

**University Faculty Senate
Undergraduate Academic Programs and Policies Committee
Academic Year 2020-21
FINAL REPORT**

Committee Charge

The Committee will provide advice and guidance to the Faculty Senate on matters relating to undergraduate programs and policies throughout the University. To these ends, the Committee may review such areas as existing and proposed curricula, standards for academic degrees, undergraduate academic assessment, teaching techniques and evaluation, special undergraduate programs, articulation among units of State University of New York and the various aspects of international education and development.

Committee Members 2020-21

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Summary of Committee Actions

- At the Fall Planning meeting, the Committee re-prioritized projects to focus on items that were either near completion or meaningful and actionable under current conditions.

- Committee conversation was carried out through email, with Zoom meetings later in the year.
- Resolution on Academic Planning for Responding to Future Crises, prepared by subcommittee of Norman Goodman and Richard Lee. Recommitted from 187th Plenary, revised and approved by the body at the 188th (Spring) Plenary.
- Subcommittee on Online Course Delivery Concerns (Janet Nepkie, Richard Lee, Norman Goodman). Survey completed and a particular issue identified with the role of “Subject Matter Experts” who may provide or use the content of courses offered online by SUNY campuses. A proposed policy has been drafted and informally communicated with UUP to be sure we all stay in our lanes.
- Subcommittee on faculty recognition (Grace Maxon-Clarke, Danna Prather-Davis) prepared “Recognition of Covid-19 Response and the Need for Continued Support” resolution, approved by UFS at the 188th (Spring) Plenary.
- Subcommittee on exemplary responses (Diane Tice, Wendy Gordon) prepared a [Form to collect exemplary outcomes](#) from the Covid-19 year. Responses will be collated and transformed to an inspirational document to be shared in Fall 2021.
- Undergraduate Committee was charged by Executive Committee to analyze and respond to two SUNY documents: a proposed revision to “Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation;” and the Provost’s General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) Proposed SUNY General Education Report.” Comments were submitted regarding both proposals. (Specific recommendations appended to this report.)
- A faculty request regarding UFS involvement with higher education in prison was channeled to the Undergraduate Committee for consideration. The committee met on March 24 with Rachel Sander and began exploring issues of Higher Education for Justice Involved individuals (HEJII). Committee identified several strands of action to pursue in 2021-22:
 - Attention to academic re-entry for justice-involved students
 - Faculty awareness-raising of SUNY HEJII group as a point of contact/support for faculty working with justice-involved students or developing programs
 - Urge campuses to gear up for 2023 Pell expansion to include incarcerated students
 - Collect campus-specific needs to support this work
- Project to compile resources to aid in program proposal/revision was dropped, as too duplicative of [resources already available through SUNY Blue](#).

Agenda Items for 2020-21

- 1) Report (Spring) regarding concerns surrounding massive increase in online delivery of courses
- 2) Distribution (Fall/Winter) of long-promised resources to aid in program proposal/revision, now with added pandemic resources - attempt to get linked to campus web pages
- 3) Resolution (Winter) regarding academic policies and standards in future emergency response situations
- 4) Statement (Spring) of recognition to faculty and all campus professionals for the work they have done in extraordinarily tough/traumatic circumstances

- 5) Publicization (Spring) of excellent outcomes from emergency responses, particularly new or energized classroom practices that will be maintained in the future

Appendix: Committee Responses to Policy Proposals.

Responses to GEAC Draft Report

1. We question the apparent exclusion of the Scientific Reasoning competency from the Social Sciences Knowledge area and its linkage solely to the Natural Sciences Knowledge area. We support Scientific Reasoning as a required competency but believe it should be made clearer that the competency can be met with Social Science courses. The committee was divided on the inclusion of Natural Sciences (separate from Scientific Reasoning) as a required Knowledge Area.
2. With the increase and significance of Competencies in the proposed program, language defining what is meant by a “Competency,” how it can be met, how it must be assessed and how it will be indicated on transcripts is essential.
3. The Committee approves of the division of “Basic Communication” into its constituent parts (Written and Oral). However, given the near-parallel of the SLOs for these two areas, it makes no sense to have one as a Knowledge Area and one as a Competency. There should be equivalency in how these skills are treated in the GE program.
4. The Committee applauds the creation of a coherent GE program, and the expectation that campuses will support their own programs that are more than mirror-images of the SUNY requirements. We request that language be added that campuses should review their own General Education programs (including all SUNY requirements, graduation requirements, and competencies) as coherent curricula, in the same way major programs are reviewed and assessed. Since often the only way to be prioritized for resources on campuses is to show the need through assessment, it is essential that campuses address general education as a program in its own right.
5. In the “Diversity” competency, we recommend the first Learning Outcome be revised as follows: “articulate an understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion, antiracism, and social justice; and use that knowledge constructively.”

Responses to Discussion Draft of Policy, “Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation”

Our committee is composed of faculty from across the System, with decades of experience in advising and instructing students. Our response is based on our understanding of students' experiences in college courses after gaining credits in pre-college settings. We applaud the expansion and clarification of this policy. Many of the students we have worked with, especially those with a moderate number of these pre-college credits, succeed in exactly the way the policy intends. The variable quality of experiences, however, can result in students with a high number of credits that are nevertheless not prepared to succeed in a regular college course. Our comments come from our concern with ensuring students achieve a substantive and useful education; economic cost cannot be the only consideration.

1. Regarding item IA-2: Subject Matter Expert is a poorly defined position and is not equivalent to faculty. Faculty have the expertise and responsibility not only to evaluate prior learning but to assess the appropriate application of that experience to a program of study. Item IA-2 should be revised to read, "Faculty Oversight: The evaluation of student learning for the award of academic credit must be conducted by the faculty."
2. We note throughout the draft policy the change from language of "may" in the 1976 policy to language of "must." While recognizing the need for consistency across the system, we expect that need to be balanced with the necessity for campus flexibility.
3. We have particular concern with the combination of the 30-credit guarantee (IC) with the acceptance and publicizing of CLEP subject examinations (IIA-1; III-Communication). While these exams have undeniable utility in assessing learning of non-traditional students or for a limited number of subjects for traditional-aged students, passing one of these exams in no way replicates the experience of taking an instructor-taught course in the subject. Engaging in coursework with an instructor provides students with academic and social development far beyond simple acquisition of the content covered on an exam. We are deeply concerned by the prospect of students completing 30 credits by examination, arriving on a campus as a sophomore, and having none of the skills in time management, communication, information literacy, or other key competencies needed to succeed in advanced college-level work.

In addition to the concerns above regarding PLA by examination, we are concerned there will be accrediting issues raised in programs where students can bypass essential courses with exams (e.g., BIO 101 for a Nursing program). Students who achieve such credit for 'free' are being done a disservice if the credits they have earned are not in fact giving them the tools they need to succeed, regardless of the score they may have achieved on an exam.

We urge a full study regarding the equivalencies of CLEP-type credit to instructor-taught college courses.

4. Items IB and IIC provide for PLA through portfolio evaluation. This item should be fleshed out to include whether there will be standard criteria provided for portfolio evaluation, or if this is an area of campus flexibility.
5. We appreciate the recognition of this policy that in the past students with the most potential benefit from PLA (e.g. first-generation students, students from under-represented minorities) have had less awareness of such programs, and applaud the clear direction regarding communication of the relevant information. We repeat, however, that credit by examination is not an equivalent experience to credit earned in coursework and hope that the necessary communication makes the trade-off clear to students. Immediate economic considerations must not be the only criterion presented to students as they make their decisions regarding PLA.
6. Note the correct spelling of "Core Tenets"