

Report to the University Academic Planning Council

December 16, 1999

At its meeting of December 18, 1997, the University Academic Planning Council affirmed that the College of Letters and Science would submit an annual report on the General Education requirements. This is the third such annual report.

Policy Items for the Council

Second Undergraduate Degree Candidates and the General Education Requirements: The Associate Administrative Council (which has representatives from all the undergraduate schools and colleges), at the request of the General Education Technical Working Group, has considered the question of whether candidates for a second undergraduate degree should be required to complete University of Wisconsin-Madison General Education requirements. As indicated in the attached memo of September 3, 1999 from Sharon Nellis ([Attachment 1](#))*, the AAC recommends that second undergraduate degree candidates whose first college matriculation date was May 20, 1996 or later be required to meet the General Education requirements and that this be a university-wide requirement. This would mean that students who initially entered college from the time the General Education requirements went into effect would be required to meet them. A student who completed the UW-Madison General Education requirements would not be required to complete them twice; a student whose first undergraduate degree is from another institution would have her/his past course work evaluated as transfer credits to determine what General Education requirements were already met. The Academic Planning Council is asked to approve this recommendation.

Annotation 1/13/00: This was approved by the UAPC.

Approval of new General Education courses: See list provided by Bruce Beck of Budget, Planning and Analysis

Progress Reports

- **Credit for only one Communication A course:** At its meeting of November 19, 1998, the Council reaffirmed that students should be allowed to receive degree credit for only one Communication A course (Ag Journ/Fam Comm 100, Comm Arts 100, EPD 155, English 100, English 118). All necessary approvals and changes in course prerequisite listings have now been approved by the Humanities Divisional Committee and the new policy is effective spring semester, 1999-2000.
- **Fourth year of students under the General Education requirements:** 1999-2000 marks the first year that students in all of the past four entering undergraduate classes must complete the General Education requirements. For students completing their undergraduate degree in four years, this will be the first group of graduating seniors required to complete the General Education requirements. Email Communication to students last spring and this fall ([Attachment 2](#))* has been directed at those students who may be graduating and seeks to remind them of the need to complete these requirements. Entering the fourth year of implementing these requirements is significant in that they

now become an expected component of the on-going undergraduate education "culture" on our campus.

- **Access to General Education courses:** Throughout the implementation of the General Education requirements, providing an adequate number of student spaces in Communication B courses has been the most pressing problem. While we have made significant strides in developing courses and course spaces, the situation is still fragile and we continue to need to develop more course spaces. The Department of Communication Arts has provided a very large number of courses and course spaces on a temporary basis, and cannot sustain this effort permanently. Along with courses and course spaces, we need to work with schools/colleges, undergraduate majors, and other undergraduate instructional units to reduce duplication of requirements which mean, in effect, that students must complete more than one Communication B course.

Given that students who must complete the requirements are now nearing graduation, we have been particularly concerned about whether students close to graduation are having difficulties finding appropriate courses to take to fulfill the requirement. It is difficult to extract data to determine completion rates among groups of students, especially given that we are in the midst of implementing a new student data system. Hoping to get a glimpse of whether this is a serious problem across campus, we conducted a survey of all undergraduate schools and colleges on campus asking if undergraduate students who are under the General Education requirements and planning to graduate in either 1999-2000 or 2000-2001 are having any difficulty finding appropriate courses with which to complete the Communication B requirement or any other element of the General Education requirements. This is a very round-about and inexact way of gauging the scope of any problem, but could serve as an early warning signal. We are happy to report that, with only a few exceptions primarily linked to the specific course requirements of some programs, schools and colleges reported that their students were not having difficulties gaining access to appropriate General Education courses.

- **Development of General Education website:** The General Education website is now in the "rough draft" stage and should be ready for general use by sometime in the spring semester. It will include sections for students (including prospective students), faculty, and advisors and will contain many links to school/college specific information. The official course lists and related information are already found in a website maintained by Bruce Beck of Budget, Planning, and Analysis <www.wisc.edu/obpa/genedhom.htm>. [**Note:** These lists are now maintained on the General Education Requirements website, at www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/courselists.]

Submitted by:

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* Attachments are unavailable online

Members of the Letters and Science General Education Committee

Richard Brualdi, Mathematics
Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, Communication Arts and L&S Administration
Brad Hughes, Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum
Booth Fowler, Political Science and ILS (1999-2000)
Bob March, Physics and ILS (1998-99)
Ken Mayer, Political Science
Phil Miles, Mathematics (1999-2000)
Bill Miller, L&S Student Academic Affairs
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