

## Report of the University General Education Committee, 2016-17

The University General Education Committee (UGEC) is responsible for oversight of the campus-wide undergraduate General Education Requirements, or GER. The requirements were adopted by the Faculty Senate in May 1994, after review by a faculty committee that found common ground among all UW-Madison undergraduate schools and colleges that “every graduate should be able to write and speak with competence, employ tools and methods of mathematics and quantitative reasoning, and possess knowledge in one or more of the natural sciences and social sciences, in literature, and in at least one or more of the human disciplines” (Bitzer Committee Report, p. 5). At the time the report was submitted, no campus-wide requirements existed to ensure a base level of knowledge and skills that characterize each UW-Madison student. A suite of course-based requirements was proposed and adopted, and the College of Letters & Science (which fields most courses meeting the requirements) was entrusted to implement and administer the requirements.

The Dean of L&S convenes the UGEC, appointing members in consultation with the deans of the other undergraduate schools and colleges (Attachment A). The committee reports to the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC), which is empowered to approve policy changes the committee may recommend related to the requirements. UGEC operating procedures and other information about the GER program may be found online at <http://gened.wisc.edu>.

Though the requirements have remained largely the same as originally proposed, the purpose has been more clearly articulated: today, these requirements are understood to exist to help ensure that every baccalaureate student at UW-Madison acquires the essential core of an undergraduate education, to prepare students for living a productive life, being citizens of the world, appreciating aesthetic values, and engaging in lifelong learning in a changing world. Students complete coursework across the humanities and arts, social studies, and natural sciences, and in communication and quantitative reasoning. Students must also complete one course designated as meeting the Ethnic Studies Requirement, which promotes learning related to culturally diverse U.S. society. GER is a component of the “Wisconsin Experience,” complementing the work students do in their majors and degree programs, and in extracurricular and high-impact learning experiences.

The report that follows provides an overview of topics on which the committee, its liaisons, and subcommittees focused attention in 2016-17. Please note that the UGEC is requesting a revision to the criteria for ESR courses.

### I. GER Course Array

**New Courses.** Courses are added to or removed from the GER course array through the online course proposal process, which ensures that standard governance procedures are followed. Departments may seek review for Communication A or B, Quantitative Reasoning A or B, or Ethnic Studies courses, or for courses to carry the L&S Breadth Designations. These reviews involve faculty and staff who understand the subject matter, GER course criteria, and GER learning outcomes. Communication and QR reviews are assigned to a faculty liaison, and requests for ESR designation are referred to the Ethnic Studies Subcommittee. Requests to have

courses carry designations for Breadth are reviewed by the L&S Curriculum Committee, which has representation from faculty across the three GER breadth divisions. Finally, because Comm A and QR-A courses are narrowly defined requirements met by a small number of courses, special committees are convened to consider occasional requests for new courses in these areas. If a request for a GER designation is approved, it is assigned a course attribute that can easily be audited by the Degree Audit Reporting System. Students who take courses with GER attributes will find their GER met regardless of the School/College in which their degree is earned.

In 2016-17, there were two noteworthy issues related to course development:

- Six proposals to create new ESR courses were submitted. All were evaluated by the Ethnic Studies Subcommittee and five were approved to meet the ESR:
  - Nursing 510 “Culturally Congruent Practice”
  - Communication Arts 373 “Intercultural Communication and Rhetoric”
  - Public Affairs 510 “Inequality, Race, and Public Policy”
  - Geography 305 “Introduction to The City”
  - Educational Policy Studies 505 “Issues in Urban Education”
- Three new QR-A courses were proposed. These proposals prompted extensive consultation between the QR liaison and the departments, and the ad hoc QR committee was convened to review one request. Two proposals were revised (from QR-A to QR-B); for the third, discussions with the Math department are ongoing about overlap with an existing course and potential collaboration to reformulate that course.

## II. Assessment of Student Learning

Since 2003, the UGEC has used a formally adopted long-range Assessment Plan to guide campus-level efforts to understand the impact and efficacy of the General Education Requirements. (Reports of GER assessment projects can be found online at <https://gened.wisc.edu/AssessmentReports>.) Over the years, the UGEC has updated the GER learning outcomes and worked to adapt its assessment strategy to study more broadly the four domains of learning relative to GER, rather than to assess individual courses or specific components of the individual requirements.

In Spring 2017, the UGEC added these broadly stated GER Learning Outcomes to the General Education Requirements section of “The Guide” that will soon replace the Undergraduate Catalog. Including this information in the “single source” for program information will better convey to students and other stakeholders the role these requirements play in undergraduate education at UW-Madison. (Attachment B).

### *GER Assessment Focus: Ethnic Studies Curriculum Mapping*

The most significant GER assessment activity undertaken in 2016-17 was a comprehensive curriculum mapping effort focused on the ESR course array. The list of ESR courses was last reviewed in 2003-04. Since then, new procedures for administering the requirement and operationalizing course criteria were implemented. The faculty also articulated learning outcomes for ESR courses, and then led an effort to assess student learning relative to the

requirement. In 2016-17, at the request of Provost Mangelsdorf and Dean Scholz, the Ethnic Studies Subcommittee undertook a new study of the ESR course array. The committee gathered and evaluated 225 syllabi for 178 active ESR courses to determine whether they conform to current course criteria, and whether these courses have the capacity to promote student learning relative to the ESR learning outcomes. The committee was asked to recommend removal of courses, offer counsel about areas of the curriculum where new ESR courses might be needed, and recommend revisions to the criteria to promote better achievement of the learning outcomes. The committee went above and beyond this charge, surveying instructors about student learning as well as instructional opportunities and challenges relative to the requirement. (Attachment C)

Importantly, the survey of faculty affirmed instructors' perceptions of alignment between their course materials and the ESR learning outcomes, and the majority of instructors reported their perception that their courses were effective in helping students achieve those outcomes – though a large number of respondents recommended to the committee that a more direct assessment of student learning should be undertaken.

Several recommendations arising from this report fall under the current purview of the ES Subcommittee's responsibility for managing the application of the ESR designation for courses (removal of ESR from particular courses, monitoring syllabi, assessment of ESR outcomes, outreach about the ESR course array, working as a faculty to develop best practices for online ESR instruction, developing new courses, etc.) Other recommendations (e.g., TA allocation and training, faculty hiring and support, the nature of instructors' experiences and perceptions teaching ESR courses), represent counsel offered to University leaders about how best to support effective teaching with respect to the requirement.

The committee also recommended revision of the ESR course criteria, which the UGEC endorsed, to increase the minimum US content standard for ESR courses that approach ESR topics from a comparative perspective, from 25% to 50%. Also, consistent with the current expectation that all syllabi include student learning outcomes, the committee expects that ESR courses should include relevant ESR learning outcomes on the syllabus.

The following criteria are proposed:

- ❖ ESR courses must be offered for a minimum of 3 credits.
- ❖ Syllabus and reading list must demonstrate that the course material is centrally focused on the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of persistently marginalized racial and ethnic minorities and/or indigenous peoples in the United States.
- ❖ Courses that are not centrally focused on the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of persistently marginalized racial and ethnic minorities and/or indigenous peoples in the United States may be designated as ESR classes under certain circumstances.
  - Courses that explore the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of racial and ethnic minorities and/or indigenous peoples in a comparative international format

must devote at least 50% of the course (syllabus, reading list, course content, and student assessment) to exploring the experiences and concerns of persistently marginalized groups in the United States.

- In cases where religion is intertwined with respect to persistently marginalized racial and ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples in the United States, courses that focus on religion may fulfill the ESR.

- ❖ Syllabus should list the ESR Essential Learning Outcomes.

These revisions require approval by the UAPC before they may be implemented; we suggest that they be implemented for new courses proposed in Fall 2017 with effective dates no earlier than Fall 2018. Since we have the syllabi for all currently approved ESR courses, in Summer 2017 and in 2017-18, we will identify current courses that might not meet this standard, and will reach out to departments and faculty with an expectation that by Fall 2019, all courses will meet the new standard.

Finally, the committee noted the strong recommendation by the faculty that the ESR be expanded, and recommended careful study of the university's capacity to require a six-credit ESR learning experience. In discussion of this recommendation, the UGEC noted that such a recommendation might gain ground were the second course to include a broader definition (e.g., intercultural studies, international studies). Both committees will likely continue this study and discussion in 2017-18.

### *GER Assessment Focus: Communication B Curriculum Calibration*

In Spring 2016, the UGEC Communication liaison, Professor David Zimmerman, undertook a review of all syllabi for courses that meet the Communication B requirement, seeking to determine if these courses meet Comm B course criteria and have the capacity to support the learning outcomes articulated for the requirement. Due to the nature of the requirement (which relies on a particular pedagogy, rather than course content), the study was conducted as a survey of faculty and staff, which also afforded an opportunity to seek information from instructors concerning engagement and oversight, curricular gaps, and future opportunities in this curricular area. Syllabi were obtained for 98 of 104 Comm B courses taught by 158 faculty and staff instructors between Fall 2011 and Spring 2016; 67% of Comm B instructors responded to the survey.

The learning outcomes implicit in Comm B were made explicit and articulated clearly only within the past few years, as part of the UGEC's efforts to improve assessment strategies. Thus, an important finding of this study was that instructors affirmed the learning outcomes associated with Comm B courses, and an overwhelming majority reported that students do indeed make gains in their courses relative to those outcomes. Virtually all instructors regard their courses as complying with course criteria and supporting the outcomes; however, careful review of syllabi and survey responses found many courses that require attention, and instructors themselves noted areas where their courses required recalibration to better comply. The greatest challenges are found in teaching oral communication skills, finding adequate time for individual student-

instructor conferences, and ensuring that the long-standing student-to-instructor ratio is maintained for these courses.

The report (Attachment D) offered several recommendations and advice that will inform administrative decisions and faculty oversight of this part of the General Education Requirements. No recommendations were made concerning policy changes.

*UPDATE: Ongoing Implementation of Results of 2012-13 ESR Assessment*

We continue to implement recommendations arising from the 2012-2013 assessment of student learning in ESR courses. Staff in L&S worked with colleagues across campus advising units to implement the recommendation that students be required to complete the requirement within the first 60 credits completed in residence. Outreach to Peer Advisors during SOAR's "Terrific Tuesdays," improved communication with advising units across campus about the impact the requirement may have on student learning, and greater advocacy with strong partners (e.g., First Year Interest Groups, the Center for the First-Year Experience) seems to be shifting enrollments into these courses, and into a wider array of courses.

Faculty who teach in Ethnic Studies areas (both in the context of traditional departments as well as in ES focused subject areas) continue to build course capacity to allow the university to serve more students early in their undergraduate careers. As noted in the Report of the ES Subcommittee, providing TA support for small and mid-sized courses has increased capacity in a wider array of ESR courses than previously available.

*UPDATE: Implementation of QR-A Requisite Recommendations.* Recommendations arising from the Summer 2015 QR-A curriculum mapping and calibration have been implemented: minimum prerequisites for QR-A courses are now aligned. These revisions also accommodate changes in UW-Madison's remedial Math courses, and will ensure that students who are required to take remedial math progress through QR in a timely sequence.

Finally, the committee continues to hope that as UW-Madison works to develop a new course proposal system and new course evaluation system, relevant General Education outcomes might be incorporated into these processes, for example, by automatically including GER learning outcomes on GER course syllabi, or by generating GER learning outcomes automatically on course evaluation surveys.

#### IV. Other Matters

The UGEC also discussed policy matters and other issues related to supporting a breadth of study as part of undergraduate education.

- ***The Wisconsin Experience – Updated.*** In December 2016, Vice Provosts Lori Berquam and Steve Cramer met with UGEC to discuss a new articulation of *The Wisconsin Experience*, which the UGEC enthusiastically endorsed.
- ***UW-Madison Mission and University General Education.*** In anticipation of the decennial accreditation review by the Higher Learning Commission, the HLC Advisory Committee invited the UGEC to consider the important question of whether the UW-Madison mission that was articulated in 1988 remains current with respect to the mission and purpose of University General Education. The UGEC strongly endorsed that mission statement, finding in it an extraordinarily flexible and forward-thinking statement of institutional values. (Attachment E)
- ***UW-Madison Liberal Arts Essay Contest.*** A subcommittee of the UGEC directed the first annual scholarship competition focused on the liberal arts. This competition, which arose from the now-defunct UW System Liberal Arts Essay Contest, challenges students to articulate, in their own words, the role liberal education plays in helping them to understand their lived experience. The winning essays may be found online at <http://ls.wisc.edu/news/liberal-arts-as-a-tool-for-change>.

On behalf of the University General Education Committee, this report is submitted by

Elaine M. Klein, Chair, UGEC  
Associate Dean for Academic Planning, College of Letters and Science  
May 25, 2017

#### Attachments:

- A. UGEC Membership, 2017-18
- B. The Guide: General Education Requirements
- C. Report of the Ethnic Studies Subcommittee, May 2017
- D. Communication Part B 2016 Curriculum Calibration Report (December 2016)
- E. Memorandum, Klein to Cramer, Milner, and Wanner, 12 May 2017, “University General Education Committee Affirmation of UW-Madison Mission”

# University General Education Committee 2016-2017

Elaine Klein (Chair)

Associate Dean Academic Planning | L&S Administration | 307D South Hall | elaine.klein@wisc.edu | 5-8484

## Term Members

**David Bohnhof**  
112 Agricultural Engineering  
bohnhoff@wisc.edu  
2-9546

**Mark Fedenia**  
5275 Grainger Hall  
mfedenia@wisc.edu

**Kelley Harris-Johnson**  
2536 Microbial Sciences Building  
kelley.harris@wisc.edu  
0-0677

**Mary Hark**  
3208 Human Ecology  
hark@wisc.edu  
2-2651

**Bret Larget**  
241 Birge Hall  
brlarget@wisc.edu  
5-6799

**Diane Gooding**  
320 W J Brogden Psychology Bldg  
dgooding@wisc.edu  
2-3918

**Shiela Reaves**  
228 Hiram Smith Hall  
sireaves@wisc.edu  
0-0732

**Sarah Thal**  
4118 Mosse Humanities  
thal@wisc.edu  
5-6033

## Ex Officio Members

**Mo Noonan-Bischof**  
Associate Vice Provost  
117 Bascom Hall  
mo.bischof@wisc.edu  
5-4413

**Kimbrin Cornelius**  
L&S Administration  
307E South Hall  
kimbrin.cornelius@wisc.edu  
890-3827

**Steve Cramer**  
Vice Provost for Teaching & Learning  
117C Bascom Hall  
steven.cramer@wisc.edu  
2-5246

**Brad Hughes**  
Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum  
6187-F H.C. White  
bthughes@wisc.edu  
3-3823

**Clare Huhn**  
Academic Planning and Institutional Research  
170 Bascom Hall  
clare.huhn@wisc.edu  
5-9276

**Regina Lowery**  
Assessment Coordinator, Office of the Provost  
130 Bascom Hall  
regina.lowery@wisc.edu  
890-2973

**Kevin Clarke**  
Center for the First Year Experience  
101 Ingraham Hall  
kevin.clarke@wisc.edu  
5-3079

**Sheila Stoeckel**  
Interim Director of Teaching and Learning Programs, UW-Madison Libraries  
443 Memorial Library  
sheila.stoeckel@wisc.edu  
5-2755

