

**SUNY Working Group on General Education
GREEN PAPER ON GENERAL EDUCATION REVISION
May 24, 2019**

Rationale for revising SUNY general education

The SUNY General Education Working Group proposes that general education must empower students to become citizens in a globalized society and prepare them for advanced study and eventually successful employment. Ultimately, SUNY general education empowers SUNY graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century global citizenship whether they are from New York State, the United States, or abroad.

A recent report produced by *The Chronicle of Education*, entitled “Reforming Gen Ed,” asks,

What comes to mind when you hear the term “general education”? A menu of random courses? A way to fill seats in a department? Requirements disconnected from the major? Somebody else’s responsibility?a waste of time?

However, the report does not suggest that the concept of a general education curriculum should be eliminated from the undergraduate degree. Instead it argues that

a well-planned general-education program can prepare students for an increasingly complex world. Designed thoughtfully, a coherent core can enable students to think broadly and deeply, hone their communication skills, and address the tough and timeless questions embedded in every discipline. (4)

The *Chronicle’s* report draws largely on research conducted by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) for its data and conclusions, but much of the anecdotal evidence is limited to general education reforms instituted by baccalaureate-degree granting institutions. Little reference is made to university systems or technology and community colleges. Yet the SUNY General Education Work Group believes much can be learned and adapted from this research to guide us as we strive to meet the needs of the State University of New York, its students, its individual institutions, and the general public.

In the *Chronicle’s* report, “General education” refers to the part of the undergraduate curriculum that is required of all students seeking a liberal education.

At most colleges, general education, the report continues to say, is delivered through the use of a distribution model similar to the SUNY General Education framework currently in place. Such a model “allows students to pick from approved courses within certain required areas of focus, including social sciences, sciences, humanities, and the arts” (7) Many academic leaders, however, worry that at a time when skepticism about the value of college is rising, rather than serving a useful purpose, general

education requirements too often “feel obligatory, lack coherence, fail to teach higher-order skills, or don’t connect with a student’s major in a meaningful way” (7).

In the last five years, efforts to reform general education have been motivated by:

- Questions about purpose
- Concerns about student success
- Accreditation policies and state regulations
- Employer demands
- Polarized politics

Indeed, SUNY conversations about undergraduate education reinforce these conclusions. Our institutions have been focusing on student retention, persistence and completion, complying with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education changing accreditation demands, developing curriculum to help students meet employer demands, and making a nod toward “incorporating learning outcomes that include elements like ethical reasoning, applied problem solving, and diverse perspectives so that undergraduates can better understand the world and their role in it (8).

As stated in SUNY General Education policy, while offering an academically rigorous and comprehensive core General Education curriculum, SUNY is committed to

- continue to ensure that Associate of Arts, Associate of Science and baccalaureate degree recipients have breadth of study in multiple subject areas;
- provide students more flexibility in selecting courses that satisfy the general education requirement as well as other degree requirements;
- give AA, AS and baccalaureate degree candidates more opportunity for in-depth study in a general education subject area;
- facilitate transfer to baccalaureate programs for Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree holders; and support timely degree completion for baccalaureate degree candidates, regardless of where they begin their study.

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education in its current Standard III states that accredited undergraduate institutions possess a general education program that

- offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field;
- offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspective.

While it is possible under the current paradigm for SUNY campuses to meet Middle States requirements, the requirements are not completely aligned. In other words, meeting SUNY's general education requirements does not guarantee that a campus will meet the Middle States requirements.

Therefore, given the lack of alignment between Middle States and SUNY's general education requirements, the national conversation surrounding higher education in general, the general education reform movement, and the fact that the SUNY General Education framework has been in place for 20 years despite the SUNY requirement that all programs should be reviewed every five to seven years, it may be time to review the framework with an eye toward these 21st century realities.

As noted by Christopher P. Long, editor of the *Journal of General Education*,

General education affords us an amazing opportunity to articulate how and why higher education is of transformative importance to the public good. The issues of civic deliberation, the capacity to understand positions from a variety of different standpoints, the capacity to bring multiple ways of thinking to bear on intractable problems — these are ways you can explain why higher education is important. (8)

The SUNY General Education Working Group believes that SUNY can build on its existing general education policy to create a framework for campuses to develop innovative, integrative, and relevant general education curricula while maintaining our students' ability to seamlessly transfer among our institutions. However, we must be thoughtful and deliberative moving through such a review.

