



## Academic Programs


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**DISCUSSION DRAFT**  
8/15/01

## General Education at Sonoma State University

### Background

In the spring semester 2000 the SSU Academic Senate approved the creation of a GE Lab to address current issues in general education. In the fall of 2000 a group of five faculty members (Julia Allen, English; Andrew Botterell, Philosophy; Raymond Castro, Chicano and Latino Studies; Richard Gale, Hutchins School; and Scott Miller, Writing Center) met to examine Area A of GE (Communication and Critical Thinking). In the spring of 2001 the Area A group prepared a draft report that was shared with the GE Subcommittee.

To further the work in GE, a team of faculty members had a proposal approved to attend the Asheville Institute on General Education (AIGE), sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Funded by the Provost's Office, the team (Brett Christie, Kinesiology; Robert Eyler, Economics and Chair of the GE Subcommittee; Rick Luttmann, Mathematics and Chair of the Faculty; Phil Northen, Chair of Biology; and Elaine Sundberg, Director of Academic Programs) traveled to Asheville in June 2001 to spend five days intensively reviewing and studying general education in the context of a liberal arts and sciences education. After meeting with national experts in GE and other teams attending the institute, and after attending a number of sessions dealing with issues facing general education, the SSU team developed the attached proposed GE Learning Goals, discussed a series of assessment approaches, and outlined the role of a GE Faculty Coordinator to lead this effort. By building on the work of the Area A team, and by analyzing several other universities' learning goals, the team developed broad learning goals that it believes represent those of a liberal arts and sciences general education.

This document is intended to be a broadly disseminated draft discussed by the various constituencies of the University, including faculty, students, administrators and staff. The major parts of this proposal are: (1) Proposed Mission Statement and General Education Learning Goals; (2) Suggested Assessment Methods; (3) GE Faculty Coordinator Position; and (4) Proposed Approval Process and Timeline.

### (1) Proposed Mission Statement and General Education Learning Goals

**The Mission:** The Sonoma State University general education program is the foundation of a liberal arts and sciences education, preparing students for full participation and citizenship in a democratic society. The general education program embodies the mission of SSU to prepare students to be learned men and women who have a foundation for lifelong learning; have a broad cultural perspective; have a keen appreciation of intellectual and aesthetic achievements; will be leaders and active citizens; are capable of pursuing fulfilling careers in a changing world; and are concerned with contributing to the health and well-being of the world at large. SSU's general education program provides students with the opportunity to achieve the following learning goals.

#### I. Acquire intellectual skills and capacities

- a. Develop intellectual curiosity
- b. Write and speak effectively to various audiences
- c. Evaluate everyday experiences critically
- d. Work collaboratively with others
- e. Use information technology appropriately
- f. Imagine, design, and execute scholarly projects

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- g. Translate problems into common language
- h. Reason quantitatively

## II. Develop social and global knowledge

- a. Understand and appreciate human diversity
- b. Prepare for active engagement in the community
- c. Understand and be sensitive to the global environment
- d. Understand social justice issues
- e. Engage with challenging moral and ethical human dilemmas

## III. Understand and use multiple modes of inquiry and approaches to knowledge

- a. Appreciate the power and beauty of math and science
- b. Appreciate the power and beauty of fine and performing arts
- c. Appreciate the power and beauty of historical and social phenomena
- d. Recognize and use the perspectives of diverse disciplines

## IV. Develop capacities for integration and lifelong learning

- a. Evaluate alternative career choices
- b. Recognize the importance of lifelong learning
- c. Integrate general education experiences
- d. Cultivate ways to empower the learning of others
- e. Engage in responsible citizenship

## (2) Suggested Assessment Methods

**Course survey:** Students currently fill out the SETE (Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness) at the end of each semester for courses taken. It is possible to add questions to the SETE that deal with students' perceptions of how well the course met the GE learning objectives.

**Embedded course assessment:** Questions related to GE program learning objectives could be embedded within course exams/specific assignments. (Example: All GE courses within a particular area of GE have as a common learning goal: II.c. Understand and be sensitive to the global environment. A question is crafted to address this learning goal. Instructors of each course score the exams as usual to assign course grades. Copies of the exam responses to the embedded question are aggregated and analyzed as outcomes assessment data.) Embedded assignments can be utilized in a similar way.