**Liane Kosaki**  
Undergraduate Advising  
110a Ingraham Hall  
liane.kosaki@wisc.edu  
2-1876

**Nathan Phelps**  
FIGS Director  
14 Ingraham Hall  
nathan.phelps@wisc.edu  
3-6504

**Benedek Valko**  
Quantitative Reasoning Liaison  
409 E B Van Vleck Hall  
valko@math.wisc.edu  
3-2782 / 3-3054

**Jolanda Vanderwal Taylor**  
Campus LEAP Co-Liaison  
808 Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Dr  
jvtaylor@wisc.edu  
2-5790

**Nancy Westphal-Johnson**  
L&S Administration  
Campus LEAP Co-Liaison  
306 South Hall  
nancy.westphaljohnson@wisc.edu  
3-2506

**Jim Wollack**  
Research Director for GE Assessment  
377 Educational Sciences  
jwollack@wisc.edu  
2-0675

**David Zimmerman**  
Communication Liaison  
7185 Helen C White Hall  
dazimmerman@wisc.edu  
3-3785

## Additional Members

### ES Subcommittee:

**Cindy Cheng (Chair)**  
cicheng@wisc.edu

**Robert Hill**  
rjhill@wisc.edu

**Susan Johnson**  
sljohnson5@wisc.edu

**Elaine Klein (ex officio)**  
elaine.klein@wisc.edu

**Maria Lepowsky**  
lepowsky@wisc.edu

**Larry Nesper**  
lnesper@wisc.edu

**Jenna Nobles**  
jnobles@ssc.wisc.edu

**Mo Noonan Bischof**  
mo.bischof@wisc.edu

**Nathan Phelps**  
nathan.phelps@wisc.edu

**Tori Richardson**  
tori.richardson@wisc.edu

**Cherene Sherrard**  
csherrard@wisc.edu

**Shannon Sparks**  
sparks2@wisc.edu

**Michael Thornton**  
mcthornt@wisc.edu

**Timothy Yu (Chair)**  
tpyu@wisc.edu

### Assistants to the Committees:

**Joni Brown (UGEC)**  
L&S Administration  
307F South Hall  
joni.brown@wisc.edu  
5-0457

**Ayanna Drakos (ESS)**  
drakos@wisc.edu

### Student Representatives:

**Gianina Dinon (ESS)**  
**Nigel Noll (UGEC)**  
**Anisa Yudawanti (ESS)**

All undergraduate students at UW–Madison must complete the university-wide General Education Requirements, which are designed to convey the essential core of an undergraduate education. This core establishes a foundation for living a productive life, being a citizen of the world, appreciating aesthetic values, and engaging in lifelong learning in a continually changing world. These requirements provide for breadth across the humanities and arts, social studies, and natural sciences; competence in communication, critical thinking, and analytical skills necessary for success in college and beyond; and investigation of the issues raised by living in a culturally diverse society. This core is intended to provide students with intellectual and practical skills, basic knowledge of human cultures and the physical world, strategies for understanding these topics, and tools intended to contribute to their sense of personal and social responsibility. General Education complements the work students do in their majors and degrees. Together, these requirements help students learn what they need to know not just for making a living, but also for making a life.

Completing the General Education Requirements is an important part of achieving these competencies, and to do so, students choose from many courses in communication, ethnic studies, quantitative reasoning, and breadth of study across disciplines in the natural sciences, humanities, literature, and arts, and social and behavioral sciences.

Each school and college may choose to allow General Education courses to count toward other degree and/or major requirements. Students should always check with their advisors to discuss any additional degree requirements and determine if students are required to take specific General Education courses or to complete the requirements in a particular order. Students should review their Degree Audit (DARS) report to see how they are progressing toward fulfilling the General Education requirements. Please refer to [this website](#) for more information about the requirements.

The university-wide General Education requirements are:

## **Breadth, 13–15 Credits, Distributed Over Three Areas**

All students must complete 13–15 credits of coursework intended to provide a **breadth** of experience across the major modes of academic inquiry. This requirement encourages students to adopt a broad intellectual perspective, to



examine the world through investigative, critical, and creative strategies practiced in the natural (computational, biological, and physical) sciences, social and behavioral sciences, as well as in the arts and humanities.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students acquire critical and creative thinking skills as well as enhance their problem-solving skills through a breadth of study across the humanities and arts, social studies, computational, biological sciences and physical sciences.

In courses satisfying the Breadth requirement, students will:

- articulate examples of significant contributions to human understanding achieved through various “ways of knowing” found in the arts and humanities; social and behavioral sciences; and computational, biological, and physical sciences.
- recognize and articulate the ways in which different disciplines approach questions that call upon different tools of inquiry, understanding, and creative enterprise.
- identify ways in which multiple tools of inquiry and understanding can be used to achieve greater insight into resolving “big” questions (e.g., climate change, poverty, global health etc.), evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of those approaches, and understanding which complementary approaches will help achieve meaningful change.
- evaluate different modes of inquiry across the humanities and arts; social studies; computational, biological, and physical sciences, and identify strengths and weaknesses of those approaches across disciplines when approaching a question.

To achieve these outcomes, students are required to complete courses in the following areas.

- Natural Science, 4 to 6 credits, consisting of one 4- or 5-credit course with a laboratory component; or two courses providing a total of 6 credits
- Humanities/Literature/Arts, 6 credits
- Social Studies, 3 credits

This requirement challenges students to understand that there are many ways to research, understand, communicate about, and interpret creatively the world around us. These “ways of knowing” intersect and overlap, and the ideas presented in one area will often inform and transform what students know and how they think about the others. Students develop skills that help them make informed decisions in a wide range of political, economic, and social contexts, to think critically about the world, to better understand their own and others’ experience, and to behave in socially responsible ways. (For more information about how this exposure to breadth of inquiry and expression enriches students’ undergraduate experience and complements intensive study in the major, please see the [General Education Requirements](#) website.)

## Communication, 3 to 5/6 Credits

The **Communication** requirement helps to ensure that all graduates of UW–Madison acquire essential communication and research-gathering skills necessary for success in university course work and beyond.

Communication–A (**Comm A**) and Communication–B (**Comm B**) courses train students to gather and assess information from a variety of sources and to present different kinds of information, insight, and analysis to diverse audiences. These courses are essential for students' career success and their preparation for public life in a rapidly changing world. While Comm–A courses focus exclusively on essential communication skills, Comm–B courses provide content instruction in a specific discipline and teach research, writing, and speaking skills in conjunction with the course content. Comm–B courses are offered by departments across campus and vary widely in topic, content, and format.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students develop skills that enable them to be effective speakers and writers in and out of the classroom.

In courses satisfying the Communication requirement, students will:

- make effective use of information retrieved, organized, and synthesized from appropriate sources.
- present ideas and information clearly and logically to achieve a specific purpose.
- make effective use of communicative forms appropriate to a specific discipline, and adapted to the intended audience.
- use appropriate style and conventions associated with particular communicative forms, genres, or disciplines.

To achieve these outcomes, students must complete the following Communication requirements:

- **Part A. Literacy Proficiency.** 2–3 credits at first-year level dedicated to reading, listening, and discussion, with emphasis on writing. While most incoming freshmen are required to complete coursework to fulfill this requirement, students may be exempted from Part A by approved college course work while in high school, AP test scores, or placement testing. Students are expected to satisfy this requirement by the end of their first year of undergraduate study.
- **Part B. Enhancing Literacy Proficiency.** 2–3 credits of more advanced coursework for students who have completed or been exempted from Part A. Students should consult with the appropriate undergraduate advisor about when this requirement should be completed. Courses that satisfy this requirement are offered in many fields of study; although a wide variety of courses fulfill this requirement, students are encouraged to select a course most in keeping with their interests or other requirements of their intended field(s) of study.

## Ethnic Studies, 3 Credits

The **Ethnic Studies** requirement is intended to increase understanding of the culture and contributions of persistently marginalized racial or ethnic groups in the United States, and to equip students to respond constructively to issues

connected with our pluralistic society and global community. Because this increased understanding is expected to have a positive effect on campus climate, students are expected to complete this requirement within the first 60 credits of undergraduate study

**Learning Outcomes:** Students draw connections between historical and present day circumstances, and consider perceptions and cultural assumptions when examining questions and making decisions.

In courses satisfying the Ethnic Studies requirement, students will:

- articulate some of the effects the past has had on present day circumstances, perceptions of, and disparities in, race in the U.S.
- recognize and question cultural assumptions, rules, biases, and knowledge claims as they relate to race and ethnicity.
- examine questions and make decisions with consideration for the cultural perspectives and worldviews of others.

Students complete this requirement by taking one course of at least 3 credits that is designated as an Ethnic Studies course.

## Quantitative Reasoning, 3 to 6 Credits

**Quantitative Reasoning** is the process of forming conclusions, judgments or inferences from quantitative information. The Quantitative Reasoning requirement at UW–Madison has two parts: Part A and B. **Quantitative Reasoning A** courses provide students with skills in mathematics, computer science, statistics or formal logic that are needed for dealing with quantitative information. The acquired skills are broad-based in order to have a positive impact on the readiness of students to take a Quantitative Reasoning B course in a variety of disciplines. **Quantitative Reasoning B** courses allow students to enhance their Quantitative Reasoning Proficiency in a more advanced setting, where they make significant use of quantitative tools in the context of other course material.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students utilize mathematical models for scientific or real life problems to set up, analyze, interpret, make judgments, and draw appropriate conclusions based on quantitative analysis of data.

In courses satisfying the Quantitative Reasoning requirement, students will set up an abstract mathematical model or hypothesis for a given scientific or real life problem.

- interpret, handle and manipulate quantitative data sets for scientific or real life problems.
- quantitatively analyze data to obtain relevant insight about a given problem.
- make judgments and draw appropriate conclusions based on the quantitative analysis of data.

Students must complete the following to satisfy the Quantitative Reasoning Requirement:

- **Part A. Quantitative Reasoning Proficiency.** This requirement can be satisfied by:
  - approved college work while in high school, AP test scores, or placement testing; or
  - taking a 3 credit course at UW–Madison with a Quantitative Reasoning A designation.

To ensure timely completion of the undergraduate degree, students should complete Part A of the Quantitative Reasoning requirement by the end of their first year.

- **Part B. Enhancing Quantitative Reasoning Proficiency.** 3 credit course at UW–Madison with a Quantitative Reasoning B designation after satisfying the Part A requirement. Courses that satisfy this requirement are offered in a variety of fields of study. Students are encouraged to select a course in keeping with their interests or other requirements of their intended field(s) of study.

## Identifying Courses That Meet General Education Requirements

The university offers hundreds of courses that meet the requirements described above. Students should consider their own interests and check with their advisor when deciding which courses to complete. Please note that many undergraduate programs of study have breadth requirements that go beyond these basic university-wide requirements.

The following language is used in the UW–Madison course listings to indicate how courses count toward satisfying the communication, quantitative reasoning, and ethnic studies portions of the General Education Requirements. Courses that satisfy these requirements are also tagged with a mortarboard symbol. 🎓

- Communication Part A
- Communication Part B
- Ethnic Studies
- Quantitative Reasoning Part A
- Quantitative Reasoning Part B

*Note:* Some Communication Part B courses carry Communication B credit only at the lecture or section level and/or only in certain semesters; these courses will be indicated in the Schedule of Classes.

Course descriptions also include information about whether courses meet General Education Humanities, Natural Science, or Social Studies Breadth Requirements. (Click on course numbers in the *Guide* to see this information.) Students should also be aware that each school and college may, at its own discretion, designate additional courses that satisfy these requirements. For this reason, students should consult their advisors to obtain information about how these requirements are implemented in the school or college in which they are enrolled.

## General Education Policies

*Exemption from General Education:* All students are required to meet the fundamental degree requirements of the university, which include general education.

*Disability-Based Waivers:* The university has determined that waivers to the communication and quantitative reasoning portions of the general education component would fundamentally alter the nature of the University of Wisconsin–Madison degree. Students should not expect to obtain disability-based waivers to the communication and quantitative reasoning portions of the General Education Requirements.

*Pass/Fail:* Effective fall 2012, all courses taken to meet the University General Education Requirements must be taken on a graded basis. These grades are included in students' GPA calculations according to school/college GPA rules.

**Report of the  
Ethnic Studies Subcommittee  
May 2017 – revised 23 August 2017**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Ethnic Studies Subcommittee (ESS) of the University General Education Committee has reviewed and evaluated UW-Madison's Ethnic Studies Requirement (ESR) course array. It also distributed a questionnaire to UW-Madison instructors that assessed the distinct challenges instructors face teaching ESR courses. The purpose of the ESR course array review and instructor questionnaire is to ensure the advancement of a robust ESR curriculum and to better address the distinct challenges of ESR instructors.

After a thorough review of the 225 course syllabi that comprise the ESR course array along with the findings of the instructor questionnaire, the ESS identified eight areas for improvement.

### **1. ESR Courses**

- The ESS met with instructors of courses that it determined were failing to meet the ESR criteria. It devised a follow-up review process for instructors of Anthropology 104 and four other courses to ensure future compliance while providing instructors the opportunity to revise their syllabus in accordance with ESR guidelines.
- The ESS recommends the removal of the Ethnic Studies designation from eight courses. With no instructors attached to them, these eight courses are unlikely to be offered again.

### **2. Student Enrollment Distribution**

- Despite the wide array of ESR courses offered, students disproportionately enroll in three courses to fulfill their ESR. To support the goal of reaching students through a diverse ESR course array, the ESS supports the permanent allocation of TA-ships to the American Indian Studies Program, the Asian American Studies Program, and the Chican@/Latin@ Studies Program, which have historically been denied TA lines despite offering a diverse set of ESR courses, and the increase allocation of TA-ships to the Department of Afro-American Studies.
- The ESS recommends that advisors continue to inform students of the wide array of courses they can take to fulfill the ESR. The ESS would like to expand its tasks to include outreach, where ESS members would regularly meet with advisors to discuss ESR course offerings.

### **3. Gaps in ESR Course Offerings**

- The ESS finds the relative paucity in the number of ESR courses offered by the Chican@/Latin@ Studies Program concerning. Given that there is only one faculty (FTE) appointment in CLS, the ESS urges the granting of a new tenure-track line to CLS as a way to promote an increase in the number of CLS ESR course offerings.

#### **4. ESR Guidelines**

- The ESS would like to revise the current ESR guidelines to capture more effectively the intent of the ESR. This proposed change concerns courses that explore the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples in a comparative international context. The previous guideline stipulated that such courses must devote at least 25%, or 3.75 weeks, to examining the experiences of persistently marginalized groups in the U.S. The new proposed guideline increases this stipulation to 50%, or 7.5 weeks.
- Given that a growing number of new ESR courses are being proposed as online courses, the ESS would like to hold a series of meetings during the 2017-18 academic year to discuss the viability of online ESR courses and develop guidelines to ensure their effectiveness.

#### **5. Assessment of the Four Essential Learning Outcomes**

- While instructors believed that their own ESR courses helped students to achieve each of the four ELOs, many added in their questionnaires that the true measure of ESR student learning outcomes required assessing students. The ESS would like to begin designing a strategy in the 2017-18 academic year for the direct assessment of student learning and/or assessment of student attitudes and beliefs, relative to the ESR learning outcomes and goals.

#### **6. The Three-Credit Ethnic Studies Requirement**

- As a clear majority of ESR instructors considered the increase of the ESR from one to two courses to be very valuable, the ESS recommends forming a task group to assess the implications of increasing the ESR from three credits to six credits.