Reformers argue, according to the *Chronicle's* report,

that developing a meaningful general education curriculum requires several elements: All faculty members must feel vested in the core; they should be rewarded for rethinking core courses; and they should be encouraged to integrate this coursework better into the undergraduate experience, rather than cordon it off from the major. (9)

Therefore, faculty who are responsible for developing the curriculum and teaching courses must be involved in all review processes and procedures for program review and revision. Local institutions must be allowed to conduct these processes within SUNY policy.

When talking about a 21st century general education framework, the *Chronicle* reports a few common themes: (See Section 2, Pages 14-15)

- Coherent and continuous.
Rather than a collection of disparate courses taken in the first two years of college, the new general education is designed to develop skills and knowledge that prepare students for more complex coursework, and includes curricular and co-curricular experiences that culminate in the use of higher-order skills.
- Focused on ways of thinking.
This sometimes subtle shift in approach moves general education away from a collection of survey courses designed as an introduction to the major. Instead, greater emphasis is placed on core skills that enable students to approach a subject, or a problem, from the perspective of an expert in the discipline.
- Flexible.

Concerned that cumbersome, and sometimes arbitrary, requirements are creating problem with retention and time-to-degree, some colleges are adding flexibility into the program.

- **Interdisciplinary.**
As with the rest of higher education, general education is becoming increasingly multidisciplinary, with core courses oriented around big questions or problems that bridge departmental divides.
- **Scaffolded.**
This refers to the process of weaving general education throughout the undergraduate experience.
- **Includes civic engagement and professional development.**
- **Incorporates high-impact practices.**
These time-tested teaching and learning practices have proved particularly beneficial for students from historically underserved groups. They include first-year experiences, internships, capstone courses, learning communities, diversity and global learning, writing-intensive courses and e-portfolios.
- **Focused on learning outcomes.**
Defining and measuring outcomes is the biggest shift in general education design. Questions to consider when designing a general education curriculum include:
 1. How does this reflect your mission?
 2. What are your goals for your general-education curriculum?
 3. How do you know whether you are accomplishing your goals?
 4. How does general education connect to the rest of your activities, so you can make sure you're offering degrees with quality?"
- **Enhances advising.**
As general education requirements grow, so does the need to help students choose their courses wisely.

It is clear from the *Chronicle's* report and from SUNY's 20 years of experience that curriculum development and innovation must happen at the campus level in order for it to maintain its rigor and its relevance. While each institution should have the flexibility to develop a general education curriculum in keeping with its mission and goals, SUNY can provide a general education framework that offers an overall SUNY mission in keeping with its responsibilities as a public system of higher education to which campuses can map. Seamless transfer, therefore, remains consistent with mission because all SUNY institutions must align their mission with SUNY's. While SUNY's general education policy lacks a current unifying mission, as a public system of higher education, it seems likely that such a mission for our general education framework would encourage our students to be thoughtful, ethical, and active global citizens within their lives, their disciplines and their communities, while engaging in a 21st century global economy. Additionally, SUNY's general education framework can

continue to assist institutions in meeting their compliance demands and facilitate transfer across the system while meeting the needs of our students and their employers.

SUNY System revisions to general education should enable SUNY institutions to pursue the flexibility they need to create new and innovative general education programs that will serve as models for colleges and universities throughout the country while preserving our students' transfer rights as stated in current policy and complying with accreditation requirements. Many campuses are already engaged in this important work.

