Recommendation of the University Committee to Modify
the Campus-wide General Education Requirements
(As adopted by the Faculty Senate at its meeting on 7 October 1996.)

The General Education Deans Council charged by the chancellor with responsibility for organizing the implementation of the campus-wide general education requirements passed by the Faculty Senate in May, 1994, recommended that the University Committee consider a modification of Faculty Document 1065. The campus policy requires each school and college to specify lists of courses that students can use to satisfy the general education requirements. The deans council expressed concerns that to the extent that different school/college course lists do not overlap completely, students who transfer from one school/college to another could potentially suffer.

In its review of the request, the University Committee sought the perspective of the University Academic Planning Council, the governance body charged with the responsibility for determining whether courses satisfy the requirements. The UAPC supported the deans concern, and the University Committee likewise agrees.

The premise of the recommended change is that if a student has satisfied a particular portion of the general education requirement in one school/college, the student will have satisfied the same portion in any. For example, if a student satisfies the Communication-A requirement in engineering, and then decides to transfer to education, the student would continue to satisfy the Communication-A requirement, regardless of whether the particular course taken in engineering was on education's approved list.

The committee unanimously supports the proposed modification of the policy and recommends that the senate approve the following language, to be inserted into the document as indicated below:

(Please see attached for actual placement of addition in the policy.)

Existing Language

RECOMMENDATION 4

The faculty of each school and college shall establish lists of courses that satisfy the several general education requirements.

Proposed Additional Language

Cross College/School Transferability of Credits

If a student completes courses that satisfy part or all of the campus-wide general education requirements while registered in one school or college, and if the student subsequently transfers to another school/college, the partially or fully completed requirements will transfer with the student.
The present report, with attached recommendations, is a supplement to the committee's earlier report, dated August 20, 1993, and entitled Report of the Committee on Undergraduate Education. That report, with a cover letter from University Committee Chairman Joel Grossman, was distributed to faculty last January; it contains information regarding, and justifications for instituting, general education requirements at UW-Madison. We trust that senators and interested faculty will refer to the 1993 report in conjunction with the present report and our somewhat revised recommendations.

Our 1993 report pointed out that UW-Madison has no campus-wide general education requirements, with the single exception of the 3-credit ethnic studies requirement. Moreover, from one school/college to another, considerable variation exists regarding requirements for basic composition and mathematics instruction, as well as for other required subjects, including natural science, humanities, literature, and social studies. Because we lack campus-wide requirements, many students never take college-level work in composition and quantitative reasoning; and some students graduate lacking competence in these basic, important skills. We reported also that numerous peer universities have substantial general education requirements, in comparison to which our requirements are meager. As well, we reported results of a survey of faculty opinion showing considerable support for general education requirements at UW-Madison.

The 1993 report pointed out that the current composition requirement, mandated by several of our schools and colleges, is embarrassingly weak. It calls for taking English 101 or Communication Arts 101 or 105 unless placement scores exempt students from any one of those courses. The exemption score is so low that less than five percent of entering students are required to take English 101 (a course in composition) or Communication Arts 101 or 105 (courses in public speaking). Many students who pass the exam cannot write papers free of the most obvious errors of composition. By contrast, the University of Iowa's requirement produces almost opposite results: Iowa's entrance test exempts about 5 percent, while 95 percent take one or two semesters of composition and basic rhetoric. In truth, UW-Madison's composition requirement is the weakest such requirement of all the 20 or so universities whose general education requirements we examined. Even though numerous reports by faculty committees called for serious reform, the requirement has remained in force since the early 1970s.

After much discussion of a literacy requirement and how it might be met, the committee concluded that a new two-course requirement in composition/basic rhetoric should be satisfied by course work in the four modes of literacy (writing, speaking, reading, and listening), with primary emphasis on writing, and in the skills of critical thinking. As well, one of the courses should provide instruction in information literacy, which introduces students to University libraries, information accessing, use of computers to locate materials, and strategies of library research. In the committee's view, students who satisfy the communication requirement should be able to write papers that are largely free of grammatical and stylistic errors, well organized, clear, convincing, and properly documented and referenced; also, students should be able to make oral presentations confidently, coherently, logically. The committee is convinced that students should take courses that focus on: expository and argumentative prose; fundamentals of grammar and style; paragraphing; methods of investigation; kinds of evidence; major types of practical inductive and deductive reasoning, as well as common fallacies; the form and documentation of research reports and papers; organization of effective prose; audience adaptation; principles of critical reading and listening; principles of oral delivery.
After considerable study and discussion during 1992-93, the committee's 1993 report recommended requirements in:

- Communication (composition/basic rhetoric), 3-6 cr.
- Mathematics and Quantitative reasoning, 6 cr.
- Natural Science, 5-6 cr.
- Humanities, 3 cr.
- Literature, 3 cr.
- Social Studies, 3 cr.
- Ethnic Studies, 3 cr.