#### **7. Teaching Format of ESR Courses**

- The vast majority of instructors indicated that small group discussions are the most effective teaching format for ESR courses and stressed the importance of properly trained TAs to lead these discussions. The ESS urges the development of a university-wide training program for graduate students interested in TAing ESR courses.

#### **8. Challenges of ESR Instruction**

- The ESS would like to share its findings of the distinct challenges that instructors face teaching ESR courses with department and program heads along with members of Divisional Committees. It also recommends the allocation of resources to support ESR instructors in all the challenges that teaching ESR courses necessarily entail.



## I. Introduction

### A. Committee Members

In August 2016, Karl Scholz, Dean, College of Letters and Science, at the request of Sarah Mangelsdorf, Provost, charged the Ethnic Studies Subcommittee (ESS) with reviewing the Ethnic Studies Requirement (ESR) course array and making recommendations on how the learning and instruction of ESR courses could be improved. The 2016-2017 ESS term members were:

#### Faculty:

Chair, Cindy I-Fen Cheng, History and Asian American Studies (year 2 of 3)  
 Roberta Hill, English and American Indian Studies (year 1 of 3)  
 Susan Johnson, History and Chican@ and Latin@ Studies (1 year appointee)  
 Maria Lepowsky, Anthropology (1 term appointee, Spring 2017)  
 Larry Nesper, Anthropology and American Indian Studies (1 term appointee, Fall 2016)  
 Jenna Nobles, Sociology (year 1 of 3)  
 Cherene Sherrard, English and Afro-American Studies (year 3 of 3)  
 Shannon Sparks, Human Ecology and American Indian Studies (year 2 of 3)  
 Michael Thornton, Afro-American Studies (1 year appointee)  
 Timothy Yu, English and Asian American Studies (year 2 of 3)

#### Students:

Gianina Dinon, ASM appointee  
 Anisa Yudawanti, ASM appointee

#### Ex Officio:

Elaine M. Klein, Associate Dean for Academic Planning, Chair, University General Education Committee  
 Mo Noonan Bischof, Associate Vice Provost  
 Nathan Phelps, Assistant Dean and Director, First-Year Interest Groups, SOAR Access liaison  
 Tori Richardson, Assistant Dean, L&S Student Academic Affairs

#### Support Staff:

Joni Brown, L&S Administration  
 Kimbrin Cornelius, L&S Administration  
 Ayanna K. Drakos, Assistant for General Education Ethnic Studies Assessment

### B. Charge to the Committee

The charge to the ESS, as transmitted by Dean Scholz and Provost Mangelsdorf, came following the University Academic Planning Council's approval of the Undergraduate General Education Committee assessment plan in spring 2016, which called for a re-evaluation of the ESR course array. The project entailed gathering and evaluating the

syllabi of all courses that currently meet the Ethnic Studies Requirement and producing a report that would:

1. Affirm that courses offered for ESR credit conform to the current criteria and have the capacity to promote student learning relative to the ESR learning outcomes;
2. Recommend revisions to the ESR course array to remove courses that do not meet the criteria or that cannot reasonably be revised to meet the criteria;
3. Propose areas where new ESR courses could be developed to improve the course array; and
4. Recommend revisions to the ESR criteria to promote better achievement of student learning outcomes.

### C. The Ethnic Studies Subcommittee Review Process

Dean Scholz and Provost Mangelsdorf expected the ESS charge to take two semesters to fulfill. The ESS dedicated fall semester 2016 to gathering all ESR course syllabi. Over the span of three meetings, the ESS developed a plan to streamline instructor submission of ESR course syllabi. It also drafted a separate anonymous questionnaire for instructors teaching ESR courses to complete. The questionnaire assessed the effectiveness of ESR courses in meeting the ESR Essential Learning Outcomes and sought feedback about the distinct challenges that instructors teaching ESR courses face. Finally, the ESS devised a syllabus review process whereby, following a thorough review of all syllabi submitted, the ESS would identify courses that did not appear to meet ESR guidelines. For courses that the ESS identified as not meeting the ESR criteria, select committee members would meet with instructors and make suggestions about how to align courses with ESR guidelines. The ESS would make recommendations to remove the ESR designation from a course should an instructor decline to alter course content in conformity with ESR guidelines. By the end of fall 2016, a series of e-mails were sent to instructors teaching ESR courses, requesting the mandatory submission of their ESR course syllabi and the voluntary completion of the anonymous instructor questionnaire.

Following the procurement of ESR course syllabi and completed instructor questionnaires, the ESS met three times over spring semester 2017 to make recommendations based on findings of the syllabus review and instructor questionnaire. The ESS successfully reached consensus on courses identified as not meeting ESR guidelines. Designated committee members met with instructors whose syllabi did not align with ESR guidelines and provided suggestions on how to improve their course content, bringing it in conformity with the current criteria. The ESS devised a follow-up process to ensure the alignment of these courses with ESR guidelines before the courses are offered again. The ESS also made recommendations to remove certain courses from the ESR course array. Finally, the ESS drafted its report with recommendations on how the ESR course array could be improved and how the ESR guidelines could be revised and better implemented to enhance the achievement of student learning outcomes.

## II. Background on Ethnic Studies Requirement Course Array Review

The ESR grew out of concerns exemplified by a May 1987 incident in which the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity put up a large caricature of an “island native” for its “Fiji Island” theme party. The newly formed Steering Committee on Minority Affairs, chaired by undergraduate Black Student Union leader Charles Holley, recommended in its December 1987 report the implementation of a mandatory six-credit ESR. The L&S Curriculum Committee reduced the proposed requirement to three credits after reviewing the campus’s capacity to meet it. On April 18, 1988, the L&S Faculty Senate adopted a three-credit ESR as part of the existing breadth requirement for B.A. and B.S. degrees to be effective for all entering students in the 1989-1990 academic year. In May 1994, the UW-Madison Faculty Senate approved a three-credit ESR for all incoming freshmen and transfer students as part of the university-wide General Education requirements.

During the 1988-89 academic year, the L&S Curriculum Committee, chaired by Bernice Durand, developed the following criteria for courses that could be used to satisfy the ESR. Approved courses were expected to promote

- the study of the experience of discrimination by some ethnic, racial, or religious group so affected in American society; or
- the thorough examination of aspects of the culture and historical experience of an ethnic, racial, or religious group that remains on the margin in the United States; or
- the study of discrimination, cultural differences, and ethnicity in other settings in ways which help in the understanding of cultural and ethnic problems in the United States.

In February 2000, at the request of Vice Chancellor Paul Barrows, Dean Phillip R. Certain appointed a committee to review UW Madison’s Ethnic Studies Requirement. Responding to student complaints over the efficacy of ESR courses, Dean Certain stated that “the criteria for defining which courses adequately fulfill the Ethnic Studies Requirement need to be reviewed. The responsibility for developing and offering courses meeting the Ethnic Studies Requirement needs to be spread more evenly across Letters and Science and extended to other Schools and Colleges as well.” When Dean Certain issued his charge in 2000, UW-Madison was in its tenth year of the ESR.

Two years after Dean Certain issued his charge, the ESR Review Committee submitted its report, concluding that the ESR should be retained because it was yielding “positive academic and campus climate outcomes.” The 2002 report also made recommendations to improve ESR course offerings.

In 2003, the Ethnic Studies Implementation Committee formed to carry out the recommendations of the ESR Review Committee. The Ethnic Studies Implementation Committee spent fall 2003 to fall 2004 reviewing the entire ESR course array. The list of 233 ESR courses was reduced to 166, and 25 new courses were added. These changes were implemented in fall 2005. This was the last time UW-Madison reviewed all ESR course offerings.

The 2003 Ethnic Studies Implementation Committee also developed a new set of descriptive guidelines for ESR courses that was approved by the University Academic Planning Council in June 2005. This new set of guidelines still functions as the criteria by which the current ESS evaluates courses that satisfy the ESR.

- ESR courses must be offered for a minimum of 3 credits.
- Evidence (e.g., syllabus, reading list) must be provided demonstrating that the course material illuminates the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States.
- Courses that explore the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of racial and ethnic minorities in a comparative international format must devote at least 25% of the course (lecture, discussion, reading materials, etc.) to the experience and/or theoretical understanding of the means by which persistently marginalized groups in the US negotiate the conditions of exclusion or marginalization.
- Courses that explore the condition of U.S. ethnic groups that were at one time marginalized but which have since been widely assimilated into the dominant U.S. culture must devote at least 25% of the course to the experience and/or theoretical understanding of the means by which persistently marginalized groups in the US negotiate the conditions of exclusion or marginalization.
- In cases where religion is intertwined with respect to ethnic/racial minorities that are persistently marginalized or discriminated against in the U.S., courses that focus on religion may fulfill the ESR.

The Ethnic Studies Implementation Committee also proposed convening a standing faculty and staff Ethnic Studies Subcommittee of the University General Education Committee (the ESS of the UGEC) to administer and advocate for the ESR. In March 2010, the ESS brought together faculty and academic staff who teach or influence the most frequently taken ESR courses. Their conversations led to the articulation of four Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) that transcend specific content areas and speak to the common objectives among ESR courses. The current ESS still relies on the four ESR ELOs that were developed in 2010 to assess student learning and to evaluate whether new courses proposed as ESR support student learning relative to the requirement.

- **Awareness of History's Impact on the Present** - Ethnic Studies courses highlight how certain histories have been valued and devalued, and how these differences have promulgated disparities in contemporary American society.
- **Ability to Recognize and Question Assumptions** – Ethnic Studies courses promote recognition and application of critical thinking skills, specifically with respect to teaching students to harbor a healthy skepticism towards knowledge claims, whether in the form of media, political, or popular representations, primarily as these relate to race and ethnicity. As part of this process, the ESR should challenge students to question their own assumptions and preconceived notions on these topics.
- **A Consciousness of Self and Other** - Awareness of self is inextricably linked with awareness of and empathy towards the perspectives of others. In constructing a space

for this kind of discussion in their classrooms, Ethnic Studies courses give students an opportunity to think about identity issues, including their own identity, as well as the connections they might have to people “outside” their focused social circle.

- **Effective Participation in a Multicultural Society** – Ethnic Studies courses should be relevant to students’ “lives outside the classroom,” and pursuing the objectives above should not only lead to student behavioral change, but to action in the real world. The ESR should ultimately engender in students the ability to participate in a multicultural society more effectively, respectfully, and meaningfully. This participation may be as mundane as being able to discuss race with a colleague or friend, or to recognize inequities in interpersonal, institutional, or other context.

In spring 2016, Provost Mangelsdorf responded to a string of racist campus incidents with renewed interest in the ESR, affirming its importance in improving campus climate. Given that ten years have passed since the 2005 implementation of ESR guidelines, a new review is necessary to assess the alignment of the current ESR course offerings with ESR guidelines and to recommend revisions to the ESR criteria in order to promote better achievement of student learning outcomes.

### **III. Findings and Specific Recommendations: Syllabus Review**

The ESS review of the ESR course array showed that the clear majority of ESR courses align with ESR guidelines. In fall 2016, the ESS identified 178 active ESR courses. Of these courses, 132 have instructors (faculty, academic staff, and graduate students) attached to them, whereas the instructors of 46 of these courses are no longer at UW-Madison.

In instances where multiple instructors teach the same ESR course, the ESS requested a separate syllabus from each instructor rather than reviewing one sample syllabus per course. For all courses, the ESS requested the syllabus from the last time that an instructor taught the class.

The ESS identified 110 instructors teaching ESR courses. Of the 110 instructors, 108 submitted the requested syllabi for a total 189 syllabi. The ESS contacted the departments and programs for courses with no attached instructors and collected 36 syllabi. The ESS reviewed a total of 225 ESR course syllabi.

Of the 225 syllabi, the ESS identified 16 syllabi that did not meet the ESR guidelines. It is notable that 209 of the 225 course syllabi met the basic criteria of the ESR. This shows that the development of a clear set of ESR guidelines and ELOs together with a standing ESS to administer the guidelines has effectively advanced a solid ESR course array.

However, concerns abound over courses that do not meet the ESR guidelines, the uneven distribution of student enrollment in ESR courses, gaps in the ESR course array, the effectiveness of the ESR guidelines in promoting student learning outcomes, and the offering of online ESR courses.

## A. Courses

Of the sixteen syllabi that the ESS identified as failing to meet the ESR criteria, seven were ANTRHO 104 courses. A total of nine ANTHRO 104 syllabi were submitted. The ESS determined that two of the nine met the ESR criteria, whereas seven did not appear to do so.

The Chair of the ESS held separate meetings with the Chair of the Anthropology Department, the Undergraduate Advisor of the Anthropology Department, the Chair of the Cultural Section of the Anthropology Department, and select Anthropology faculty to discuss concerns about ANTHRO 104. In February 2017, the Chair of the Anthropology Department together with the Chair of the Cultural Section of the Anthropology Department invited members of the ESS to the faculty meeting of the Cultural Section of the Anthropology Department.

At the meeting, ESS members explained that seven of the nine submitted ANTHRO 104 syllabi failed to make legible how 25% of the course (3.75 weeks) was dedicated to exploring the experiences and/or theoretical understandings of persistently marginalized groups in the U.S. ESS members emphasized the academic and social importance of ESR courses given that students are required to take only one ESR course in their college career. In addition, ESS members explained the responsibility of ANTHRO 104 to meet the basic criteria of the ESR given that L&S has consistently supported increased enrollment in the course. Indeed, L&S support for TAs in ANTHRO 104 has been so robust that it has had a higher percentage of undergraduate enrollment than all other ESR courses since at least 2008. ESS members provided sample syllabi of introductory Anthropology courses that are in line with ESR guidelines.

On March 13, 2017, the Chair of the Anthropology Department forwarded from the Chair of the Cultural Section of the Anthropology Department, on behalf of her faculty, a written response to the meeting with ESS members that pledged “to continue working together to strengthen 104 and to improving our syllabi and course design to make our pedagogical goals in teaching this critical course more transparent, legible, and consistent.” The letter further stated that faculty teaching ANTHRO 104 “will be vigilant in making sure that each version of 104 contains a clear minimum of 3.75 weeks of Ethnic Studies content, with the goal to incorporate a significantly greater amount.” (See Appendix A)

To ensure that faculty of the Cultural Section of the Anthropology Department carries out their pledge to align all versions of the ANTHRO 104 syllabi with ESR guidelines, the ESS recommends:

**R-1: Individual instructors must submit their ANTHRO 104 syllabus before each teaching term to the ESS for review and approval. The deadlines for syllabus submission are August 1 for fall semester, December 1 for spring semester, and May 1 for summer sessions. The review will continue for three academic years,**

**from July 31, 2017 to May 31, 2020. The chair of the ESS will oversee the implementation of this review.**

The deadlines for monitoring ANTHRO 104 are intended to afford instructors the opportunity to revise their syllabus in accordance with ESR guidelines. Should it appear that compliance is unlikely to be achieved, the ESS may assert its authority to remove the Ethnic Studies designation from ANTHRO 104, to be effective in a future term so as not to disadvantage students.