General Education and Transferability

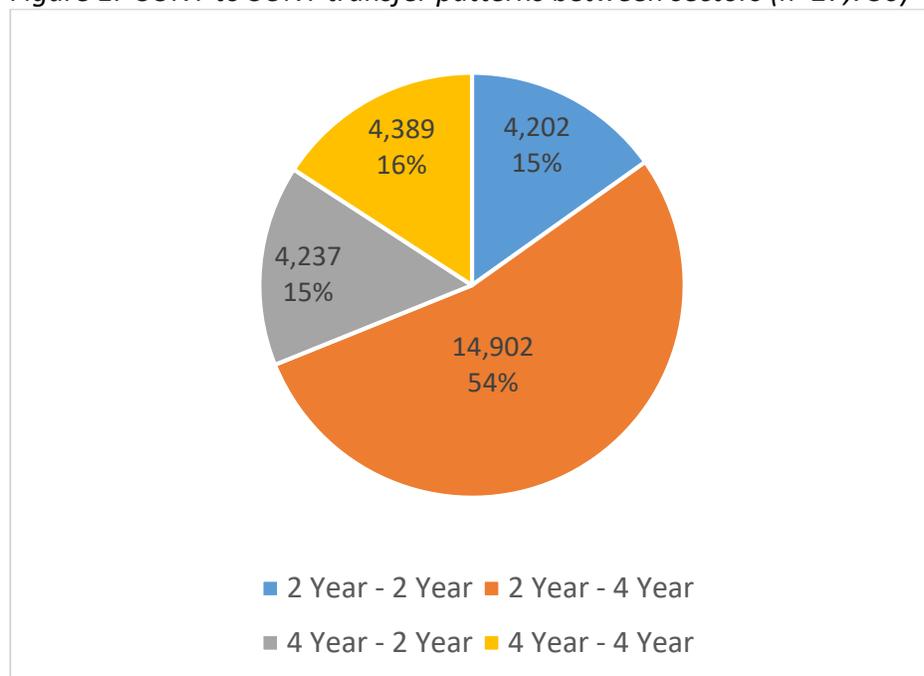
Transferability is a core principle of the SUNY system. In fact, references to supporting transfer students can be found as far back as the 1940's. SUNY Boards have since passed at least six resolutions affirming and re-affirming various principles of 'seamless transfer.' The most recent policy framework, passed in December of 2012 and implemented for students entering academic programs in fall 2015, includes limits on credit requirements, specifications for lower division content in the major ('Transfer Paths'), and requires the completion of the SUNY general education requirements in associate of arts, associate of science, and the first two years of baccalaureate degrees. These general education requirements build from two iterations of previous policies. In December 1998, the SUNY Board of Trustees established the university wide general education framework, requiring a minimum of 30 credits in 10 content areas for baccalaureate degrees. In 2010, the policy was modified to be more flexible, with 30 credits in 7 of 10 content areas required, including Basic Communication and Mathematics for all baccalaureate degrees. This more flexible framework is reflected in the current Seamless Transfer policy.

Across all iterations of the SUNY general education policies, though, transfer remained a key consideration. Specifically, if a SUNY-GER category is deemed satisfied at one SUNY campus, it is deemed satisfied at all other SUNY campuses following transfer. In addition, if a course is completed with a grade of 'C' or better, that course credit is guaranteed for transfer as well, unless native students in the same academic program are held to a higher grading standard for that particular course. In this case, transfer students can be held to a higher grading standard, as long as native and transfer students are held to the same standard. To facilitate the efficient transfer of SUNY-GER categories and credits, a standardized nomenclature (the General Education Transcript Addendum, or 'GETA') was developed by the SUNY campus registrars for transcribing purposes. In any considerations of general education revision, these practices that are reinforced by policy should remain in place.

While supporting transfer students has always been a core element of the SUNY mission, it is perhaps more important than ever, considering the high degree of mobility of the current student population. Simply put, there are large numbers of transfer students and they tend to move between institutions in complex patterns. Consider that, during academic year 2016-17, 48% of all baccalaureate degrees were awarded to transfer students, and 30% of associate degrees.

And while transfer is most often discussed in terms of a ‘vertical’ pattern (i.e. students transferring between community colleges to four year campuses), students tend to transfer between all sectors. As shown in figure 1, during academic year 2016-17, 54,482 students transferred to SUNY campuses, split fairly evenly between non-SUNY to SUNY transfers (26,752) and SUNY to SUNY transfers (27,730). Of the SUNY to SUNY transfers, 54% were vertical transfers between community colleges and four year campuses. An additional 30% transferred to community colleges, split evenly between 2 year to 2 year transfers and 4 year to 2 year transfers. The remaining 16% transferred between 4 year campuses. Therefore, nearly every SUNY campus is potentially both a sending and receiving institution.

Figure 1. SUNY to SUNY transfer patterns between sectors (n=27,730)



The complexity of transfer patterns points to the need to not only guarantee the transfer of categories and credits, but also for some degree of alignment between institutions and sectors. No matter where a student starts and finishes, the goal is to provide an efficient path to completion without adding unnecessary cost and duplication of effort. Considering SUNY’s longstanding commitment to seamless transfer, the extensive policy work that has already been completed, and the increased mobility and complexity of transfer patterns, SUNY must ensure that transferability remains a core principle when considering any revisions to the general education framework now or in the future.