**Portfolio assessment:** Students could be asked to develop an electronic portfolio of representative work throughout their general education. The concept of the portfolio might be presented in the freshman seminar or perhaps in one of the foundation courses (English 101 or Philosophy 101). With the advice and support of their instructors, students would organize a representative sample of their work for each of their GE courses. In the capstone experience (see below), students would use the portfolio to assist them in a self-assessment of their GE experiences and how well they achieved the GE learning goals. This information could be aggregated and analyzed to review the outcomes of GE. Another possible use of the portfolio would be to extract a representative sample of portfolio artifacts for faculty to analyze for specific learning outcomes.

**Capstone experience:** Area E of General Education could be converted into a series of capstone courses. The strength of utilizing an upper division capstone course in GE is that students would be in a good position to reflect on the GE curriculum and their learning experiences, and they would appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback to the university. Additionally, meaningful assessment at the capstone level can be used to provide useful information to students about their accomplishments in the GE program.

**Graduation exit survey/interviews/and/or focus groups:** SSU has participated for several years in two national surveys (administered in alternate years to juniors/seniors at the time of the WEPT, Written English Proficiency Test): College Student Survey, Alexander Astin, UCLA, and the CSEQ, Pace, UCLA. SSU will now begin administering the NSSE, participating in a

consortium of COPLAC institutions. CSU campuses will also form a consortium and data will be available for comparison purposes. On-line, web-based exit surveys can also be designed to be taken by students at the time of graduation from SSU (see Kinesiology Department for sample survey). Alternatively (or as an addition), students can be interviewed or participate in focus groups to get at more specific issues regarding their general education.

**Alumni surveys:** SSU currently administers the ACT Alumni Outcomes Survey. It is mailed out to SSU alumni every two years. Data from the survey provide SSU with information on how alumni perceive they have benefited from their undergraduate education.

**General Education Mentoring Team:** GE Mentors could be selected from different departments to assist other instructors in developing their skills as GE faculty. These mentors would be selected based on their expertise and excellence in teaching GE courses and would provide feedback on such things as course materials, creation of syllabi, classroom techniques, assignment development, portfolio assessment, etc. The mentors could also conduct informal discussion groups and provide ideas and feedback to other GE instructors.

### (3) GE Faculty Coordinator Position

A GE Faculty Coordinator could be appointed to further the goals of general education at SSU. The coordinator's duties might include the following: (1) assist in guiding this proposed plan through the faculty approval process and oversee its implementation; (2) develop the assessment effort in GE; (3) work with the GE Subcommittee on changes to GE curriculum and structure; (4) analyze the results of assessment; (5) provide feedback to faculty and students; and (6) develop and oversee the GE Mentoring team that will become an ongoing resource to GE faculty. The GE Faculty Coordinator could also develop a systematic plan for review of SSU's GE Program. This could include: helping departments create matrices that summarize the relationship between program goals and courses; creating a program review process with the GE subcommittee; and developing a timetable for systematic review of SSU's GE program and goals

### (4) Proposed Approval Process and Timeline

#### FALL SEMESTER 2001:

**August 20-November 1:** Broad-based discussion of the GE Goals and Assessment Approaches in department meetings, appropriate Academic Senate committee meetings, Dean's Council, etc. The proposal will be posted on the SSU home page and e-mail comments will be solicited. Discussion sessions will also be conducted throughout the semester.

**November:** Revision of GE Proposal: After receiving all the feedback by November 1, the GE coordinator, the Director of Academic Programs and members of the Asheville team will revise the proposal for presentation to the faculty committees.

**December:** Revised draft document presented to the GE Subcommittee for review.

#### SPRING SEMESTER 2002:

**February:** GE Subcommittee review, comment and approval

**March:** Document forwarded to EPC for review and approval

**April:** Document submitted to the Executive Committee and the Academic Senate for final approval

**May:** GE Faculty Coordinator receives the final approved document and begins implementation

#### SUMMER 2002:

GE Faculty Coordinator develops plan for assessment to begin in Fall 2002

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Questions or Comments

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