

To: Elaine McDonald, Chair, EPC; Paul Draper, Chair, GE Initiative Task Force

From: School of Social Sciences Curriculum Committee; Susan Hillier, Chair

Response to FYE draft of 9 September 2004

Our School GE subcommittee has reviewed all available documents to help inform the larger group of the process and content of SSU's GE planning. Our process was tremendously assisted by the clarity and specificity of Nathan Rank's response to FYE dated 12 September. Hats off to the hard work of so many faculty!

The proposal to create an intellectually powerful Freshman Year Experience is theoretically exciting, logistically complex, and fiscally daunting. The following are specific concerns expressed by our curriculum committee, followed by their elaboration.

- Resource allocation
- Impact on schools, especially small programs
- Long term impact on upper division GE
- Remediation

Resource allocation. This is the committee's greatest concern. Faculty workload compensation must be addressed up-front, as must be the necessity of new faculty positions within some departments. The logistics of planning and coordination will require huge amounts of faculty time to properly develop the proposed FYE. As we are all aware, implementing an innovative program with inadequate or impermanent funding does not predict excellence in long-term outcome, nor will it enhance faculty ownership in the program.

Further, cannibalizing majors to support FYE absolutely must be guarded against. Specifically, given the scale of the proposed program (80+ sections of FYE) we are concerned that departments will be required or asked to assign instructors for FYE but will not be provided any additional funding for this purpose. The result will or could be a significant reduction in the number of courses taught for the majors and minors on campus.

Impact on schools. We are especially concerned for the program's impact on the health and vigor of smaller programs, whose majors are recruited through lower division GE. Professor Rank's proposal to break each FYE course into three units of five weeks with a single responsible faculty person might ameliorate this concern. We would further propose that the courses be interdisciplinary *within schools*—that is to say, school-wide discussions around a university-wide topic (example: Issues in a pluralistic world). As an option schools could choose to collaborate. This model would allow greater visibility for smaller programs and greater exposure for students to the theory and methods of disciplines that more naturally hang together. To expand Rank's comment, we gravitate to specific areas of inquiry and civic engagement to a great extent because of our discipline-based theories. To expose freshmen to that reality is an exciting concept in that it demonstrates the impact of education on how we perceive the world.

Upper division GE. The relationship between upper division GE courses and FYE needs to be clarified. Will the overall number of upper division courses be reduced to accommodate an expanded FYE requirement? How will this impact departments that offer upper division GE courses that simultaneously serve the GE program and their majors and/or minors? Will departments have the resources necessary to continue to offer these courses if enrollments are reduced due to changes in upper division GE? To protect the integrity of our majors, we continue to support the model of GE-specific courses at the upper division level.

Remediation. This issue will need to be addressed up front in the planning. At this time we have no specific suggestion but again highlight our attention to resource allocation and the protection of majors.

Role of the task force. We regret the GE task force was unable to meet at a time when Social Sciences EPC representative Dolly Friedel could attend. It is the committee's understanding that the revision of GE is the purview of EPC's GE committee rather than a task force comprised of whoever can attend the meeting. This is noted with an appreciation for the complexity of getting faculty participation on such a substantial task. It also addresses the reality that committee members arrange their calendars far in advance to accommodate committee attendance. Nevertheless, we very much appreciate the openness of the process and plan to maintain input into the process by whatever methods seems to be most workable.