Recommendations

The SUNY General Education Working Group is making recommendations, based on our research, to the SUNY Provost who will in turn submit those recommendations to the Provost’s advisory committee on general education. A review of current general education categories and learning outcomes will be undertaken in a process defined by the advisory committee and approved by the University Faculty Senate and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges.

The SUNY General Education Working Group has divided its recommendations into those that are of immediate concern, and those that will require a longer term review and revision. A change in SUNY Board policy and its role in general education is of direct importance, as are revisions in the learning outcomes of the competency known as Information Management and the category title of “Other World Civilizations”.

Recommendations needing immediate attention

SUNY Board Policy

The need for a vibrant, comprehensive, contemporary, and relevant general education program is virtually universally recognized. As the external expectations by regional accrediting bodies, the New York State Education Department, and others, as well as the internal goals of SUNY, its campuses, and faculty evolve, the SUNY system must be in a position to adapt in a timely manner. The current SUNY General Education program, detailed in Board of Trustees’ policy in 1998, makes it difficult to respond in a timely manner. Additionally, the current general education framework does not allow for adaptation for campus mission or the demands of accreditation. Accordingly, we recommend that the current Board policy with respect to SUNY General Education be modified in the following ways:

1. Establish that there shall be a SUNY General Education program applicable to all campuses of the State University of New York, and
2. Make appropriate exceptions for the statutory units of the University currently run under contract by Cornell University and by Alfred University, and
3. Mandate that the SUNY General Education program shall adapt to the requirements of our regional accreditation agency (Middle States Commission on Higher Education). Specifically, SUNY General Education categories ought to more clearly enable the fulfillment of MSCHE competencies. This will facilitate campus assessment of general education for both SUNY and Middle States, and
4. Maintain SUNY Policy that states: *If a SUNY sending institution certifies that a student has completed a SUNY-GER area, then the receiving institution must accept that requirement as being met. If the transfer student has completed SUNY-GER areas that are different from the SUNY-GER areas required by the receiving institution, the receiving institution may require the transfer student to fulfill the additional general education areas as long as it does not require the transfer student to exceed the number of credits to graduation that are required*

of students who began their college education at the same institution. (Seamless Transfer MTP (I.A.VII, pg. 3))

The following two recommendations are of critical concern to the General Education Working Group. However, we recognize that implementing any changes to SUNY General Education requirements will result in a significant workload for campus staff, given the number of systems that may be impacted, such as degree audit systems, campus catalogs, course databases, websites, etc. Therefore, we recommend that the implementation group, wherever possible, gives careful thought to streamlining and consolidating revisions in order to ease the workload on campus faculty and staff.

Information Management Competency

This existing competency is in need of review and revision in order to exact a higher technological skill level for our students that is appropriate to the 21st century demands of our increasingly technological economy. The current learning outcomes state:

Students will:

1. Perform the basic operations of personal computer use;
2. Understand and use basic research techniques; and
3. Locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

We recommend that these outcomes are updated as soon as is feasible.

Other World Civilizations Category

The title of this existing knowledge category is in urgent need of re-labeling primarily due to its offensive nature that is not respectful of non-western culture or civilization. It could be re-named to 'global awareness' or 'world systems' in order to convey the non-western classification that it intends.

Current learning outcomes state:

Students will demonstrate:

- Knowledge of either a broad outline of world history, or
- The distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc. of one non-Western civilization.

We recommend that the title of this category minimally be revised. In the longer term review, the learning outcomes for this category might also be streamlined and updated.

Recommendations that require longer term consideration

1. The work group recommends that SUNY general education should be framed in the language of *General education for the 21st century global citizen*. We view this framework as an organizing principle for campuses to apply in accordance with their own mission statements.
2. SUNY General Education should more clearly enable the fulfillment of general education competencies as required for Middle States accreditation.
3. SUNY should limit the number of content categories to ten, and maintain the seven category requirement for all SUNY students. Campus feedback has indicated resistance to more than 10 categories. Therefore, if new categories are added to align with Middle States (such as diversity,

ethical thinking or frequently suggested 'information literacy'), then other categories should be collapsed or eliminated to retain no more than 10 knowledge areas. It is also possible to imagine the elimination of all SUNY categories in favor of the Middle States competencies.