The remaining nine course syllabi that the ESS identified as not meeting the ESR criteria represented seven different courses. Following meetings that ESS members held with individual instructors of these courses and a thorough review to consider whether the courses could be reasonably revised to align with ESR guidelines, the ESS recommends the following:

**R-2: For courses where the instructor has agreed to make revisions to align their course with ESR guidelines, instructors must submit their syllabi to the ESS for review and approval for two teaching cycles, or the next two times they offer the course. The deadlines for syllabus submission are August 1 for fall semester, December 1 for spring semester, and May 1 for summer sessions. The chair of the ESS will oversee the implementation of this review. (See Appendix B)**

The deadlines for monitoring these courses are intended to afford instructors the opportunity to revise their syllabus in accordance with ESR guidelines. Should it appear that compliance is unlikely to be achieved, the ESS may assert its authority to remove the Ethnic Studies designation from specified courses, to be effective in a future term so as not to disadvantage students.

**R-3: The removal of one course from the ESR course array whose instructor is no longer teaching at UW-Madison. (See Appendix C)**

When the ESR was implemented in April 1988, most courses from the four Ethnic and Indigenous Studies units were included in the ESR course array. However, given that some of the courses offered by the four units may not center the experiences of persistently marginalized groups in the U.S., the ESS recommends:

**R-4: The creation of topics courses in the four Ethnic and Indigenous Studies units that do not carry the Ethnic Studies designation for cases where instructors wish to develop new courses or offer one-time courses that do not meet the ESR.**

As part of the ESR course array review, the ESS contacted departments and programs that list ESR courses which do not have instructors attached to them. Following correspondence with department and program chairs about these courses, the ESS recommends:

**R-5: The removal from the ESR course array of seven courses that have no instructors attached to them. These requests were all initiated by the heads of departments and programs, as they have no plans to offer these courses again. (See Appendix C)**

## B. Student Enrollment Distribution

Despite a wide selection of ESR courses across campus, students disproportionately enroll in three courses offered by two departments to fulfill their ESR: ANTHRO 104, SOC 134, and SOC 170. Together, these courses account for 32% of all ESR enrollments (Table 1). This finding is corroborated by a 2010 study conducted by the UW Office of Academic Planning and Institutional Research, which reported similar trends in student enrollment in ESR courses for bachelor degree recipients from 2008 to 2010.

Table 1

**Most Enrolled ESR Courses**  
Undergraduate Enrollments Fall 2015 - Spring 2017

Subject	Cat #	Title	% of total
ANTHRO 104	104	Cult Anthro&Human Diversity	17.0%
SOC 134	134	Am Racial&Ethnic Minorities	7.9%
SOC 170	170	Population Problems	7.3%
AFROAMER 156	156	Black Music&Am Cultrl Hist	4.1%
ASIAN AM, HISTORY 160	160	Asian Am Hist:Movmnt&Dislocatn	2.3%
ASIAN AM, HISTORY 161	161	AsianAm His:Settlmnt&Belonging	2.3%
L I S 202	202	Divides&Differences-Multicultr	2.2%
AFROAMER 154	154	Hip-Hop and Cont Am Society	2.2%
ENGL 173	173	Ethnic and Multicultural Lit	2.1%
AFROAMER 231	231	Intro to Afro-Am History	1.7%
AFROAMER 271	271	Topics in African Amer Culture	1.6%
ASIAN AM, ENGL 150	150	Lit & Culture of Asian America	1.6%
JOURN 162	162	Mass Media in Multicultrl Amer	1.5%
AMER IND, ANTHRO 314	314	Indians of North America	1.4%
COM ARTS 372	372	Rhetoric-Campaign&Revolutn	1.4%
AMER IND 100	100	Intro-Amer Indian Studies	1.3%
ASIAN AM, SOC 220	220	Ethnic Movements in U.S.	1.3%
AFROAMER, ART HIST 242	242	Intro to Afro-American Art	1.3%
HDFS 474	474	Racial Ethnic Families in U.S.	1.1%
COUN PSY 225	225	Coming to Terms-Cultrl Divrsty	1.1%

**Note:** Previous studies have shown that a clear majority of students take only one ESR course on campus, so enrollment data can be used as a reasonable proxy for understanding how students are meeting their ESR.



A founding principle of the ESR that was affirmed by Dean Certain in his 2000 charge to the ESR Review Committee is the importance of developing and offering a wide range of ESR courses within L&S and in other Schools and Colleges as well. Student demands and interests are diverse and expansive. Thus, a wide-ranging ESR course array is necessary to meet the needs of students and bolster the achievement of student learning outcomes. The current ESS aims to carry forward this core principle. In addition to ensuring the development of a robust ESR course array, we want to support a more balanced student enrollment in ESR courses.

The ESS recognizes that the course offerings of the four Ethnic and Indigenous Studies units not only anchor the ESR course array, comprising 114 or 64% of the 178 active ESR courses, but also act as the main conduits for the diversification and growth of the ESR course array. Over half of the 114 courses are cross-listed with departments and programs across campus. The course offerings of the four Ethnic and Indigenous units comprise eleven of the top twenty highest enrolled ESR courses and six of eleven courses are cross-listed with five different departments. However, student enrollment in these eleven courses makes up 21% of the total ESR enrollment, while student enrollment in ANTHRO 104, SOC 134, and SOC 170 makes up 32% of the total ESR enrollment (Table 1). We seek to balance these numbers.

A key factor that has structurally limited student enrollment in courses offered by the four Ethnic and Indigenous Studies units is the lack of TA allocation. In spring 2017, Provost Mangelsdorf allocated TA lines to the American Indian Studies Program, the Asian American Studies Program, and the Chican@/Latin@ Studies Program.

The granting of these dedicated TA lines led to impressive results. The American Indian Studies Program originally set out to offer their introductory course, AMER IND 100, with an enrollment cap of 100 students, with one TA. With the help of UGEC and their participation in SOAR Advisor training, advisors were able to help students identify courses other than the more commonly enrolled classes to fulfill their ESR. As a result of these efforts, AMER IND 100 quickly filled. L&S administration provided an additional TA line, allowing AIS to raise enrollment to 150. Currently, the enrollment for AMER IND 100 is at 152, with two TAs. Before spring 2017, AMER IND 100 enrolled 35 to 50 students, with no TA support (Table 2).

**Table 2**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Cat #</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>S '15</b>	<b>F '15</b>	<b>S '16</b>	<b>F '16</b>	<b>S '17</b>
AMER IND	100	Intro-Amer Indian Studies	45	46	51	77 2 classes, combined enrollmt	152 (with 2 TAs)
ASIAN AM, CHICLA, FOLKLORE	102	Intro-Comparativ Ethnic Studies	39	N/A	N/A	N/A	145 (with 2 TAs)

In a similar manner, the Asian American Studies Program was able to offer the Introductory to Comparative Ethnic Studies course with an enrollment cap of 144 students, with two TAs. The course has a current enrollment of 145 students. When it was last offered in spring 2015, the Introductory to Comparative Ethnic Studies course enrolled 39 students, with no TA support (Table 2).

Given these dramatic results, which support the goal of reaching students through a diverse ESR course array in line with student demands, the ESS recommends:

**R-5: Permanent allocation of TA-ships to the American Indian Studies Program, the Asian American Studies Program, and the Chican@/Latin@ Studies Program, and an increased allocation of two TA-ships to the Department of Afro-American Studies, to be added to the department's current TA budget. The four Ethnic and Indigenous Studies units will work in partnership with traditional departments to employ TAs.**

**R-6: Continued support of ESR TAs with access funding.**

**R-7: Continuing the shift in the culture of undergraduate student advising, where advisors work to inform students of the wide array of courses they can take to fulfill the ESR, rather than steering students to the more commonly enrolled courses.**

**R-8: Expanding the tasks of the ESS to include outreach, where ESS members regularly meet with advisors to inform them about the wide array of ESR courses and to promote the importance of the ESR.**

### C. Gaps in ESR Course Offerings

The ESS finds the relative paucity in the number of ESR courses offered by the Chican@/Latin@ Studies Program concerning. Of the 114 active ESR courses that are listed or cross-listed with the four Ethnic and Indigenous Studies units, 57 are listed or cross-listed with the Department of Afro-American Studies, 24 with the American Indian Studies Program, 20 with the Asian American Studies Program, and 13 with the Chican@/Latin@ Studies Program. Given that AIS, AAS, and CLS are all programs and not departments, their course offerings should be relatively similar. With 13 ESR courses, CLS offers noticeably fewer courses than the AIS and AAS programs.

The small number of CLS course offerings limits the ability of students to fulfill their ESR with CLS courses. CLS enrolled a mere a 5% of the total number of students taking ESR courses (Table 3).

Given that the Latinx population is the nation's largest minority group and the center of its immigration debate, the ESS is troubled by the small number of CLS courses. While the study of race can be approached on a broad conceptual level and within a comparative or relational context, the foundational framework of Ethnic Studies and Indigenous Studies is rooted in group-specific studies that promote a focused examination of the distinct racial formations of a minoritized group and their explicit concerns. Thus, a strong ESR course array should have among its course offerings a solid core of courses that examine each of the four major ethnic and indigenous groups of the U.S.

The ESS would like to see more CLS courses offered in order to increase student enrollment in CLS ESR courses and enhance the achievement of student learning outcomes for ESR courses. The ESS notes that faculty strength across the four Ethnic and Indigenous Studies units has fallen to historically low levels. Chican@ and Latin@ Studies currently has 1 faculty (FTE), while American Indian Studies has 2.5 faculty (FTE) and Asian American Studies has 2.75 faculty (FTE).

With only 1 faculty (FTE) appointment in CLS, the program is unable to teach or develop more courses. To promote an increase in the number of CLS ESR course offerings and student enrollment in CLS ESR courses, the ESS recommends:

**R-9: A new tenure-track faculty line for CLS, where the hiring is administered and conducted by CLS.**

#### D. ESR Guidelines

The ESS believes that the current ESR guidelines need to be revised to capture more effectively the intent of the ESR and to assist the review of courses that carry the Ethnic Studies designation.

The most notable change applies to courses that explore the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of racial and ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples in a comparative international format. The previous guideline stipulated that such courses must devote at least 25%, or 3.75 weeks, to examining the experiences of persistently marginalized groups in the United States. The new proposed guideline increases this stipulation to

**Table 3**  
**ENROLLMENTS IN COURSES WITH**  
**ETHNIC AND INDIGENOUS**  
**STUDIES**

**UNIT SUBJECT LISTINGS**

Total Enrollments Summer 2014		
Subject Listing	Enrolls	% of total
AFROAMER	7,603	19.0%
AMER IND	2,603	7.0%
ASIAN AM	5,002	13.0%
CHICLA	2,013	5.0%
Course does not have one of the above subject listings	21,894	56.0%
Total	39,115	

**Note:** When a course was cross-listed with one of the Ethnic and Indigenous Studies Unit subject listings, the full enrollment was reported there. Rarely, a course was cross-listed between these units. In those cases the enrollment was split equally between the units so as not to duplicate the enrollment data.

50%, or 7.5 weeks. The ESS would like to see an equal emphasis on the local and the global. The task of improving campus climate entails understanding how the global is linked to the local, but is not a substitute for the local. Examining the health concerns of Guatemalans in Guatemala City, for example, does not necessarily enhance understandings of the health concerns of Guatemalan Americans or a sensitivity towards Latinx populations in the U.S. Since students are currently required to take only one ESR course, the ESS believes that ESR courses should examine in a meaningful way the experiences and concerns of persistently marginalized groups in the United States.

#### **R-10: Proposed new guidelines to be effective fall 2017**

(for the current 2005 ESR guidelines, see page 6)

##### **New Guidelines**

- **ESR courses must be offered for a minimum of 3 credits.**
- **Syllabus and reading list must demonstrate that the course material is centrally focused on the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of persistently marginalized racial and ethnic minorities and/or indigenous peoples in the United States.**
- **Courses that are not centrally focused on the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of persistently marginalized racial and ethnic minorities and/or indigenous peoples in the United States may be designated as ESR classes under certain circumstances.**
  - **Courses that explore the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of racial and ethnic minorities and/or indigenous peoples in a comparative international format must devote at least 50% of the course (syllabus, reading list, course content, and student assessment) to exploring the experiences and concerns of persistently marginalized groups in the United States.**
  - **In cases where religion is intertwined with respect to persistently marginalized racial and ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples in the United States, courses that focus on religion may fulfill the ESR.**
- **Syllabus will reflect the ESR Essential Learning Outcomes among the course-level learning outcomes, by listing them as expressed in the ESR course guidelines, or by integrating them into discipline-specific course-level outcomes.**

##### **E. Online ESR Courses**

A growing number of proposed new ESR courses are being designed in an online format, and some courses originally approved for the Ethnic Studies designation in a traditional “live” format have changed to online courses. Given these developments, the ESS calls for discussions of how ESR learning outcomes can be achieved in online learning. The ESS questions whether the goals of ESR can be met in an online format. For instance, can the goals of diversity be achieved in a meaningful way without the physical interaction of people? And at what enrollment does online discussion break down and become too difficult for students and instructors to navigate?

Because serious discussions need to take place about the effectiveness of online ESR courses, the ESS recommends:

**R-11: The chair of the ESS should hold a series of meetings during the 2017-18 academic year to discuss the viability of online ESR courses and develop guidelines to ensure their effectiveness.**

**R-12: The ESS should draft recommendations and seek approval of ESR online course guidelines by fall 2018.**

#### **IV. Findings and Specific Recommendations: Questionnaire**

To assist the assessment of the effectiveness of the four ESR Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs), the ESS devised a questionnaire to be completed by instructors of ESR courses on a volunteer basis (Appendix E). The ESS believes that the assessment of student achievement in ESR courses goes beyond asking for instructor feedback on the efficacy of each of the four ELOs. It also entails soliciting feedback on the effectiveness of a three-credit ESR and how factors such as the instructor’s identity along with the size and format of an ESR course shape student learning and reception of course materials.



The ESS sent the anonymous questionnaire to 110 instructors teaching ESR courses to be completed on a volunteer basis. The ESS received 76 completed questionnaire for a 69% response rate.

##### **A. Assessment of the Four Essential Learning Outcomes**

The questionnaire asked instructors to assess the effectiveness of their ESR course(s) in helping students achieve each of the four ELOs. The findings are summarized below (Tables 4, 5, 6, 7):

**Table 4**

**Table 5**

ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE & QUESTION ASSUMPTIONS			
Response	Cnt	% of Total	
Very Effective	52	69%	
Somewhat Effective	21	28%	
Neither effective or ineffective	1	1%	
Ineffective	0	0%	
Very ineffective	0	0%	
N/A	0	1%	



AWARENESS OF HISTORY'S IMPACT ON PRESENT			
Response	Cnt	% of Total	
Very Effective	55	73%	
Somewhat Effective	17	23%	
Neither effective or ineffective	2	1%	
Ineffective	1	0%	
Very ineffective	0	0%	
N/A	0	1%	

Table 6





A CONSCIOUSNESS OF SELF AND OTHER			
Response	Cnt	% of Total	
Very Effective	50	67%	
Somewhat Effective	21	28%	
Neither effective or ineffective	2	3%	
Ineffective	1	1%	
Very ineffective	0	0%	
N/A	1	1%	

Table 7

EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN A MULTICULT. SOCIETY			
Response	Cnt	% of Total	
Very Effective	39	52%	
Somewhat Effective	32	43%	
Neither effective or ineffective	2	3%	
Ineffective	0	0%	
Very ineffective	0	3%	
N/A	2	1%	





As indicated in the tables above, a majority of respondents think that their own ESR courses are very effective in helping students achieve each of the four Essential Learning Outcomes. In the qualitative response sections where respondents were asked to write in additional thoughts or feedback on each of the four questions, many noted that they had designed their courses with the four ELOs in mind. A good number of respondents remarked that their replies indicated their hopes for their ESR course, but added that the true measure of student learning outcomes for ESR courses required assessing students. In light of this feedback, the ESS recommends:

**R-13: The ESS begin designing a strategy in academic year 2017-18 for periodically assessing the requirement, which should include direct assessment of student learning, and/or assessment of student attitudes and beliefs, relative to the ESR learning outcomes and the goals articulated for the requirement's impact on campus climate. This assessment activity should be conducted in a timely way to take advantage of the currency of the syllabi that have been gathered. However, adequate time must be devoted to considering results and developing effective recommendations arising from the research.**

## B. The Three-Credit Ethnic Studies Requirement

When asked how valuable it would be to increase the ESR from one to two courses, almost 80% of respondents answered that this increase would be

Table 8

How valuable do you think it would be to increase the Ethnic Studies requirement from one to two courses?			
Response	Count	% of Total	
Would be extremely valuable	42	56%	
Would have quite a bit of value	17	23%	
Would have average value	6	8%	
Would have limited value	9	12%	
would have no value	1	1%	

extremely valuable or would have quite a bit of value (Table 8).

