

Gen Ed Forum 4-17-09

Member of the GETF for 2 ½ years, from January 2006 to May 2008

Anti-Disciplinary Motivations

The **two main goals** of the GETF members who wrote the blueprint were:

1. To promote **skill** development (David)
- and 2. To **require** faculty to teach in a **multidisciplinary** manner.

In their view, our current GE program is **unsalvageable** because its **disciplinary** focus

1. Results in **stale surveys** of disciplines
2. Is used primarily to **recruit majors**
- and 3. Is an **obstacle to coherence** (Troy)

They believe that requiring faculty to teach in a multidisciplinary manner will significantly increase the **creativity** of instruction at Southern.

As a result, the GETF has **eliminated disciplinary designations** from the LEP, **Relenting only** in the cases of Math, Composition, and Foreign Languages.

13 of the 16 courses are nondisciplinary

The 9 Tier II courses must each be in different disciplines,

And the remaining 4 courses can be in any disciplines.

In the LEP, most of the 16 courses **combine elements from a variety of disciplines.**

The committee was guided by the principle that, with the few exceptions I've mentioned,

any instructor should be able to teach any course,

no matter the discipline or background of the instructor

And that the **key elements** of the goals should be written to

emphasize **multidisciplinary** teaching.

One of the consequences is that the LEP isn't a true General Education or Liberal Arts program:

Two problems with this nondisciplinary approach:

1. It is easy for students to **avoid a range of disciplines**

Especially those seen as **difficult or esoteric**

The majority of our students have this motivation, and this is a disservice to them.

Ken's poll

Websites posting average GPAs for instructors

Pam Brucker – Students discovering that they are interested in disciplines that they would have otherwise avoided.

2. It is easy for students to **group courses** in disciplines **close to their respective majors**

E.g., All humanities, social sciences, etc.

Summary: The LEP is neither General Education nor focused on the Liberal Arts. This will have a **devastating effect** on the **quality** of our students' education, and the **preparedness and cultural literacy** of our majors.

Problems with Quality Control

Teaching **outside** one's area of expertise

No **mechanisms** to insure quality control or a consistent identity in courses.

Strong incentive for departments to make their courses **less challenging** in order to attract more students, and retain or increase their full-time faculty lines.

The GETF's ideological inclusiveness suggests that the **review of course proposals** will be rather **lax**.

Natural World – Why not gatekeepers?

Lack of Evidence for Nondisciplinary GE models, and for the LEP

No objective evidence

No trial courses offered

No syllabi