We believed that UW-Madison's schools and colleges could incorporate these requirements without increasing the total number of credits required of their students.

After the 1993 report was distributed, the committee received comments from individual faculty members, several of the schools and colleges, the University Committee, academic planning councils, and several students. We received comments in formal reports, letters, conversations, and in three public hearings sponsored by the committee in February. In general, we found strong support for the recommendations. No one disagreed with the committee's finding that our composition requirement must be upgraded markedly. Likewise, there is broad support for general education requirements in quantitative reasoning, natural science, humanities, literature, social studies, and ethnic studies. Finally, we heard strong support from library staff and others for our recommendation that instruction in utilizing the resources of University libraries should be an essential part of the required communication courses.

The recommendations attached to the present report are, as a package, mainly the same recommendations that appeared in the 1993 report, except that: several overly specific provisions in the 1993 recommendations have been deleted from the revised recommendations; some recommendations that are no longer relevant or that fall within the scope of later implementation committees were deleted; and we have merged parts of other recommendations. Therefore, the attached recommendations are 10 rather than 15 in number; and several recommendations, as revised, are stated far more concisely than they were in the 1993 report.

The revised recommendations contain some substantive changes.

(1) The communication requirement has been changed in the number of credits from 3 to 6 in the original to 3 to 5/6 in the revised recommendation. This means that while some schools/colleges probably will require 3 to 6 credits, others will require 3 to 5 credits. Students exempted from Part A of the requirement on the basis of examinations would meet the remainder of the requirement by taking 2 or 3 credits, as specified by their school or college. This change was recommended to us by two of our colleges in order to accommodate the communication requirement to the already heavy requirements of the colleges. A second change in the communication requirement provides that a school or college may, under certain conditions, assign credit for composition/basic rhetoric instruction in a unit of a course, even though the course is not wholly dedicated to such instruction. Finally, we have altered the language of our recommendations concerning the communication requirement by removing details about the kind of courses we think should be devised and offered.

(2) The mathematics and quantitative reasoning requirement has been changed by shortening the title to "Quantitative Reasoning."

(continued)
(3) The natural science requirement has been revised in number of credits. The original recommendation stated that the requirement could be met by taking either one 5-credit course having a laboratory component, or two courses providing a total of 6 credits. Since several laboratory courses are offered for 4 credits, we revised the requirement to: "This requirement may be met in one of two ways: one 4- or 5-credit course having a laboratory component; or two courses providing a total of 6 credits."

(4) The humanities and literature requirements have been altered by merging them into one requirement, and by adding the arts. The revised requirement is: "Humanities/Literature/Arts, 6 credits." The revision makes explicit the committee's assumption in the 1993 report that the arts are understood to be within the humanities. Two colleges offered reasons for merging humanities and literature. One college requested the merger because its students must acquire some depth by taking not just a first-level course in humanities or literature, but a second, advanced course in the same subject. For another college, the merged title helps the college meet outside accreditation requirements, which fail to distinguish between humanities and literature.

Through letters, conversations, and public hearings, several faculty members and students asked us to consider additional matters. "Environmental literacy," said some, is important enough to be featured prominently in general education requirements. Revised Recommendation 2 calls for environmental literacy as well as other learnings and appreciations expected of UW-Madison graduates. Some faculty members recommended that we delete language in the 1993 recommendations stating that a single course could not count toward both the social studies requirement and the quantitative reasoning requirement. We deleted the language. Others suggested that sometimes the language of the 1993 recommendations was overly specific. We have deleted most instances of such specific language. Some faculty called our attention to matters that must be faced by those who develop implementation plans, presumably next year, including: conceiving, developing, and staffing excellent courses that will satisfy the communication and quantitative reasoning requirements; possible reallocations and costs; difficulty in finding faculty willing to devote time and energy to developing and teaching general education courses if the reward system does not much honor such work. We are aware, of course, that after adoption of the recommendations, discussions regarding implementation will bear importantly on outcomes. Finally, several faculty said that no general education course should be a remedial course. We agree entirely, and wish to state clearly that all courses that satisfy general education requirements should be college-level courses.

We submit our revised recommendations in the next section. We believe that the reasons for instituting the requirements are even more compelling today than they were a year ago. Indeed, conversations with colleagues, students, deans, other administrators, and friends of the University have strengthened our conviction that the findings we reported are correct and that the changes we recommend are needed. Without doubt, the most important reason for adopting the recommendations is concern for the future of our students.