In the qualitative response section, many noted the benefits of having a six-credit ESR. Instructors believe that requiring students to take a lower division and an upper division ESR course would significantly enhance student learning of ESR course content. Some respondents, while enthusiastic in their support for this increase, expressed concerns about student resentment. In light of this finding, the ESS recommends:

**R-14: The forming of a task group to assess the implications of increasing the ESR from three credits to six credits.**

### C. Teaching Format of ESR Courses

A clear majority of instructors teaching ESR courses, 68%, indicated small group discussions to be the most effective teaching format for ESR courses. The respondents were less enthusiastic about the lecture format: 30% considered the lecture format very effective, while 58% considered it somewhat effective. At an institution as large as UW, a combined lecture-and-discussion format may be optimal with TAs teaching discussion sections for big lecture courses.

Whereas 39% of all respondents felt that they had been provided with the necessary resources to teach in the format that best suited their ESR course, 31% felt that they were only somewhat provided with the necessary resources. While the questionnaire did not specify the meaning of “resources,” the narrative feedback provided by respondents overwhelmingly indicated the importance of TA support and of properly trained TAs.













Given that the clear majority of instructors identified small group discussions as the most effective teaching format and expressed the importance of TAs, especially properly trained TAs, the ESS recommends:

**R-15: The development of a focused university-wide training program for graduate students interested in TAing ESR courses.**

### D. Factors Influencing the Teaching of ESR Courses

Among the 76 respondents, 37, or 49%, self-identified as a person of color while 39, or 51%, did not identify as a person of color. While these figures indicate that a relatively even number of minority and majority instructors teach ESR courses, they also show that within the broader campus demographics, there is a disproportionate number of instructors teaching ESR courses who identify as people of color.

Table 9

How much do you think your racial/ethnic identity influences student reception of you as their teacher?			
All Respondents			
Responses	Count	% of Total	
Completely influences	18	24%	
Influences quite a bit	34	45%	
Influences some	19	25%	
Influences a little	4	5%	
Has no influence	0	0%	
Respondents who identify as person of color			
Completely influences	14	39%	
Influences quite a bit	15	40%	
Influences some	7	19%	
Influences a little	1	3%	
Has no influence	0	0%	
Respondents who identify as white			
Completely influences	4	11%	
Influences quite a bit	19	50%	
Influences some	12	32%	
Influences a little	3	8%	
Has no influence	0	0%	

Findings show that instructors who identified as people of color discerned a greater influence of their racial/ethnic identity on student reception than majority instructors (Table 9).

While the questionnaire did not qualify what it meant by “influence,” the narrative feedback from respondents unpacked the racial and gendered dimensions of this term. For instance:

“Because I'm white, some white students probably identify with me and so gain a way of thinking about and addressing racial hierarchy and injustice in the world

while acknowledging their own privilege. I'm sure students of color sometimes appreciate hearing a white person give voice to the issues I stress, even as they might benefit more from seeing an instructor of color in an authority role.”

“I think of “reception” in at least two ways. First, I can tell that my racial/ethnic identity influences my students' positive reception of my teaching when my students, especially my students of color are more curious about my research, ask questions more frequently in class, speak up more in class more often, provide constructive feedback about my course, are more willing to share their personal stories and experiences with their peers and with me inside and outside of class, are more willing to mention “privilege” and “racism” in their examples and conversations, etc. ... The flip side of this reception is that some white students are more aggressive, more hostile toward me as an instructor, because I am a faculty of color. To speak plainly, I have experienced hostilities and



microaggressions from students that I doubt most white male faculty ever experience.”

“Now as a post-menopausal white women over 5'5", I have the most power in the classroom I've ever had.”

“short brown woman - negative credibility”

White instructors, instructors of color, and women instructors all identified a similar set of top four challenges that they face when teaching their ESR course. Their answers corresponded with the tally of all instructors inclusive (Table 10). Women of color instructors, however, not only identified a different set of top four challenges; their answers also showed that they face a proliferation of concerns when teaching their ESR course (Table 11). Some standout challenges include: feelings of isolation, negative impact on tenure and/or performance reviews, and the lack of University support, of properly trained TAs, and of socio-economic diversity in the classroom.

**Table 10**

CHALLENGES MOST FREQUENTLY IDENTIFIED BY ESR INSTRUCTORS		
Respondents: All instructors	% indicating this as a challenge	
Lack of racial/ethnic diversity in the classroom	69%	
Students lack racial/ethnic vocabulary and grammar	65%	
Students are resistant to course content	54%	
Power and privilege are at work in the classroom	49%	

**Table 11**

CHALLENGES MOST FREQUENTLY IDENTIFIED BY ESR INSTRUCTORS		
Respondents: Women of Color Instructors	% indicating this as a challenge	
Lack of racial/ethnic diversity in the classroom	82%	
Students lack racial/ethnic vocabulary and grammar	65%	
Students are resistant to course content	65%	
Lack of support from the University	59%	
Power and privilege are at work in the classroom	59%	
Lack of properly trained TAs	53%	
Negatively affects tenure and/or performance reviews	53%	
Lack of socio-economic diversity in the classroom	53%	
I am isolated	53%	

**Table 12**

MOST INDICATED OPPORTUNITIES OF TEACHING ESR COURSES		
Respondents: All Instructors	% indicating this as an opportunity	
Changing students' views about the world in which they live	92%	
Exposing students to non-majority voices, perspectives, and histories	87%	
Preparing students for life and careers in an increasingly multicultural U.S.	82%	
Helping students see how power and privilege work	78%	









All respondents, including all identity subsets, selected the same top four opportunities that teaching an ESR course provided them (Table 12). These findings show that ESR instructors overwhelmingly believe in the transformative potential of education and that they teach ESR courses to change students' views

about the world in which they live.

When asked which factors motivate them to teach their ESR course, instructors of color selected a different set of motivators than did white instructors (Table 13).

Notably, a clear majority of all instructors, including all subsets, indicated that they were either well prepared or very well prepared to teach ESR courses. Of the 16 total respondents who indicated that they were somewhat prepared to teach ESR courses, 15 were instructors who did not identify as a person of color.

**Table 13**

MOST INDICATED MOTIVATORS FOR TEACHING ESR COURSES		
Respondents: Instructors of color	% indicating this as a motivation	
Race, ethnicity, and indigeneity are important analytical categories for me	94%	
I want to promote social justice	86%	
Ethnic Studies is important to my research	78%	
I have a passion for Ethnic Studies	78%	
Respondents: White Instructors	% indicating this as a motivation	
I want to promote social justice	85%	
Race, ethnicity, and indigeneity are important analytical categories for me	77%	
There is a need in my department/program curriculum	54%	
Ethnic Studies is important to my research	51%	

In light of the findings reported in Tables 10-13, the ESS recommends the following:

**R-16: Share data with department and program heads along with members of Divisional Committees to increase awareness of the challenges that instructors face when teaching ESR courses.**

**R-17: Allocate resources to support ESR instructors in all the challenges that teaching ESR courses necessarily entail.**

## V. Conclusion

The ESS has put forward seventeen recommendations to advance a robust ESR course array and to better address the distinct challenges instructors face teaching ESR courses.

In this review of the ESR course array, the ESS worked with instructors whose courses failed to comply with the ESR criteria and tried to create a supportive environment for change. It

wanted to provide instructors with the opportunity to revise their syllabus in accordance with ESR guidelines before recommending the removal of the Ethnic Studies designation from their courses.

As many of the recommendations reveal, TA allocations and training shape the quality of ESR courses. The University should thus work towards promoting a more even distribution of student enrollment in ESR courses by providing permanent TA lines to the four Ethnic and Indigenous Studies units, especially given how the units have diversified and bolstered the growth of the ESR course array across campus with their many cross-listed courses. Moreover, by prioritizing the granting of TAs to ESR courses so that these courses can offer small group discussions, the university will advance what instructors have identified as the best teaching format for ESR courses. Besides TA allocation, the development of a university-wide training program for graduate students interested in TAing ESR courses will support ESR course instruction with properly prepared TAs.

With only one faculty (FTE) appointment in the Chican@/Latin@ Studies Program, TA allocation alone is not enough to bolster student enrollment in CLS courses or remedy the gap in the ESR course array caused by the relative paucity of CLS courses. The ESS maintains that CLS will only be able to offer more courses if the program can hire a new tenure-track faculty member.

As the ESS moved to update the ESR guidelines, it sought to capture more effectively the intent of the ESR in promoting a meaningful examination of the experiences of persistently marginalized groups in the U.S. This is crucial given that students are required to take only one ESR course in their entire college career. The ESS would also like to see formal discussions take place in the 2017-18 academic year to consider the viability of online ESR courses and develop guidelines to ensure their effectiveness.

While the ESS was able to ascertain that instructors believe their own courses are effective in helping students achieve each of the four ESR ELOs, it would like to begin in the 2017-18 academic year designing a strategy for the direct assessment of student learning and/or assessment of student attitudes and beliefs, relative to the ESR learning outcomes and goals. Additionally, the ESS supports the view of ESR instructors that increasing the ESR from one to two courses would promote student achievement of ESR learning outcomes, and would like to see a task group formed to assess the implications of this change.

Finally, the ESS maintains that the promotion of a robust ESR course array and of quality ESR instruction entails being aware of the distinct challenges that instructors teaching ESR courses face. The ESS would like to share its findings with the heads of departments and programs along with members of Divisional Committees and tenure review committees. It also requests the allocation of resources to support ESR instructor development.

The ESS, like the majority of ESR instructors, believe that ESR courses have the capacity to change students' views about the world in which they live. With these seventeen recommendations, the ESS aims to improve the learning and instruction of ESR courses and promote a better campus climate.

**APPENDIX A:**  
**Response of the Cultural Section of the Department of Anthropology**

March 13, 2017

To: Professor Cindy I-Fen Cheng  
 Chair, Ethnic Studies Requirement Subcommittee  
 College of Letters and Science

From: Professor Maria Lepowsky  
 Chair, Cultural Section  
 Department of Anthropology

As the Cultural Section faculty of the Department of Anthropology, we are responsible for teaching Anthropology 104. We thank you and your ESRC team for your time and effort in reaching out to us recently for a response to your subcommittee's current concerns about the course.

Your visit was truly timely. The energy brought into our department by three new hires in cultural anthropology, plus a political climate in which acts of overt racism and xenophobia have been newly emboldened, had already pushed us to consider how we might make Anthropology 104 even more effective. Consultation with the ESRC team has been very helpful to this end.

We agree that we collectively need to be more vigilant in how we make the Ethnic Studies content of 104 more consistent—and more legible to students and administrators. We will be sure to spell out in future 104 syllabi the Ethnic Studies content for each week's readings and lectures, and we will be careful about having these themes reflected in course required readings as well as in lectures and section discussions. For those of us who use a textbook in 104, we will be especially careful to flag the Ethnic Studies content of chapters assigned for particular weeks; as you pointed out, these readings can be especially opaque in terms of legibility on the syllabus. Most of us move between domestic and international content in each week of the course, but we see ways to make that movement more visible to students: we will be vigilant in making sure that each version of 104 contains a clear minimum of 3.75 weeks of Ethnic Studies content, with the goal to incorporate a significantly greater amount. Finally, we thought your suggestion of incorporating the Ethnic Studies requirement language directly into each of our future 104 syllabi was an excellent one, and we plan to adopt it.

With this course, we ask students to consider issues of social marginalization based on “race” and ethnicity in contemporary America in light of global patterns of inequality and marginalization. Collectively, we see Anthro 104 as critical to developing global citizens who understand and can apply their insights to urgent social concerns at home. We are strongly committed to the Ethnic Studies Requirement, and are honored that more than a third of undergraduates choose Anthropology 104 as their ESR course. We pledge to continue working together to strengthen 104, and to improving our syllabi and course design to make our pedagogical goals in teaching this critical course more transparent, legible, and consistent.

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**APPENDIX B:**  
**Courses Requiring Continued ESS Review and Approval**

1. ANTHRO 104
2. CES 578; SOC-AMER ID 578
3. ENGL 461
4. FOLKLORE 540
5. REL-FOLKLRE 352

**APPENDIX C:**  
**Courses Recommended for Removal from the ESR Course Array**

1. HIST 346
2. AMER IND-ART HIST 359
3. ART HIST 432
4. ART HIST 433
5. CHICLA-COM ARTS 419
6. FOLKLORE-MUSIC 535
7. POLI SCI 271
8. SCAND ST 466

## **APPENDIX D: Instructor Questionnaire**

### ESR Instructor Questionnaire

This questionnaire is anonymous.

After each question, there is an opportunity for you to elaborate your thoughts. Your willingness to share your insights with us will be key to the report that we generate at the end of this project.

Thank you so much for your time and support. We value your feedback.

How well do you think your "e" designated course helps to promote the University's goal of improving campus climate?

- ☐ Very well (1)
- ☐ Well (2)
- ☐ Adequately (3)
- ☐ Poorly (4)
- ☐ Very Poorly (5)

Please feel free to add to and/or elaborate on your response to the question above.

Do you identify as a person of color?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

How much do you think your racial/ethnic identity influences student reception of you as their teacher?

- ☐ Completely influences (1)
- ☐ Influences quite a bit (2)
- ☐ Influences some (3)
- ☐ Influences a little (4)
- ☐ Has no influence (5)

Please feel free to add to and/or elaborate on your response to the question above.



What challenges do you personally face teaching your "e" designated course? Please select all that apply. (The order of the items are randomly generated for each user.)

- ☐ Students are hostile (1)
- ☐ Students are resistant to course content (2)
- ☐ Students are disengaged (3)
- ☐ Students lack racial/ethnic vocabulary and grammar (4)
- ☐ Lack of TA support (5)
- ☐ Lack of properly trained TAs (6)
- ☐ Lack of support from faculty colleagues (7)
- ☐ Lack of support from my department/program (8)
- ☐ Lack of support from the College (9)
- ☐ Lack of support from the University (10)
- ☐ There is insufficient time for small group discussions (11)
- ☐ Classroom seating arrangements limit teaching and learning (12)
- ☐ Power and privilege are at work in the classroom (13)
- ☐ Teaching this course negatively affects tenure and/or performance reviews (14)
- ☐ I am presumed incompetent as an instructor (15)
- ☐ There is a lack of racial/ethnic diversity in the classroom (16)
- ☐ There is a lack of socio-economic diversity in the classroom (17)
- ☐ I am isolated (18)

Which one or two of the items above are your biggest challenges?