4. There is strong support in the General Education Working Group to reduce the number of General Education credit hours required in the first two years of study. There are both pedagogical and programmatic advantages to a reduction in General education credit hours. Pedagogically, reducing the general education credit requirement allows curriculum designers to meet both SUNY's mission and the individual campus mission regarding general education. Additionally, a reasonable reduction in the general education credit requirement in the first two years would further value the student's general education by enabling depth of study, not just breadth. A reduction of credits would allow associate-degree programs to include more transfer-path courses and other types of courses that facilitate student success while still working to meet the 64-credit limit for the degree.

However, the Working Group has differences of opinion on where that reduced number of credit hours should lie. It is especially difficult to present a consensus opinion as we can only speculate on the effects of each option below given that they are all hypothetical.

The Working Group's difference in opinion rests with the three options outlined below:

Option A) Reduction of general education to 21 Credits for A.A./A.S. degrees: The number of SUNY general education credit hours required for A.A. and A.S. degrees should be reduced from 30 to 21 credits. The remaining 9 of the 30 credits would still be required for baccalaureate degrees. This would align with the 7 category requirement that is currently in policy and recommended above (#3). It was also a long-standing practice prior to the 2012 Board resolution.

The advantage of a reduction of 9 hours is that it would alleviate the burden on Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degree programs that were driven to eliminate desired program requirements after the implementation of the SUNY Board's 2012 Seamless Transfer policy. At community colleges, a reduced general education credit hour requirement will facilitate innovative considerations of local general education requirements, make room for first year seminars and allow for more flexibility to accommodate transfer path courses.

Students in baccalaureate programs would also benefit by scaffolding of general education courses from the lower division to upper division work if a 21 credit general education requirement was approved for the first two years of study. Students in baccalaureate programs would maintain the 30 credit requirement for general education over four years in order to allow baccalaureate degree-granting campuses to develop and/or continue the practice of local general education requirements that are specific to campus mission or preference. This may encourage students to add a minor or major, allow for the integration of general education into the major, provide general education that builds on students' previous knowledge, or allow students to engage in more critical thinking, analysis and communication skills. Expanding the

timeframe to complete the additional nine credits in general education demonstrates the 'scaffolding' that is presented as a best practice in the Chronicle report (page 15).

The disadvantages of such a reduction of credits in the first two years may include the outcome that students would arrive at their baccalaureate granting institution without having completed their 30 credits of general education, as they currently do. Thirty credits are currently guaranteed for transfer which if reduced, *may* impact the number of accepted credits at a receiving institution.

Option B) Remove the credit requirement: The credit requirement could be removed but we would maintain the 7 category requirement. In this scenario, seven courses would be the default requirement for campuses that retain a course-based general education program. It's unclear what the consequences might be for transfer if the elimination of a credit hour requirement was adopted.

One advantage to this approach includes support for innovation should a campus move to competency based general education outcomes. The State Education Department and Middle States do not require a credit-based general education framework. Baccalaureate programs with a need for a high number of credits may be advantaged with this approach because eliminating general education credit requirements might enable fusion of general education competencies into courses in the major.

Removing the requirement does not preclude including credit courses in the institution's general education program. It only prevents students from having to take additional credits to meet the requirement if they have already met all of the content categories, whether infused in courses in the major, or met in other ways such as by Prior Learning Assessment. Transfer may not be affected since completion of the categories would still be recorded, as they currently are, on the General Education Transcript Addendum (GETA). Removing the credit requirement allows SUNY general education policy to apply to all undergraduate degree programs, including A.A.S. and A.O.S. degrees that have to meet Middle States General Education requirements.

The disadvantages to this approach may facilitate a 'race to the bottom'. If campuses are motivated to further reduce general education requirements (with no credit minimum) and several competencies are achieved with only a few completed courses, then even more room is available for students to explore. But if those students are ill-advised, they might take courses that don't transfer, exacerbating a problem that currently exists. Additionally, the removal of a credit hour requirement harms students who transfer from a credit-based system in that they are released from taking general education courses that currently support their successful transfer. Credits will still be the basis of a transcript even if general education is achieved through infused competencies due to NYS liberal arts requirements. Lastly, critics of removing the credit requirement submit that the way the general education learning outcomes are written (and will need to be revised) already enables competency based general education. A campus that chooses to pursue competency based outcomes is not prohibited from doing so in the current framework.

Option C) Maintain the 30 credit requirement: This option maintains the 30 credit requirement because some argue that it facilitates transfer within the SUNY system.

