

General Education Task Force Report

In late November 2000, the Provost charged the General Education Task Force to bring forward to the university community recommendations in response to a set of questions:

1. What philosophy statement should support the UNC General Education requirements and what specific outcomes are to be achieved by any identified sub-grouping/categories?
2. What competencies should all UNC graduates be required to demonstrate?
3. What proportion of the baccalaureate degree program should be reflected in general requirements?
4. What options might exist for the demonstration of required competencies?
5. What process might be followed in the selection of courses identified as appropriate to a specific requirement category and the development of a desired competency?

The eight-member Task Force included faculty representatives from each college, Sharon Clinebell (Business), Carolyn Edwards (Education), Cynthia Galovich, Sally McBeth, and Barry Rothaus (Arts & Sciences), Jim Stiehl (HHS), Jinny Jenkins (PVA), Sherilyn Marrow (Chair of the General Education Council), and Sandra Flake (Dean of Arts & Sciences), charged with the administration of General Education. The Task Force had an organizing meeting shortly before the Christmas break, electing Barry Rothaus chair, and then met weekly from the first week of January until the start of Spring break.

What follows is in response to the questions addressed to the Task Force.

1. What philosophy statement should support the UNC General Education requirements and what specific outcomes are to be achieved by any identified sub-grouping/categories?

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT SUPPORTING UNC GENERAL EDUCATION

General Education at the University of Northern Colorado is central to developing well-educated individuals. It serves as the cornerstone of a sound university education, and provides the basis for acquiring specialized knowledge. General Education promotes lifelong learning and enhances students' personal, professional, and public lives. This philosophy is reflected in the following outcomes:

General Education prepares one for a complex world that requires creativity, imagination, critical thought, the appreciation of diversity, and insightful action;

General Education cultivates skills, abilities, and perspectives that strengthen an individual's capacity to pursue a career and a healthy, balanced life;

General Education enhances the ability to communicate and interact effectively with others;

General Education enhances the ability to deal with rapid and ongoing change through becoming adaptable, flexible, and resourceful; and

General Education strengthens one's commitment to intellectual honesty, personal and professional integrity, and responsible citizenship.

Categories

1. *Inquiry and Expression (12 hours)

Writing (3)

Oral Communication (3)

Integrated Communication and Research (3)

Mathematics (3)

*Courses meeting the requirements of this category are not necessarily department specific.

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2. **Arts and Letters (6 hours)

Art
Foreign Languages
History
Humanities
Literature
Music
Philosophy
Interdisciplinary Arts and Letters

3. **Social and Behavioral Sciences (6 hours)

Anthropology
Economics
Geography
Political Science
Psychology
Sociology
Interdisciplinary Social and Behavioral Sciences

4. **Science (7 hours)

Earth Science
Life Science
Physical Science
Interdisciplinary Science

**We have chosen the same areas of study as in the current program for categories 2, 3, and 4. This should not presuppose that either the same courses, or the same number or frequency of offerings, are recommended or would be selected.

5. Cultural Diversity (3 hours)

Multi-cultural Studies
Cross-cultural Studies

6. Wellness and Physical Activity (2+1 hours)

A knowledge and experience course tied to physical activity, i.e., an integrated physical experience course with a knowledge base of health, nutrition and life style choices.

7. ***Appreciation and Exploration (3 hours)

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Examples of areas include the following:

- Civic Responsibilities
- Ethics
- Art Appreciation
- Financial Planning
- Music Appreciation

***No more than twenty courses at any one time may be placed in this category, with no college providing more than seven of the courses at any one time.

No course in this category may be counted toward a student's major or minor.

No course should remain in this category for more than five years.

All courses in this category should receive S/U grading.

Last, we recommend that no course in this area should be taken earlier than the sophomore year.

2. What **competencies** should all UNC graduates be required to demonstrate?

Competencies/Outcomes

Critical Thinking

Reading Comprehension

Oral and Written Competence

Mathematical Comprehension

Socio-Cultural and Geopolitical Awareness

Scientific Understanding

Technological Literacy

Cross Cultural Understanding

Research Skills

Appreciation of the Liberal Arts

Enhancement of Life

3. What **proportion** of the baccalaureate degree program should be reflected in General Education requirements?

It is the recommendation of the task force that at least one third of the baccalaureate degree program, or 40 hours, should be reflected in General Education requirements.

4. What **options** might exist for the demonstration of proficiency in required courses?

The Task Force recommends that current options, such as the CLEP examination, Advanced Placement examinations, International Baccalaureate, or similar equivalents be retained or augmented. These nationally normed tests, in the view of the Task Force, have served well to demonstrate proficiency in required General Education courses. They also provide acceptable indicators for a student's academic performance.

5. What **process** might be followed in the selection of courses identified as appropriate to a specific requirement category and the development of a desired competency?

The Task Force understood this question as being one of procedure, i.e., how courses may be best identified for categories? We believe the present procedural system with courses going the approval route from department to college curriculum committee, to General Education Council, etc., etc., while cumbersome and awkward, still works. We do recommend, in an effort to streamline the system, however, that explicit and observed timelines be established for the approval of all courses, not just General Education courses. However, the system is ultimately designed, it is imperative that all courses be approved in a timely manner.

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6. While no direct request was made by the Provost for Task Force **recommendations**, one of the side products of our deliberations was a series of recommendations regarding General Education. The Task Force proposes the following, that:
- a. General Education remain within the exclusive province of the faculty. While entities external to the faculty are welcome to become involved in a discussion of issues surrounding the delivery of General Education, under no circumstances should their views take precedence over the faculty. This applies to courses, course development, instruction, syllabi, and everything else connected with the delivery of General Education.
 - b. Two Task Forces be immediately appointed whose objectives will be, first, to reduce the present number of offerings in General Education, and second, to review the procedure by which General Education courses are proposed and approved.
 - c. No General Education course is to have more than forty (40) students, with the exception of English composition, foreign language, mathematics, and oral communication courses. In these latter programs, we propose a limit of twenty-five (25) students.
 - d. The body of courses offered, or to be offered in General Education, should lead to student proficiency in computer use and technology.
 - e. All courses offered, or to be offered, in General Education should lead to student proficiency in oral communication.

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- f. All General Education courses are to have a significant writing component, either in the form of essay examinations, book (s) or other analytical reviews, and/or term/research paper (s), leading to students' written competence.
- g. All courses assigned for General Education must be taught on a regular basis, i.e., at least once each calendar year.
- h. Where possible, departments offering General Education courses should consider introducing "General Education Seminars" of no more than twenty (20) students so that students may have the opportunity to truly enhance their educational experience.