Please feel free to add to and/or elaborate on your responses to the questions above.

What opportunities does teaching an "e" designated course provide you? Please select all that apply. (The order of the items are randomly generated for each user.)

- ☐ Working with a diverse group of students (1)
- ☐ Working with engaged students (2)
- ☐ Working with TAs (3)
- ☐ Connecting with other faculty and staff who teach these topics (4)
- ☐ Affirming students' lived experiences with social disparities (5)
- ☐ Changing students' views about the world in which they live (6)
- ☐ Exposing students to non-majority voices, perspectives, and histories (7)
- ☐ Helping students see how power and privilege work (8)
- ☐ Preparing students for life and careers in an increasingly multicultural U.S. (9)
- ☐ Improving campus climate (10)
- ☐ Sharing research interests with students (11)
- ☐ Service to department/program and University (12)

Which of the above is the most important opportunity to you?

Please feel free to add to and/or elaborate on your responses to the question above.

What motivates you to teach an "e" designated course? Please select all that apply. (The order of the items are randomly generated for each user.)

- ☐ Ethnic Studies is important to my research (1)
- ☐ I have a passion for Ethnic Studies (2)
- ☐ Race, ethnicity, and indigeneity are important analytical categories to me (3)
- ☐ I want to promote social justice (4)
- ☐ There is a need in my department/program's curriculum (5)
- ☐ I want to bridge academia with broader communities outside the University (6)
- ☐ I want higher enrollment in my course (7)
- ☐ I am required to do so by my department (8)
- ☐ It is beneficial for tenure and promotion (9)

Which of the above is the most important motivator to you?

Please feel free to add to and/or elaborate on your responses to the question above.

How pedagogically prepared are you to support effective student discussions about race?

- ☐ Very well prepared (1)
- ☐ Well prepared (2)
- ☐ Somewhat prepared (3)
- ☐ Poorly prepared (4)
- ☐ Very poorly prepared (5)

Please feel free to add to and/or elaborate on your response to the question above.

How effective is the following teaching format for your "e" designated course(s)?

	Very effective (1)	Somewhat effective (2)	Neither effective or ineffective (3)	Ineffective (4)	Very ineffective (5)	N/A (6)
Lectures (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Small group discussions (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online discussions (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student-led discussions (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please share any best practices that you have developed in teaching your "e" designated course(s)?

Are you provided with the necessary resources to teach in the format that best suites your "e" designated courses?

- ☐ Definitely (1)
- ☐ Mostly (2)
- ☐ In between (3)
- ☐ Mostly not (4)
- ☐ Definitely not (5)

Please feel free to add to and/or elaborate on your response to the question above.

How valuable do you think it would be to increase the Ethnic Studies requirement from one to two courses?

- ☐ Would be extremely valuable (1)
- ☐ Would have quite a bit of value (2)
- ☐ Would have average value (3)
- ☐ Would have limited value (4)
- ☐ Would have no value (5)

Please feel free to add to and/or elaborate on your response to the question above.

Please reflect on one of your "e" designated courses. How effective is your course in meeting the following four Ethnic Studies Requirement Learning Outcomes?

Awareness of History's Impact on the Present. Ethnic Studies courses highlight how certain histories have been valued and devalued, and how these differences have promulgated disparities in contemporary U.S. society.

- ☐ Very effective (1)
- ☐ Somewhat effective (2)
- ☐ Neither effective or ineffective (3)
- ☐ Ineffective (4)
- ☐ Very ineffective (5)
- ☐ N/A (6)

Ability to Recognize and Question Assumptions. Ethnic Studies courses promote recognition and application of critical thinking skills, specifically with respect to teaching students to harbor a healthy skepticism towards knowledge claims, whether in the form of media, political, or popular representations, primarily as these relate to race and ethnicity. As part of this process, the ESR should challenge students to question their own assumptions and preconceived notions on these topics.

- ☐ Very effective (1)
- ☐ Somewhat effective (2)
- ☐ Neither effective or ineffective (3)
- ☐ Ineffective (4)
- ☐ Very ineffective (5)
- ☐ N/A (6)

A Consciousness of Self and Other. Awareness of self is inextricably linked with awareness of and empathy towards the perspectives of others. In constructing a space for this kind of discussion in their classrooms, Ethnic Studies courses give students an opportunity to think about identity issues, including their own identity, as well as the connections they might have to people "outside" their focused social circle.

- ☐ Very effective (1)
- ☐ Somewhat effective (2)
- ☐ Neither effective or ineffective (3)
- ☐ Ineffective (4)
- ☐ Very ineffective (5)
- ☐ N/A (6)

Effective Participation in a Multicultural Society. Ethnic Studies courses should be relevant to students' "lives outside the classroom," and pursuing the objectives above should not only lead to student behavioral change, but to action in the real world. The ESR should ultimately engender in students the ability to participate in a multicultural society more effectively, respectfully, and meaningfully. This participation may be as mundane as being able to discuss race with a colleague or friend, or to recognize inequities in interpersonal, institutional, or other contexts.

- ☐ Very effective (1)
- ☐ Somewhat effective (2)
- ☐ Neither effective or ineffective (3)
- ☐ Ineffective (4)
- ☐ Very ineffective (5)
- ☐ N/A (6)

Please feel free to add to and/or elaborate on your responses to the questions above.

Is there anything else you would like us to know about your experience teaching "e" designated courses, or your thoughts on the requirement more broadly, that this questionnaire has not covered?

The following questions are optional:

What word or words would you use to describe your race and/or ethnicity?

What word or words would you use to describe your gender expression/gender identity?

What word or words would you use to describe your sexuality?

What word or words would you use to describe your disability status?

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Communication Part B (Comm B)  
2016 Curriculum Calibration Report  
University General Education Committee

### **Comm B Courses: An Overview**

Comm B courses are part of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's General Education curriculum and help to ensure that every graduate of the university acquires the essential core of an undergraduate education. Providing instruction in transferable communication and research-gathering skills, Comm B courses are essential for students' success across their university coursework. Training students to gather and assess information from a variety of sources and to present different kinds of information, insight, and analysis to diverse audiences, Comm B courses are also essential for students' preparation for public life in a rapidly changing world. Offering focused instruction in writing proficiency and public speaking, the two areas that employers have identified as most needed by new-graduate hires, Comm B courses also help to prepare students for career success.<sup>1</sup>

Communication B ("Comm B") courses are low-enrollment courses involving substantial instruction in the four modes of literacy (that is, speaking, reading, writing, and listening), with emphasis on speaking and writing, either in the conventions of specific fields or in more advanced courses in communication. Comm-B courses are offered by departments across campus and vary widely in topic, content, and format, but they all teach research, writing, and speaking skills in close conjunction with course content. In Comm-B courses, students learn to:

- identify and make skillful use of relevant, reliable, and high quality research sources appropriate to the course subject and discipline
- make productive use of the writing process, including brainstorming, outlining, drafting, incorporating feedback, and revising, to develop a fledgling idea into a formal paper, presentation, and/or project
- produce formal writing and oral presentations that are clear, persuasive, well-organized, and polished
- make proper use of expressive conventions and protocols (e.g., organization, content, presentation, formatting, and style) appropriate to the genres of communication relevant to the course subject or discipline.

Every UW-Madison undergraduate student must complete a Comm-B course or a course at another university equivalent to a Comm-B course.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: PayScale and Future Workplace Release 2016 Workforce-Skills Preparedness Report. <<https://www.payscale.com/about/press-releases/payscale-and-future-workplace-release%202016-workforce-skills-preparedness-report>>. December 5, 2016.

One hundred and four (104) Comm B courses have been taught in the past five years (Fall 2011-Spring 2016). They were offered by 48 departments in seven Schools/Colleges. These courses include large lectures with many designated Comm B sections led by trained TAs, midsize lectures with no TA involvement, seminars, labs, and research tutorials. Comm B courses bear between two and five credits, depending on the course structure. Some Comm B courses integrate the Comm B instruction across lecture and discussion section; others are designed to have additional sections in which Comm B instruction is delivered (and when they do, they are offered for additional credit).

Thirty percent of Comm B courses are taught by a tenure or tenure-track faculty member, 43% by academic staff, and 27% by a graduate assistant.<sup>2</sup>

Generalizations about Comm B class size are hard to make, given the variety of Comm B course structures. Here is an enrollment snapshot of one common course structure. In Fall 2015, there were 70 lecture sections of 3-credit "catalog-level" courses (defined below). Ninety percent of these had 23 or fewer students, and 77% had 20 or fewer students. Seven lectures had more than 23 students (they ranged from 52-146 students); each of these lectures was structured with discussion sections taught by TAs. Most of these sections had 17 or fewer students, although a few had 20 students.

Comm B courses have one of two administrative designations. A "catalog level" designation signifies that the course is only offered as a Comm B course. Every iteration of the course must be taught with Comm B learning goals in mind and must meet the formal criteria for Comm B courses. A "section level" designation allows departments to offer a non-Comm B version of the course. This flexibility is useful in cases where department resources do not allow for TA support, or for cases where a course might be offered in the compressed Summer session when Comm B may be challenging to teach. Among the courses surveyed, 70% have the "catalog level" designation, and 30% have the "section level" designation.

### **Prior Work Assessing Comm B**

- a. A large-scale study in 2001 by the Verbal Assessment Project (chaired by Professor Denise Solomon, Communication Arts) evaluated samples of student writing and surveyed students about their perceptions and attitudes related to writing. The executive summary and the full report and appendix are available on the General Education website. This study led to the adjustment of course criteria to improve student learning in the dimension of oral communication skills, and to provide better support for instructors who teach these skills to students. These results also helped guide advisors to counsel students about which Communication A ("Comm A") courses might complement their studies.
- b. An ad hoc working group convened by Associate Dean Nancy Westphal-Johnson, then chair of the University General Education Committee (UGEC), conducted an analysis in

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<sup>2</sup> Source: 2015 APIR study of curricular trends in the General Education course array

2004 of student course-taking patterns to identify curricular redundancy in the Comm-B course array and to identify transfer credit issues. Using data from the data warehouse and from analysis of student transcripts, this administrative study allowed the General Education Program to better manage limited resources for a costly requirement by reducing redundancy (e.g., removing Comm B from courses in which another Comm B course served as a requisite). Follow-up work in 2005 addressed issues with course transfer and students receiving credit for Comm B for courses that were not equivalent with respect to embedded writing pedagogy.

- c. In 2010 the Office of Academic Planning and Institutional Research (APIR) examined the benefit of enforcing the requirement to take Comm A before Comm B. The analysis did not find sufficient evidence of disadvantage to the small number of students who complete the courses out of sequence.
- d. A 2015 APIR study of curricular trends in the General Education course array identified aging courses and noted concerns about the relatively low number of faculty providing Comm B instruction.

The current study is a direct outcome of this work evaluating curricular trends. It sought to determine if—and provides assurance that—courses in the General Education course array are meeting Comm B course criteria and supporting the learning outcomes articulated for the requirement. The study also sought to determine if—and provides assurance that—these courses have an appropriate level of faculty and staff engagement and oversight.

## **2016 Survey Aims and Methods**

In Spring 2016, the General Education Communication Part B Working Group, consisting of David Zimmerman (UGEC Communication Liaison), Elaine Klein (Associate Dean of Academic Planning and Chair, UGEC), and Kimbrin Cornelius (Senior Administrative Program Specialist) surveyed UW-Madison faculty and staff who taught at least one Comm B course in the previous five years.

The survey had four primary aims:

1. to illuminate faculty and staff instructor perspectives on Comm B learning outcomes and requirements
2. to show whether actual Comm B instructional priorities and practices align satisfactorily with the expectations for Comm B instruction articulated by the UGEC, and if not, where they fall short and why
3. to show if, and to what extent, Comm B instructors believe Comm B courses succeed in helping students gain proficiency in the four core Comm B skills
4. to help the Communication Liaison and administrators identify ways to maintain or increase the relevance, value, and effectiveness of Comm B instruction

The survey featured 21 questions convened around five topics:



- i. the instructor's perspective on the General Education learning outcomes articulated for Comm B courses
- ii. practical information about the instructor's Comm B course
- iii. the instructor's assessment of student learning in the course
- iv. department or instructor plans to revise the course, including adapting it for online or summer offerings
- v. the instructor's use of campus resources to support and enrich Comm B instruction.

Respondents had several opportunities to add explanatory comments.

The survey was emailed to 158 faculty and staff instructors of all Comm B courses taught in the last five years (Fall 2011-Spring 2016). In instances where TAs were primarily instructors (for example, English 201), the survey was sent to a coordinating faculty member. The survey asked faculty and staff instructors (hereafter, "instructors") to submit an updated syllabus of their Comm B course. Where a large number of faculty or staff taught the course, they were advised they could coordinate one response.

One hundred and six (106) instructors responded, including at least one instructor for 89 Comm B courses. Departments submitted updated syllabi for nine additional courses, on request. No information was submitted for 6 courses.<sup>3</sup>

## Survey Findings

### 1. Do Comm B instructors think that the learning outcomes articulated for Comm B courses are valuable?

Yes. All respondents agreed that "undergraduate students should acquire" the skills that Comm B courses teach.

### 2a. Are Comm B courses in compliance with articulated Comm B course requirements and expectations?

Virtually all respondents reported that their Comm B course complied with the formal Comm B course criteria listed on the survey, but the information they provided about their courses indicates that almost a fifth of the courses fell short of meeting these criteria. In almost every case, the compliance issue had to do with the oral communication requirement. Of the 101

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix, point 2. In five cases where the sole instructor of a course retired or left UW-Madison, the lack of response was expected. Twenty-two active catalog-level Comm B courses were not offered in the past 5 years and were not included in the survey. Fifty-one section-level Comm B courses have not been taught with the Comm B designation in past 5 years and also were not included.

respondents, 18 reported providing fewer than the required "two opportunities for each student to be graded for oral communication" or failing to offer at least one "informal, ungraded opportunity to develop and receive feedback on their speaking skills." These results highlight an area where instructors may need reminders or guidance about giving adequate emphasis to oral communication skills, but some of the reported failures may not reflect actual pedagogical shortcomings. About half of these courses relied on TAs to do most or all of the Comm B instruction, and these TAs, who were not surveyed, may have added assignments or activities that brought the course into full compliance.<sup>4</sup>

The compliance data indicate that Comm B instructors take seriously Comm B's emphasis on meeting with students individually to discuss their speaking or writing. Around 24% of respondents (or their TAs) hold at least three conferences with each student, and 36% hold two.

## **2b. Do instructors have difficulty aligning their course with Comm B learning outcomes? If so, why?**

Most respondents reported having no difficulty aligning their course with Comm B learning outcomes. However, fifteen respondents (out of 101) did. Most of the reported difficulties had to do with finding class time and securing adequate TA resources to fulfill all of the Comm B instructional goals. As one respondent put it, "satisfying all of the requirements is a challenge both in terms of just fitting everything in logistically as well as the labor-intensive nature of the teaching, relative to most other courses." The challenges are:

- i. **Fitting in oral presentations.** Several instructors noted the difficulty of "wedging" oral communication activities, especially student presentations, into limited class time while also giving adequate focus to course content (e.g., "The oral component is the one that causes the most logistical nightmares"). In-class presentations, the most common form of graded speaking activity in Comm B courses, can occupy two to five hours of class time (e.g., 25 students x 10 minutes each = 4+ hours), narrowing the time available for other instruction and activities.
- ii. **Needing more time and a smaller student-to-instructor ratio to provide adequate writing instruction.** Several instructors noted the extraordinary amount of time and labor involved in Comm B writing instruction. Direct instruction, peer review, and other writing activities take significant time in class, and offering productive feedback on multiple writing assignments and drafts, whether by writing careful comments or conferring with individual students, takes significant time outside of class. Lecturers who teach large-enrollment Comm B courses face particular challenges as writing instructors (e.g., "The Comm B course I have taught is a large

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<sup>4</sup> The criteria listed on the survey allow for "equivalent speaking activities" as alternatives to formal presentations. In some courses the assessment of student speaking may have been folded into a general participation grade, making it "hard," as one respondent put it, "to quantify the number of opportunities [for graded oral communication]."

lecture, which makes it hard to really do the writing process justice"). Several respondents lamented the prohibitively high number of students per instructor and desired more TA support.

