feedback about both the content and form of such communication;
2. demonstrate the ability to discover, critically evaluate and accurately report information, engage in sound reasoning, organize presentations effectively, adapt to the audience and situation, and present their views with persuasive force;
3. demonstrate effective listening skills; and
4. demonstrate understanding of the psychological, social, and cultural basis and significance of oral communication as it occurs in dyads, small and large groups, and public settings.

Written Communication (Sub-Area A2)

Students enrolled in courses meeting the written communication requirement must demonstrate

1. ability to select worthwhile subjects to write about and generate interesting ideas about them;
2. ability to state a clear thesis, build support for it, and reach an appropriate conclusion;
3. use of description, narrative, comparison-contrast, cause-effect, and other patterns of development effectively;
4. ability to tailor writing to various purposes and audiences; and
5. ability to edit prose to make it more clear, fluent, and concise and to minimize errors in usage, spelling, and punctuation.

Critical Thinking (Sub-Area A3)

Students enrolled in courses meeting the critical thinking requirement must demonstrate

1. ability to distinguish between fact and judgment and between belief and knowledge;
2. ability to distinguish between correct and incorrect reasoning, including an understanding of the formal and informal fallacies in language and thought;
3. knowledge of and skill in using elementary methods and patterns of reasoning, including induction and deduction; and
4. ability to criticize, analyze, and advocate ideas with logical force within human discourse, both oral and written.

Mathematics (Sub-Area A4)

Students enrolled in courses meeting the mathematics requirement must demonstrate

1. understanding of one or more of the following mathematical fields: statistics, algebra, trigonometry, calculus, finite mathematics, or matrix theory and show application of these concepts to a variety of fields; and
2. understanding of more than computational skills; they must also demonstrate understanding of basic mathematical concepts and apply these concepts to complex real world activities.

Breadth Courses (Area B -- Science)

The principal charge to this area of General Education is to provide students opportunities to inquire into the physical universe and its life forms. Students will demonstrate understanding and appreciation of the methodologies of the natural sciences as investigative tools and the limitations of scientific inquiry.

The Physical Universe (Sub-Area B1)

1. Students must have a laboratory component or similar activity in the physical sciences and inquire into the physical universe.
2. Student learning must demonstrate understanding of the fundamental concepts of matter and energy or must emphasize these concepts in a study of some specific part of the physical universe.

Life Forms (Sub-Area B2)

1. Students must have a laboratory component or similar activity in the life sciences and inquire into the life forms of the universe.
2. Students must demonstrate an introductory understanding of the fundamental concepts of life science as illustrated in plants and animals, *e.g.*, structure and function, heredity, evolution, and ecology or course must emphasize these concepts in a study of some specific part of the life sciences.

Breadth Courses (Area C -- Humanities and Fine Arts)

The principal charge of this area of General Education is to provide students opportunities to develop understanding of human creativity, arts, values, and reasoning. Class, race, ethnic, and gender issues should be integrated into courses in this area whenever possible.

In each course, students must

- attend, where feasible, at least four relevant public events or arts events and demonstrate an integration of the event and their course subject matter;
- demonstrate a foundation experience that is focused on issues and content that are basic and central to the discipline; and
- demonstrate research and learning from scheduled and specific library assignments, including computer access to information resources.

The Arts (Sub-Area C1)

Students must demonstrate

1. involvement in the experience of visual, musical, or theatrical art, either as makers or as informed audiences. In these courses students may “think in” and “think up” art, as well as “think about” art. Their experiences of art will occur within a context that is culturally and historically diverse; and
2. their knowledge, understanding, and experience of the creative process and expand their aesthetic sensibilities.

Languages and Literatures (Sub-Area C2)

Students must demonstrate

1. knowledge of languages and literatures and the diverse cultural traditions they represent through the study of creative writing, literature, or language acquisition; and
2. understanding, appreciation, and interpretation of language as a literary and culture artifact and use language as a literary, cultural, or creative vehicle of communication.