Submitted by:

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(continued)
RECOMMENDATIONS

[Note: Materials enclosed in brackets are not parts of the formal recommendations.]

RECOMMENDATION 1

UW-Madison General Education Requirements shall be:

Communication: 3 to 5/6 credits

Part A: 2-3 credits

Each student shall complete, or through examinations be exempted from, a first-year course providing instruction and practice in the modes of literacy. Courses shall be dedicated to literacy proficiency-- accurate and critical writing, speaking, reading, and listening, with primary emphasis on writing. The courses shall contain instruction in "information literacy," including accessing the print and electronic resources of the University's libraries. Students exempted from Part A shall complete comparable instruction in information literacy.

Part B: 2-3 credits

Students who complete or are exempted from the first course shall thereafter earn 2 to 3 credits in course work designed to enhance their literacy proficiency.

Units of instruction within courses not dedicated primarily to instruction in the modes of literacy may count toward satisfaction of the Part B requirement if the school/college determines that the units provide substantial instruction in these modes.

Students required by their school/college to complete two freshmen-level courses shall complete both courses before earning 45 credits; students required to take one freshmen-level course shall complete the course during the freshman year and the remaining credits later as prescribed by the school/college. Transfer students shall complete the requirement during their first year of enrollment at UW-Madison. These deadlines may be adjusted in such special instances as students for whom English is a second language and students with certain disabilities.

Credits earned in remedial courses do not count in satisfaction of the requirement.

Quantitative Reasoning: 3-6 credits

Part A: 3 credits in mathematics, computer science, statistics, or formal logic.

Part B: 3 additional credits in quantitative reasoning.

On the basis of examinations, students may be exempted from Part A of the requirement.

Credits earned in remedial courses do not count in satisfaction of the requirement.

[A quantitative reasoning course provides significant exposure to quantitative information presented in a variety of formats, together with appropriate analytical techniques to understand the significance of the data and to distinguish between valid and invalid quantitative arguments.]
[The committee suggests that for some schools/colleges, exemption from Part A will be appropriate for students whose mathematics placement score would allow entry into Mathematics 112.]

Natural Science: 4-6 credits

This requirement may be met in one of two ways:

One 4- or 5-credit course having a laboratory component; or

Two courses providing a total of 6 credits.

["Natural science" refers to disciplines that UW-Madison traditionally classifies as natural, biological, and physical sciences.]

Humanities/Literature/Arts: 6 credits

Social Studies: 3 credits

Ethnic Studies: 3 credits

RECOMMENDATION 2

[The committee believes that important subjects and issues, such as those named in the following recommendation, are best treated within a major or program in several courses and at increasing levels of complexity.]

Instructional units--programs, institutes, departments, schools, and colleges--shall make feasible curricular modifications designed to foster student appreciation and understanding of subjects and issues including: environmental literacy; historical consciousness; values and ethics; implications of technology; international awareness, cultures, or influences; computer literacy; and the integration of knowledge. As well, instructional units are encouraged to offer courses dealing with contemporary problems and their resolution.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Implementation planning should commence at once, with the goal of making the general education requirements effective in the 1995-96 academic year for entering freshmen and transfer students.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The faculty of each school and college shall establish lists of courses that satisfy the several general education requirements.

Proposed Additional Language

Cross College/School Transferability of Credits

(continued)
If a student completes courses that satisfy part or all of the campus-wide general education requirements while registered in one school or college, and if the student subsequently transfers to another school/college, the partially or fully completed requirements will transfer with the student.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The all-campus Academic Planning Council shall (a) determine whether courses nominated to satisfy the communication and the quantitative reasoning requirements are suitable; (b) review, evaluate, and report on UW-Madison instruction offered in satisfaction of the communication and the quantitative reasoning requirements; and (c) commission and receive research reports from ad hoc research committees (that the Council appoints) concerning the effectiveness of these requirements and the courses that satisfy them. Reports of reviews, evaluations, and research shall be distributed to deans, academic planning councils, relevant faculty committees, and departments.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Schools and colleges should continue to evaluate the criteria by which ethnic studies courses, which satisfy the ethnic studies requirement, are designated.

RECOMMENDATION 7

A test of college-level writing ability that includes the writing of an essay shall be used to assess the communication skills of entering students.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The cut-off score on the mathematics placement examination should be adjusted in order to test for three years of high school mathematics accomplishment. Entering students whose scores fall below the cut-off point must complete additional work in mathematics.

RECOMMENDATION 9

All professors are asked to consider possible changes in courses and in requirements that would result in increased student writing.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Adequate notice of the changes in the communication and the quantitative reasoning requirements shall be given to Wisconsin secondary schools.