- iii. **Meeting the learning needs of non-native English speakers.** A few respondents noted how the Comm B learning outcomes were hard to achieve or placed an extraordinary burden on instructors because of some non-native speakers' need for extra instruction in basic English-language skills.

### 3. Do instructors perceive Comm B courses as helping students achieve the Comm B learning outcomes?

Yes. Overwhelmingly, instructors believe these courses help students achieve the desired outcomes. We asked instructors to "reflect on [their] impression of students' performance" by estimating what portion of their students at the end of the course could perform the four essential Comm B learning outcomes. In at least 90% of Comm B courses, "all" or "most" students, according to instructors, ended up able to perform each of these skills (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Instructors' impressions of student success in achieving essential Comm B learning outcomes**

skill	percentage of courses in which			
	all students ended up able to	most students ended up able to	half of students ended up able to	less than half of students ended up able to
1. identify and make skillful use of relevant, reliable, and high-quality research sources appropriate to the course subject and discipline	23	70	6	1
2. make productive use of the writing process to develop a fledging idea into a formal paper, presentation, or project	31	66	2	1
3. produce formal writing and oral presentations that are clear, persuasive, well-organized, and polished	12	80	7	1
4. make proper use of expressive conventions and protocols appropriate to the genres of communication relevant to the course subject or discipline	15	81	3	1

Respondents' comments reinforce these encouraging results. Over a quarter of respondents added comments testifying to the success of their course and the conspicuous instructional payoff of Comm B's pedagogical priorities (e.g., "it is *by far* the course where I saw my student grow the most. The required emphasis on writing and presenting was a major benefit to my students").<sup>5</sup> Here is a sampling of their comments:

- *I can say with confidence that I feel every student who has taken my class over the 2 years improved their writing and speaking skills as outlined in the objectives.*
- *The overwhelming majority of students (45 out of 50) have made significant progress in learning to write effective [analytical papers], formulate research questions, conduct research, analyze their results and develop an effective presentation.*
- *Students are often poorly-prepared for the desired learning goals, so they are not able to make as much progress by the end of the semester as I would like, but they all make significant progress and are much improved in their research, writing, and speaking skills by the end of the semester.*
- *On the whole, the students improved enormously.*
- *Obviously, there are always outliers, but most students come out of the back end of the course with considerable improvements to their composition, oral, and research skills.*
- *The vast majority of students are clearly meeting outcomes.*
- *I saw tremendous growth in all of these areas over the course of the semester.*

When we focus on the courses that provide the majority (60%) of Comm B credit, we see that instructors were again confident that at least half – but far more frequently, most or all – of their students achieved proficiency in the Comm B learning outcomes. Table 2 shows data for nine (out of ten) these courses, or 55% of the total Comm B credit:

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<sup>5</sup> Commenters were quick to note that students typically entered the class with widely varying skill levels and that many students entered with alarmingly weak skills, compounding the challenge of helping all students become proficient in the core Comm B skills by the end of the term. Only one respondent expressed doubts about the efficacy of Comm B instruction. The Communication Liaison will follow up with instructors who indicated that half or fewer than half of their students ended up able to achieve any of the learning outcomes.

**Table 2. Instructor impressions of student proficiency  
in Comm B learning outcomes (LO) in the largest Comm B courses**  
(by percentage of all Comm B credit)

Course	% of all Comm B credit awarded	portion of students who achieve proficiency in LO 1 (research)	portion of students who achieve proficiency in LO 2 (writing process)	portion of students who achieve proficiency in LO 3 (formal writing and oral presentations)	portion of students who achieve proficiency in LO 4 (expressive conventions)
Bio 152	15	most	most	most	most
Journalism 201	9	most	most	half	most
EPD 397 <sup>6</sup>	8	most	most	most	most
Psych 225	5	all	all	most	all
Eng 201 <sup>7</sup>	5	no response	no response	no response	no response
Geog 101	4	most	all	most	all
Geog 101		most	most	most	most
Comm Arts 272	4	most	most	most	most
C&E Soc 210	4	most	most	most	most
C&E Soc 210		most	most	half	most
Comm Arts 262	3	most	most	most	most
Comm Arts 262		most	most	most	most
Comm Arts 266	3	all	all	most	most

The table reveals that most or all students in 100% of the courses for which we have data achieved proficiency in Learning Outcome 1 (research); most or all students in 100% of the courses achieved proficiency in Learning Outcome 2 (writing process); most or all students in 90% of the courses achieved proficiency in Learning Outcome 3 (formal writing and oral presentations); and most or all students in 100% of the courses achieved proficiency in Learning Outcome 4 (expressive conventions). These results suggest the overall effectiveness of Comm B courses in helping students meet the desired learning outcomes.

<sup>6</sup> EPD 397 data comes from EPD's direct measurement of student performance on specific EPD 397 assignments in the Biomedical Engineering (BME) Program (Fall 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Eng 201 is taught by TAs, who were not surveyed.

4. The survey asked instructors to share their plans for revising their course and to share their suggestions for, as well as concerns about, the future of Comm B courses generally.

**a. Do instructors and departments plan to revise their Comm B courses? How?**

A notable portion of respondents reported that they or their departments plan to revise their Comm B course by offering it as a summer course (12%) and/or putting it partially or fully online (17%).

Only a handful of respondents explained how they planned to meet the challenge of redesigning a 15-week Comm B course, with its unique instructional demands, for the compressed summer schedule. One indicated that a summer version of the course would feature "less reading, more interaction [and] shorter writing assignments." Another indicated that "the compressed format will mean we can't read long books as we do during the semester." Another reported that some Comm B activities would be shifted online (i.e., "oral presentations will be given online, which will actually make it easier for the students to critique themselves and each other. Discussions will be in chat rooms rather than live"). Respondents did not assess whether the pedagogical advantages of such adaptations outweigh the potential disadvantages.

Respondents specified a number of ways they plan to adapt (or have already adapted) their instruction for partially or fully online versions of their course:

- giving more individual and small-group digital media assignments such as video essays, multimodal presentations, and blog postings that require students to do online writing and/or speaking
- asking students to write a "concept paper" for a multimedia project and discussing it with them before and as they work on it (e.g., brainstorming with students at various stages of development of the project as with a scholarly research paper project)
- shifting reader-response and other regularized discussion to digital arenas, including social media (e.g., Twitter)
- having small students groups co-produce video documentaries for their final projects
- incorporating online face-to-face conferencing to facilitate more one-on-one interactions with the instructor and promote more group interactions among students.

**b. Which campus resources do Comm B instructors use?**

By far, the Writing Center and the research workshops led by library staff are the resources most frequently used by Comm B instructors. Almost three quarters of Comm B instructors refer their students to the Writing Center and slightly more than half rely on the research workshops. It is not clear whether instructors rely on the Writing Center to help improve the writing of all of their students or only the weakest writers (e.g., "I refer students with basic writing skill problems to the Writing Center").

Relatively few Comm B instructors make use of other campus resources such as the Writing Fellows Program (21%), Learning Support Services (15%), Writing Across the Curriculum (13%), online research tutorials such as Sift & Winnow (8%), or Design Lab (6%). There are several factors that may explain this relatively low use: instructors may not be aware of these resources (as some respondents confirmed in their comments); instructors may wish to teach research and writing skills themselves (or have their TAs teach these skills); a course's emphasis on oral communication may obviate the need for outside resources for writing instruction; and the instructor's department may provide equivalent resources (e.g., the History Department's History Lab).

**c. Do instructors support including digital media and/or digital communication skills in the Comm B learning outcomes?**

The survey defined "digital media/communication skills" as "skills necessary for creating video essays, graphic essays, interactive posters, radio documentaries, etc." In response to the question, "Should Comm B learning outcomes include digital media or digital communication skills?," 64% of respondents answered "no"; 19% answered "yes"; and 18% answered "no opinion." The nineteen respondents who answered "yes" were spread evenly between science fields and non-science fields.

Twenty-seven respondents added explanatory comments. From these comments, it is clear that most instructors agree that digital media/communication skills are valuable and that students should learn them. The question is whether these skills should, or even can, be taught in Comm B classes. Those who think they should be included argue that such skills are important for success in the job market (e.g., "when students get into job market, most likely they will be asked to give a job talk by means of ppt. presentation. For that purpose, perhaps it is good to give them the training needed"). Faculty who are amenable to including digital media/communication outcomes generally favored including these outcomes as optional "add-ons" to the current requirements or favored a flexible requirement where instructors choose from a buffet of possible communication skills, including digital media/communication skills, to emphasize.

Only a handful of commenters supported a mandate—that is, a firm requirement across all Comm B courses—to teach digital media/communication skills. In contrast, a third of the commenters felt that such a mandate would dangerously compromise other Comm B instruction by diverting instructional attention from it. As one respondent put it, "Expanding to include the multiple digital media skills will dilute activity leading to improved oral and written skills." Some respondents, while not opposed to encouraging interested teachers to offer such instruction, felt strongly that "teaching basic research, critical thinking, writing, and speaking skills should come first." Even respondents who granted the vocational importance of digital skills noted the continuing priority of traditional writing and speaking skills for the job market (e.g., "interpersonal communication and writing skills are still the number one thing that many employers desire and say is lacking in job candidates").

Some respondents resisted including digital media and communication skills among the Comm B learning outcomes for other reasons. Several felt that instruction in digital media/communication skills didn't fit the communication protocols of their discipline (e.g., "it would be great for some classes, but really wouldn't fit in mine at all"), while some felt that students already received adequate instruction in other courses (e.g., "We teach these skills in the upper level classes, so it would be redundant"). Finally, some faculty felt ill-equipped by training or temperament to teach these skills.

#### **d. Do instructors have additional recommendations for improving Comm B instruction?**

Respondents offered two additional recommendations for improving Comm B instruction:

- i. **Maintain appropriate class size and student-to-instructor ratio.** Many Comm B lecturers indicated that they felt incapacitated by the high number of students in their course. Many felt that instructional success was "closely related to availability of TAs and class size," and some noted that the student-to-TA ratio in their courses had significantly surpassed the 20:1 recommended in the Comm B course criteria. To address this, many instructors proposed adding TAs. A sampling of their comments reveals these instructors' frustration with large class sizes and course staffing plans:
  - *Many students need more assistance than I or my TAs are able to provide, given the number of students we are each responsible for. I try to alleviate the workload for my TAs by doing a lot of grading, but they are still far from having time to bring the weaker students to the level described above. . . I think the [Comm B] goals are great, but the student-TA ratio (40-1 in my case) make them unrealistic. In my mind, we could actually accomplish these goals with a ratio of 15-1.*
  - *The learning outcomes of Comm B courses are entirely dependent upon the availability of TAs and the size of the class. The course I teach had an enrollment of 120 students with 3 TAs 10 years ago, now I have only one TA and therefore can only allow an enrollment of about 30 for efficient training. . . . My ideal number would be an enrollment of 45 students with 2 TAs.*
  - *As enrollments have increased and TA resources decreased, it is harder to fairly and thoroughly assess all material in a Comm B course. . . . Dedicated TA lines to Comm B courses would be amazing.*
  - *Given budgetary cuts, it has been questioned as to whether the course is well-suited for a Comm B designation . . . [since I am] stretched thin when it comes to assessment.*
  - *I am no longer able to teach the course as a Comm B because of enrollment. This semester there were 50 students, and prior semesters have had 60 to 110 students. I would LOVE to provide more feedback, but cannot do it given the minimum enrollment requirements that have been imposed.*
- ii. **Special compensation for Comm B instructors.** Several respondents noted that special compensation for instructors who frequently teach Comm B courses would encourage the development of new Comm B courses and reinforce instructors'



commitment to regularly teach and update Comm B courses, which "take a substantial amount of extra time to prepare and deliver to students."

### Limitations of this Study

**A. Compliance.** Bubbled survey responses may not offer a complete picture of how courses meet or fail to meet the formal Comm B course requirements, and respondents' explanatory comments suggest that some of the seeming compliance shortfalls may not reflect actual instructional deficits. For example, the bubbled responses suggest that in 17% of Comm B courses, instructors fell short in grading the requisite number of oral communication activities. However, this does not necessarily mean that these courses failed to provide adequate instruction in or assessment of speaking skills. In one History course, to take just one example, "students give two oral presentations. The first is technically ungraded, but students receive the same evaluation and feedback that they receive for the graded, second presentation." Likewise, the bubbled responses suggest that students in 6% of courses are not receiving the required amount of feedback on their writing, but these responses may not accurately reflect how much feedback students in fact receive. One respondent noted this mismatch: "In terms of revision, I answered 1 in reference to the first draft of their paper. But they also get feedback at a number of other stages of the research process with the expectation that it is incorporated into their writing. So the answer could be 4, depending on how you want to count it." In short, these and other courses may fulfill the spirit, but not the letter, of the Comm B requirements.

**B. Effectiveness.** The survey was not designed to illuminate the relative effectiveness or ineffectiveness of specific Comm B instructional practices. It did not aim, that is, to identify specific correlations between particular Comm B teaching activities, emphases, or formats, on the one hand, and students' level of success in achieving each of the four core Comm B learning outcomes, on the other. Rather, the survey assessed if, and to what extent, Comm B faculty and staff perceive their courses to be helping students achieve the Comm B learning outcomes. However, because the survey did not query TAs, who do most or all of the actual Comm B instruction and assessment in many large-enrollment courses, some respondents could not answer questions about student learning. The faculty program director of a large Comm B course taught exclusively by TAs, for example, left her survey answers blank, explaining: "I would need to survey all instructors to get a sense of how to answer these questions for the aggregate." Likewise, a few lecturers noted that they were guessing about student proficiency rates (e.g., "I don't grade the papers so I do not have direct knowledge about this. You need to ask the TAs").

## Conclusions

**1. Course alignment with Comm B criteria and outcomes.** Most Comm B courses align satisfactorily with the formal expectations for Comm B instruction.

- a. Sixty-three Comm B courses (listed in Appendix, point 1) meet the criteria and are structured and taught in a manner consistent with supporting the learning outcomes.
- b. Thirty Comm B courses (listed in Appendix, point 2) require additional discussion to ensure that they meet the criteria and are structured and taught in a manner consistent with supporting the learning outcomes. These include 16 courses for which we did not receive a survey response or received an incomplete one.
- c. Five departments teaching Comm B courses (listed in Appendix, point 3) must present evidence to show that these courses support the learning outcomes despite a high student-to-instructor ratio. See Recommendation III.9.