Philosophy, Religion, and Humanities Studies (Sub-Area C3)

Students must demonstrate

1. knowledge of major philosophical or religious traditions, perspectives, or communities or major figures or issues in the humanities;
2. understanding, appreciation, interpretation, and critical engagement of worldviews, institutions, symbol systems, and ethics in the context of history and culture; and
3. knowledge of major philosophical, religious, literary, or artistic figures or issues, in historical context.

Breadth Courses (Area D -- Behavioral and Social Sciences)

The principal charge to this area of General Education is to provide students opportunities to develop understanding of human behavior and the use of social theory, concepts, and analysis in application to human interaction. Class, race, ethnic, and gender issues should be integrated into courses in this area whenever possible.

All courses must, in a significant way, deal with human behavior. In each course, students must demonstrate learning

- in social science methods and perspectives,
- in historic as well as contemporary perspectives and influences, and
- in several relevant theoretical and methodological approaches.

Individual and Society (Sub-Area D1)

Students must demonstrate learning in the nature and behavior of individuals and their effects on and adaptations to other individuals, groups, institutions, and their environments.

Political and Economic Institutions (Sub-Area D2)

Students must demonstrate learning in

1. relationships between political and economic institutions and behavior and the roles power and scarcity play in the issues that face society, based upon social scientific perspectives and approaches; and
2. some of the diversity of approaches that are or have been used in addressing the political and economic issues in human societies.

Cultural and Social Institutions (Sub-Area D3)

Students must demonstrate learning in

1. the development and variation of cultural and social institutions; and
2. how cultural and social development and variations affect groups, institutions, and behavior.

Breadth Courses (Area E -- Lifelong Learning)

The principal charge to this area of General Education is to encourage student understanding of, and stimulate curiosity about, the self as an integrated and complex being. Students must

1. demonstrate learning about issues that are substantial and are likely to be important to them throughout their lifetimes;
2. recognize, incorporate, and integrate theory, evidence, and perspectives from each of three broad areas of human life: the physiological, the psychological, and the social; and
3. apply the ideas and materials of the course to themselves, as individuals.

Upper Division Themes

The principal charge to this area of General Education is to provide students with learning opportunities which require them to integrate a variety of skills and content areas from three separate courses that are integrated with each other and integrative with a unifying thematic conception.

A. Upper Division Themes (UDT)

1. Students must take nine units of course work selected from a single theme.
2. Students may not use an Upper Division Theme course for UDT credit unless they have completed at least 45 semester units and all GE Core requirements prior to enrolling in the course.

B. Criteria for Themes

Themes will identify clearly a set of basic enduring questions which humans have asked about themselves and their world, across time, place, and cultures. Themes should also explore the alternative answers which different peoples have arrived at for the same questions. Themes will

1. incorporate, build upon, and nurture skills from Area A;
2. encourage investigation by a variety of perspectives and will integrate significant content from Areas C and D and at least one of Sub-Areas A4, B1 or B2; and
3. show planning and coordination among instructors and subject matters of the several courses with notable points of connection among course materials and the theme's principal unifying topics.
4. Additionally, preference is given to themes that
 - a. are offered and taught as a six or nine unit block of courses, with students being enrolled in each course in the block (blocks can be scheduled within one semester or span two semesters);
 - b. have structured various and creative ways of teaching, e.g., faculty from two different disciplines or perspectives attend and participate throughout the course or different faculty conduct modules of a course;
 - c. have prerequisites which mandate completion of one or more relevant General Education Areas B, C, or D; and/or
 - d. include a capstone course, which is taken last and when the student has completed at least 90 semester units prior to enrolling in the course.

