

Stephen F. Austin State University

SFASU Faculty Senate

**Proposal for the Formation of a Standing General Education Committee
To be presented for second reading, November 11, 1998, Faculty Senate Meeting, #279**

Academic Affairs Committee

Frank Codispoti, Chair

Rationale

The recommendations of the Core Curriculum Committee (CCC), see page 4, make a strong case for the formation of a standing General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC). The tasks they assign to the proposed committee are vital to the success and strength of our core curriculum. These tasks are also ones that require time and commitment to complete. In addition to specifying five tasks for a GEAC, the CCC specified eight criteria for General Education courses. While no committee will or should have the authority to require that courses at the university meet specific criteria, a GEAC could assess how well these goals are achieved as part of its responsibility to assess the effectiveness of the General Education Program at SFA. A GEAC could also serve to encourage and facilitate the development of such traits in General Education courses.

The Committee Composition, Election, and Terms

It is recommended that a standing General Education Advisory Committee be formed consisting of one representative from each of the colleges. In addition, the Chair of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee will be an ex officio member (The Committee will also be expected to coordinate its actions with the Chair of the SACS Institutional Effectiveness Committee during the existence of that committee). The tenured and tenure-track members of the University faculty will constitute the eligible faculty for this committee. The members of the GEAC will be chosen in elections conducted by the Election Committee of the Faculty Senate. The members of each college will elect their representative. Members of the GEAC will be elected for staggered three-year terms. The members of the first GEAC will draw lots to determine who will serve one-, two-, and three-year terms. Members of the GEAC will be indefinitely eligible for reelection. The members of the GEAC will elect their own Chair and create and staff any other offices (such as secretary) they deem necessary.

Responsibilities

The GEAC will be responsible for the following tasks:

- Review, on a regular five-year schedule, syllabi for all courses offered in the General Education Program.
- Consider recommendations for inclusion and deletions of courses.
- Recommend to the Vice President additions to or deletions from the course list in the list of approved core courses Core Curriculum Committee's report.
- Assess the effectiveness of the General Education Program at SFA.
- Assess the competence of transfer students in General Education areas.
- Develop a set of procedures for carrying out the assessment responsibilities of the committee. The committee will be required to make this one of its first tasks after it is constituted. These procedures are to regularly reevaluated and modified as necessary.

The GEAC will encourage and facilitate the following characteristics in all General Education courses:

- Make use of the best learning theory and pedagogical techniques.
- Be taught by the most qualified faculty.
- Provide a broad base of knowledge in the academic field.
- Demonstrate links among disciplines.
- Emphasize critical thinking skills and problem solving.
- Explore ethical issues.
- Exercise students' oral and written communication skills
- Make students aware of cross cultural and global perspective as they relate to the discipline.

The responsibilities of the General Education Advisory Committee are extensive and will require a great deal of help from outside sources if it is to complete them. Therefore, the committee is expected to call upon the information, data-gathering, and analytic capabilities of other units of the University.

Decision-Making and Reporting Requirements

The General Education Advisory Committee will report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and to the Chair of the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee. Reporting will be simultaneous. The report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs will for action by that official, while the report to the Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee will be for the purpose of advising the Senate of such proposals in a timely fashion.

An effective General Education program requires the support of as many members of the faculty and of as many academic units of the university as possible. Additionally, it must be recognized that decisions concerning the General Education program can have negative, as well as positive effects on individual departments or programs. For these reasons, The decision-making process of the General Education Advisory Committee is required to have the following characteristics:

1. Any decisions to eliminate, add, or change course requirements included in the general education requirements may only be taken after the full committee has consulted with the Chair or another appropriate representative of any department or program that is directly affected by the change.
2. Recommendations to eliminate, add, or change course requirements included in the general education requirements will require the approval of 5 of the 7 College representatives.
3. Recommendations When forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Chair of the Senate Academic Affairs Committee recommendations to that eliminate, add, or change course requirements must be accompanied by a statement justifying the proposed change.

Recommendations of the Core Curriculum Committee

The core Curriculum Committee strongly recommends the establishment of a standing General Education Committee reporting to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, to provide oversight and continuous assessment of the courses in general education. The Committee should consist of one elected faculty member from each college and three faculty members appointed by the Vice President of Academic Affairs so that appropriate balance is maintained among the colleges and so that a variety of points of view are brought to bear on issues. The responsibilities of the committee should include the following:

- Review on a regular five-year schedule syllabi for all courses offered in the General Education Program.
- Consider recommendations for inclusion and deletions of courses.
- Recommend to the Vice President additions to or deletions from the course list in the Core Curriculum Committee's report.
- Assess the effectiveness of the General Education Program at SFA.
- Assess the competence of transfer students in General Education areas.

Because of our belief in the importance of General Education to the development of a well informed citizenry prepared for lifelong learning and for leadership in our democracy, the Core Curriculum Committee recommends that every General Education course will:

- Make use of the best learning theory and pedagogical techniques.
- Be taught by the most qualified faculty.
- Provide a broad base of knowledge in the academic field.
- Demonstrate links among disciplines.
- Emphasize critical thinking skills and problem solving.
- Explore ethical issues.
- Exercise students' oral and written communication skills
- Make students aware cross cultural and global perspective as they relate to the discipline