

An Alternative General Education Proposal

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Problems with the GETF Proposal

- Enormous Transitional Costs
- A Risky Experiment that is Unlikely to Succeed
 - Problems with Nondisciplinary Gen Ed Models
 - Quality Control
 - No Objective Data that Nondisciplinary Models work at least as well as Disciplinary Models
 - No existing Gen Ed Program comes close to the Complexity of the GETF Proposal

A Moderate Alternative

- Guiding Principles
 - Modifying our Current Gen Ed Program rather than Reinventing the Wheel
 - A Relatively Smooth and Inexpensive Transition
 - Credit Neutrality
 - Offering Proposed Courses on a Trial Basis
 - Requiring Evidence of Academic Value and Rigor
 - Avoid Committee-level Politicization by using Faculty Referendums to Determine Major Changes to AURs
- Our Current Program is far from perfect, but it has certain virtues
 - Especially the Distribution of Content Areas
 - Main Shortcomings: Breadth in Content Areas but not Depth, and Inconsistent Development of Skills
 - The GETF Proposal exacerbates the Depth-Problem, since the Tier 2 and 3 courses will be taught by a wide variety of different disciplines.
- Improving the Current Program
 - Incorporate certain elements of the GETF Proposal
 - Redesigning the existing skill oriented AURs
 - Senior Capstone Course
 - Unintrusive Assessment
 - Sequencing of AURs
 - Successful Gen Ed Programs provide depth by building on what students already know.
 - There is no way to predict the content knowledge of students in a given Gen Ed course unless there is a fixed sequence in which students take the AURs.

- Sequencing will enable instructors to reinforce content knowledge from other courses by drawing on it for examples, analyzing it, and providing additional context.
 - Sequencing will also encourage the formation of Learning Communities.
 - Exceptions to the sequence made for majors like Nursing and Special Ed, for transfer students, and prospective majors.
 - Sophomore Gen Ed courses taught at the 200 level, Junior and Senior Gen Ed courses taught at the 300 level.
 - More Clearly Articulating the topics covered in each AUR
 - This will better enable other instructors to reinforce this material.
 - Content shouldn't be specified to the degree that it constrains the originality of instructors and their ability to teach to their strengths.
 - Quality Control
 - Informal mechanism for providing feedback to department chairs about Gen Ed faculty who aren't adequately preparing their students.
- Incorporating the original goals from the 2005 Referendum
 - The original goals could easily be incorporated into existing AURs because they are very general.
 - Competency goals could be covered in existing skill oriented AURs like Composition, Math, and Foreign Languages.
 - Areas of Knowledge goals could be covered in existing knowledge oriented AURs.
 - Value goals could be covered in a Senior Capstone course, or be incorporated into existing AURs.

Advantages of this Alternative Proposal

- Relatively Smooth and Inexpensive Transition
- More Likely to Succeed since it works from a well-established model
- Greater Emphasis on Quality Control
- A Much Simpler Model
 - Easier to understand and follow
- A Simpler and Faster way to satisfy the demands of NEASC