**2. The value of Comm B learning outcomes.** Comm B faculty overwhelmingly agree that the Comm B learning outcomes and course requirements are valuable and that all UW-Madison undergraduates should learn the core communication and research skills emphasized in Comm B courses. Faculty are divided, however, about whether to incorporate digital media and communication learning outcomes. See Recommendation II.6.

**3. Difficulties meeting Comm B learning outcomes.**

- a. The most common difficulty Comm B instructors reported in meeting Comm B outcomes was incorporating oral communication activities into their course design. See Recommendation I.1.
- b. Some instructors felt that improving Comm B teaching and learning depended less on developing new instructional strategies, requirements, and formats than on decreasing class size or otherwise ensuring an appropriate instructor-to-student ratio to meet the extraordinary demands of Comm B instruction. Many proposed addressing this by increasing the number of TAs. See Recommendation III.9.

**4. The effectiveness of Comm B courses.** According to faculty instructors, Comm B courses are, with very few exceptions, successful in helping most or all students achieve all of the Comm B learning outcomes. See Recommendation III.7.

## Recommendations

**I. Easy Interventions.** The survey revealed several challenges facing Comm B instructors that can be met relatively easily by the Communication Liaison and the UGEC Chair.

**1. Provide more guidance about the oral communication requirement.**

- a. Comm B instructors need more guidance about alternate ways to fulfill the oral communication requirement. The UGEC document, "Strategies for Integrating Oral Communication into the Comm-B Course," describes several alternatives to formal

presentations. The Chair of the UGEC will send this document to all Comm B instructors at the start of each year.

- b. Instructors who struggle to fit two or more in-class presentations into limited class time should receive guidance from the Communication Liaison about how to shift presentations (and related practice and feedback) online. Video presentations are a professionally valuable and increasingly popular mode of oral communication. Instructors who choose to explore this option will need technical guidance and support.
2. **Familiarize instructors with campus resources that support Comm B instruction.** The UGEC Chair's letter sent to Comm B instructors each year should include a description of these resources. The list should include resources that will guide Comm B instructors in helping students who struggle with basic English meet the Communication learning outcomes.
3. **Develop a Comm B "community of practice" by holding an annual meeting for Comm B instructors.** The Communication Liaison should hold a welcome meeting each September for new and experienced Comm B instructors who will teach a Comm B course that year. In the meeting, modeled on the Writing Fellows Program's faculty orientation meeting, Comm B instructors can share course design ideas, instructional experiences, and successful teaching and troubleshooting strategies.
4. **Provide guidance and monitoring of summer Comm B instruction.** Given departments' widening interest in offering summer Comm B courses, instructors will need guidance to ensure that their new or redesigned courses meet Comm B learning outcomes and course criteria. The compressed 3-week, 4-week, or 8-week summer schedule poses unique challenges because Comm B pedagogy requires sufficient time for students to develop and practice various skills over multiple assignments, draft and revise their work, and have multiple opportunities to get graded and ungraded feedback on their writing and speaking. Instructors designing summer Comm B courses, with limited time between classes, will need guidance to ensure that students meet all of the Comm B learning outcomes. To provide such guidance:
  - i. each spring, the Communication Liaison should convene instructors who will teach a Comm B course over the summer. At this meeting, new and experienced summer Comm B instructors can discuss ways to meet the unique challenges of designing and teaching a summer Comm B course.
  - ii. the UGEC Chair should notify instructors who plan to offer a 3-week or 4-week summer Comm B course for the first time to consult with the Communication Liaison at the start of the spring semester to ensure that the compressed course design is viable.
5. **Create an e-handbook for Comm B instructors.** This handbook, assembled by the Communication Liaison, would include sample syllabi, activities, and advice provided by experienced Comm B instructors, including summer and online instructors, and additional information provided by the Communication Liaison and UGEC Chair.

## II. Provisional recommendations for discussion by the UGEC Working Group

6. **Including digital media and communication outcomes.** A small, focused committee should be convened to discuss possible revisions related to digital media and “flexibility” in the Comm B criteria. The inclusion of digital media or communication outcomes could take the form of an optional alternative or a mandated addition to the current outcomes. The optional alternative might look like this: “Students must produce formal writing and oral presentations that are clear, persuasive, well-organized, and polished. They may substitute suitable digital projects for oral presentations.” The mandated addition would also require a change to the Comm B requirements and might look like this: “Students must produce formal writing, oral presentations, and suitable digital projects that are clear, persuasive, well-organized, and polished.”

Incorporating digital media and communication activities, assignments, and skills—that is, activities, assignments, and skills that harness the creative capacities, rhetorical affordances, and pedagogical rewards of working with multimedia software and digital platforms may require substantial changes in course design or instruction style. Further discussion is needed to determine whether a) the pedagogical yield of such activities and assignments is great enough to warrant their being allowed to substitute for more traditional expository writing or oral communication activities and assignments; and b) digital communication activities and assignments are likely to deflect needed attention and time from writing and oral communication instruction. A fuller description of digital media and communication activities, including multimodal writing assignments (i.e., assignments that combine images, audio, and text), should anchor this discussion.

If digital media and communication outcomes are included in Comm B outcomes, Comm B instructors must receive adequate training and support in the required technology, and this technology must be accessible to all students.

### III. Recommendations for further study.

7. **Student learning across Comm B courses.** Further study is needed to triangulate and verify faculty impressions of students' success in meeting the Comm B learning outcomes. Such a study should align with the implementation of the UGEC assessment plan and engage in direct assessment of students' communication knowledge, skills, and values.
8. **Summer Comm B courses.** An administrative assessment of summer Comm B courses will need to be done to determine whether instructors' adaptations to meet the unique demands of summer courses consistently fulfill the Comm B course criteria and preserve the goals and effectiveness of Comm B teaching.
9. **Comm B course size and student-to-instructor ratio.** Some departments may need to calibrate their class sizes and TA workloads to support Comm B instruction. The criteria clearly state that the recommended ratio for students to instructor is 20:1, and if the ratio is higher than that, departments have to demonstrate how the objectives and requirements of the course can be satisfied within the larger format. For those courses listed in the Appendix, point 3, departments should provide evidence that there is an appropriate balance between instructors and students.

- 10. English language learners.** Some faculty noted a "disconnect" between Comm B expectations and students who struggle with basic English skills. The Communication Committee should follow up by consulting with those faculty and gathering data on English language learners' success in Comm B courses. An analysis might pay particular attention to Comm B courses more frequently taken by students who completed Comm A via ESL to determine if more support or smaller sections for those courses are needed.

#### **IV. Long-term investments in Comm B: interventions that require funding**

- 11. Support for one dedicated Comm B Education Innovation Grant or course release per year.** Departments would apply for such an award on behalf of instructors who regularly teach Comm B courses and who wish to perform a major redesign of an existing Comm B course. Several respondents noted that a course release was needed to give instructors sufficient time to plan a major course redesign, including creating an online version of an existing course. Such a course release could be awarded through a special Comm B application process (e.g., a Comm B Education Innovation Grant).
- 12. Explore new formal structures for teaching oral communication** – ideally, an "oral communication across the curriculum" program or support center. Better support for oral communication instruction might be achievable by assembling a curated set of core teaching resources provided to one or more departments that prioritize oral communication.

Appendix:  
Comm B Course Calibration

1. These Comm B courses meet the Comm B criteria and are structured and taught in a manner consistent with supporting the learning outcomes:

ANTHRO	352	Ancient Tech and Invention
ART HIST	227	The Ends of Modernism
ASIAN AM, SOC	220	Ethnic Movements in U.S.
BIOOGY, BOTANY, ZOOLOGY	152	Introductory Biology
BIOCORE	381	Evolution, Ecology, & Genetics
BIOCORE	382	Evol, Ecol, & Genetics Lab
BIOCORE	384	Cellular Biology Laboratory
BOTANY	330	Algae
C&E SOC, SOC	210	Survey of Sociology
COM ARTS	272	Intro-Interpersonal Com
COM ARTS	266	Thry&Pract-Group Discussion
CS&D	481	Undergraduate Junior Honors
COUN PSY	650	Theory & Prac-Interviewing
CURRIC	277	Videogames & Learning
CURRIC	315	Rdg & Wrtg in Early Childhood
CURRIC	369	The Teaching of Language Arts
CURRIC	305	Tchg Rdg & Other Lang Arts
CURRIC	318	Teaching Reading and Writing
CURRIC, JEWISH	515	Holocaust: Hist, Memory & Educ
CSCS	130	Community Newswriting
DANCE	200	Writing the Moving Body
ENGL, THEATRE	120	Intro-Theatre & Dramatic Lit
ENGL	140	Comm B Topics in English Lit
ENGL	162	Shakespeare
ENGL	201	Intermediate Composition
ENGL	207	Intro to Creative Writing
ENGL	236	Bascom Course
ENVIR ST, F&W ECOL	515	Natural Resources Policy
FOLKLORE	100	Introduction to Folklore
FOOD SCI	603	Senior Seminar
E P D	397	Technical Communication
GEOG	101	Intro to Human Geography
GERMAN	236	Bascom Seminar
GERMAN	270	Language & Immigration in Wisc
HISTORY	200	Historical Studies
HISTORY	201	The Historian's Craft
ILS	200	Critical Thinkng & Expressn
ILS, RELIG ST	234	Genres-Westrn Relig Writing
JEWISH, MUSIC	319	Topics in Music & Ethnicity-US

JEWISH	356	Jerusalem: Conflict & Desire
JOURN	201	Intro to Mass Communication
KINES	355	Soc-Cult of Phys Act
KINES	457	Med Probs-Exercise & Sports
KINES	521	Physical Activity and Health
KINES	600	Advanced Exercise Psychology
JOURN	176	Spec Topics in Mass Comm
LAND ARC	551	Senior Project in Land Arc
L I S	201	The Information Society
L I S	340	Topics in Information Studies
LINGUIS	236	Bascom Course
LITTRANS	203	19&20 C Russian Lit Tran I
LITTRANS	204	19&20 C Russian Lit Tran II
LITTRANS	209	Masterpieces-Fr Lit & Culture
LITTRANS	236	Bascom Crse-In Translation
LITTRANS	255	Lt Trn:Boccaccios Decameron
LITTRANS	271	Scand LitTran:Mid Ages-1900
LITTRANS	274	Scand Lit in Tran-20th C
LITTRANS	275	In Transl:Hans C. Andersen
L SC COMM	111	Sci&Technology Newswriting
L SC COMM	212	Intro-Scientific Communication
L SC COMM	360	Information Radio
L SC COMM	560	Scientific Writing
MICROBIO	551	Physiol Dvrsty-Procryot Lab
NURSING	319	Nurs Care-Inpatient Setting
PHILOS	341	Contemporary Moral Issues
PORTUG	361	Portuguese Civilization
PSYCH	225	Research Methods
RP & SE	479	Lang&Readng: Learn&Behav Disab
RP & SE	501	Rehab-Cnslg Psych: Applcatn
SOC	181	Hnrs Smr:Sociolgl Enterprse

2. These Comm B courses require additional discussion to ensure that they meet the criteria and are structured and taught in a manner consistent with supporting the learning outcomes.

a. Courses for which we have completed surveys:

ASTRON	236	History of Matter in the Universe
CHEM	346	Intmed Organic Chem Lab
CLASSICS	320	The Greeks
E ASIAN, RELIG ST	235	Genres-Asian Religious Writing
ECON	580	Honors-Research Proj Design
ENGL	181	First-Year Honors Seminar
ENG	307	Creatv Wrtng:Fic&PoetWkshp
GERMAN	267	Yiddish Song and Jewish Exp

JEWISH	236	Bascom Course
LITTRANS	209	Masterpieces-Fr Lit & Culture
LITTRANS	226	Intro-Luso-Afro-Brazilian Lit
MUSIC	236	Bascom Course
POLI SCI	104	Intro-Amer Politics&Governmt
SOC	236	Bascom Course

b. Courses for which no survey response was submitted or the survey response was incomplete:

i. No survey response or syllabus was submitted for the following courses.

During followup, the department indicated the designation may be removed from the course, and course change proposals were initiated to do so.

CURRIC	313	Lang & Lit-Secondary Curric
HISTORY	533	Multi-Racial Soc:Latin Amer
LCA	236	Bascom Course* <i>(The department is undergoing a large renumbering process this spring, and the designation will be removed as part of that process)</i>

ii. Survey response was incomplete:

CHICLA, HISTORY 245 Chicana and Latina History

3. Departments teaching these Comm B courses must present evidence to show that they support the learning outcomes despite a high student-to-instructor ratio:

AFRICAN	201	Intro-African Lang and Lit
ATM OCN, ENVIR ST	171	Global Chg: Atmospheric Iss
CLASSICS	322	The Romans
COM ARTS	262	Thry&Pract-Argument&Debate
CNSR SCI	360	Socially Just Consumption





12 May 2017

To: Steve Cramer, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning, Co-Chair HLC Advisory Committee  
Jocelyn Milner, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs  
Anja Wanner, Professor of English and Co-Chair, HLC Advisory Committee

From: Elaine M. Klein, Associate Dean and Director, University General Education

Re: University General Education Committee Affirmation of UW-Madison Mission

XC: John Karl Scholz, Dean, College of Letters & Science

The University General Education Committee was recently asked to consider a question presented in the course of discussions about UW-Madison's decennial accreditation, concerning the extent to which the university's 1988 mission statement maintains its currency today, and if so, how "General Education" is located relative to that mission. Members reviewed the mission and enthusiastically endorsed it not only as "current," but as an excellent summary of what UW-Madison does in all of its dimensions as our faculty and staff teach students at the undergraduate, graduate, professional, and post-graduate levels; create new knowledge through research and innovation; and serve society in a long tradition that starts with our campus community, city, and state and expands well beyond those boundaries.

The goals of UW-Madison's General Education program, and the courses that meet the requirements, align well with the institution's mission. General Education draws upon and reinforces broad and balanced educational programs at the undergraduate level. Courses in the arts and humanities and in the social sciences strengthen students' cultural understanding and the ability to consider the implications of social, political and economic change; courses in biological, physical, and computer sciences, and in technology studies, engineering, and design encourage students to weigh, too, the implications of scientific and technological change. Courses that meet the Ethnic Studies Requirement focus explicitly on "respect for, and commitment to, the ideals of a pluralistic, multiracial, open and democratic society." The committee is committed to excellence in General Education: to support this excellence, faculty and staff from schools and colleges that serve undergraduates, and from administrative units that support their success, serve on the committee and actively provide oversight for the curriculum and assessment of student learning in it.

Though the university's aspirations were articulated nearly 30 years ago, the goals and values expressed therein continue to resonate with our modern sensibilities. From adoption of the AACU's "Essential Learning Outcomes for Liberal Education" as a framework for discussing the goals of higher education, to understanding excellence through assessing and improving student learning, to describing our sense of the coherent whole that is the *Wisconsin Experience*, this mission is alive and well, and is supported by the UW-Madison General Education program.

On April 14, 2017, the UW-Madison General Education Committee was pleased to consider the question raised, and on May 12, unanimously affirmed this statement. Please feel free to contact me if I or the UGEC can be of any further assistance.

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#### Office of the Dean

#### College of Letters & Science, The Heart of A Great University

Academic Planning & General Education 307D South Hall 1055 Bascom Mall Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1394  
Elaine M. Klein, Associate Dean 608/265-8484 FAX: 608/265-3565 elaine.klein@wisc.edu www.ls.wisc.edu  
www.twitter.com/uwmadisonLS www.facebook.com/uwmadisonLS http://news.ls.wisc.edu