C. Criteria for Theme Courses

Courses participating in the Upper-Division Thematic Program must

1. be at 100 level and meet the criteria of the General Education program;
2. be integrated with each other and integrative with the theme;
3. be principally an integration of two or all three Areas;
4. deal with the value assumptions and issues raised by two or more disciplines or perspectives;
5. use primary sources and data sets in analyzing the theme's major issues;
6. have assignments that allow the student to integrate materials, deal with value assumptions or issues, and creatively speculate about the theme and its impact on humanity.

D. Theme Management

Effective support for Upper Division Themes is necessary for their success. Each theme

1. must evidence effective coordination, including meetings and working together by its faculty, planning and sharing course syllabi and materials with each other, and oversight by the theme's coordinator;
2. must acquaint theme students systematically with the goals and points of curricular integration within the theme;
3. must have the support of relevant department chairs and deans to offer sufficient sections of the theme's courses every semester;
4. may be provided a budget up to \$1000 in ways that will directly benefit students and may include theme development and nurturance.

Cultural Diversity Requirement

The principal goal of this requirement is for students to gain insight into intercultural relations and the variety of cultures and peoples present both in the United States and the world at large. Typically, this requirement will be met by taking two courses. However, single six-unit courses that meet all criteria are encouraged.

A. Students must complete both of the following two aspects of the Cultural Diversity Requirement (two courses), or they must complete a six-unit course that will satisfy both aspects:

1. one course that focuses on one or more U.S. ethnic groups that are distinct from the dominant U.S. culture; and
2. one course that focuses on non-U.S. culture(s) distinct from the dominant U.S. and European experience.

B. Among the elements that must be included in all courses satisfying the Diversity Requirement are the following:

1. the introduction and examination of basic concepts of intergroup and intercultural relations, such as racism, ethnocentrism, the impact of cultures on each other, perception, and the intersection of differing value systems and
2. the intersection of ethnicity and culture with gender, class, and other important social categories, such as religion.

C. Students, after completing the diversity courses, will understand

1. relationships among different ethnic groups;
2. interactions, values, and perceptions of cultures distinct from the dominant U.S. and European cultures; and
3. the social construction of class, race, ethnicity, and gender.

The General Education Advisory Committee

The General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) will be responsible for making recommendations to the Provost or designee on the implementation, monitoring, and development of the university's General Education program. Since it will advise the Provost on a major university program, it may either initiate advice or respond to requests for advice. This committee will be comprised of

- six faculty - **one** elected from each liberal arts college;
- **two** elected from different professional colleges (four-year terms, renewable and staggered), and
- **one** selected from the Academic Senate's Educational Policies and Programs Committee (one year term, renewable twice);
- **one** student (one year term, renewable twice); and
- **two** ex-officio members -- one Provost designee and one member of the Academic Advising Services.

A Coordinator of General Education will be appointed from the committee's faculty members for a term of two years by the Provost and the Chair of the Academic Senate; the Coordinator shall receive appropriate assigned time and shall chair the committee. The Educational Policies and Programs Committee faculty member will be appointed by the Chair of the Academic Senate in consultation with the Provost. The student member will be appointed by the Provost in consultation with the Associated Students.

Program Evaluation

Regular assessment and evaluation of the General Education Program as a whole and of its major components is necessary to ensure its quality and guide its development. The major components of the program will be reviewed by GEAC periodically and cyclically. Sub-Area A4 will be reviewed in conjunction with Area B. For the overall program and for its major components, assessment planning and implementation shall be the responsibility of the appropriate General Education Area Dean(s) and the Provost. Results of the assessment will be reported to the President and to the Academic Senate and campus community at intervals not to exceed seven years.

Course Evaluation

Each course must have an assessment process which shows how well course General Education goals are being achieved. It is the responsibility of the course's faculty and department chair to provide a report on the assessment and proposed changes for GEAC in its scheduled evaluation of courses. (In the case of multiple sections of the same course, a common assessment and proposed changes should be given.) In all courses, there must be evidence that the assessment information is being applied to improve the course in meeting its part of the goals for General Education.