Those who prefer the 30 credit requirement believe we could be creating challenges for students who arrive at their receiving transfer institution without their general education completed (with 21 credits for A.A./A.S. degrees as proposed in option A). A reduction of SUNY General Education credits in the first two years may impact the number of credits that are guaranteed to transfer from sending colleges to the receiving colleges. Currently, requiring 30 credits of SUNY General Education courses in the first two years as well as the SUNY Transfer Path courses (when completed) may have provided substantial transfer remedies since the passage of the Seamless Transfer policy in 2012.

The disadvantage to maintaining the 30 credit requirement is that it does not facilitate the innovation at the campus level that we set out to accomplish when we began this work. Most members of the Working Group want to encourage campus experimentation within the framework of the SUNY General Education competencies and categories. If the number of credits is not lifted in the first two years of study, general education cannot be integrated into the major and many baccalaureate degree-granting institutions will continue to grow their local general education requirements in order to link their general education program with mission-specific courses/competencies. Lastly, community colleges expect equity in the potential of achieving the same innovation in their general education programs that is already provided to the baccalaureate degree-granting campuses. This equity is prohibited in the current framework.

5. Scientific Reasoning is a required competency that students must fulfill for the Middle States general education program. In order to facilitate its completion, SUNY should require scientific reasoning as part of the SUNY General Education Program. Whether a new category called scientific reasoning should be created or the existing category of Natural Sciences should become a requirement, is to be decided. The General Education Working Group agrees that scientific thinking and skills ought to be an expectation of the 21st century student and citizen.
6. Each campus will determine whether and how to infuse the Middle States competency which requires a “study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives”, according to campus mission. Alternately, an entirely new SUNY general education category could be created to accomplish this Middle States requirement. Many SUNY campuses have already mandated a diversity requirement in their own local general education programs.
7. A review of all category learning outcomes will be conducted and revised as deemed necessary. This process and timeline will be defined by the Provost’s advisory committee on general education and should culminate in an endorsement of said process by the UFS and FCCC. The learning outcomes should be written in a way so as to enable but not compel competency based learning outcomes. We advise the Task Force to particularly examine

revisions that allow for a more explicitly stated diversity category, as well as a consideration as to whether a distinction of oral communication from written communication should be made in the Communications category.

8. Courses currently approved for General Education shall continue as approved courses. As courses are updated at the campus level according to the revised learning outcomes, campus general education courses may be replaced or eliminated (with an effective date three years from the policy's approval). This will allow for a phase-in of new courses over time.
9. In order to maintain the integrity of the adopted general education categories, we submit that a general education course may not be used to meet more than two categories of general education.
10. System Administration will determine a means to document and transcribe courses deemed to meet infused categories so they are transferable across and between campuses.
11. System Administration will encourage campus creativity and innovation. More important, perhaps, than an innovative revision of SUNY requirements is the creation of an open field for campuses to tailor local programs for individual campus conditions and traditions. While revising SUNY mandates to eliminate unnecessary restrictions, the system should work to be a resource for education and development of innovative general education programs at the campus level. To encourage campus creativity in general education programming, the System should support statewide and regional conferences, incentive grants, communities of practice, conversations in the discipline, and open-access publications. Resources should also be made available to facilitate this work. This future, on-going role of the SUNY System in supporting innovation in general education will involve sharing examples of innovative general education models.

General Education in AAS and AOS Degree Programs

SUNY policy requires General Education at the Associate level in AA and AS degrees only. In Memorandum to Presidents Vol 11, No. 1 (p. 4) AAS degrees are also encouraged to include as much of the SUNY general education requirement as possible, "especially if a program tends to transfer significant numbers of students or graduates to SUNY baccalaureate programs." The New York State Education Department requires a minimum of 20 credits of Liberal Arts in an AAS degree and no liberal arts credits in an AOS degree (See this link: <http://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/departments-expectations-curriculum>.) Although Liberal Arts and SUNY General Education content may be similar, there are some distinct differences. Studio art courses, for example, may count toward the SUNY GER in the category of The Arts, but according to SED policy, may not be counted toward the liberal arts requirements of a degree program. Careful consideration of a course's learning outcomes, may additionally provide insight into whether a course with a typically Non-Liberal Arts designation may lend itself to either a Liberal Arts designation or a SUNY GER designation. For

example, a Business course with a substantial focus on ethics, or oral and written communication might be approvable for either general education and/or Liberal Arts.

It seems clear, then, that neither SUNY nor SED requires AOS degrees to have general education content. AAS degrees are notable in that, by SUNY policy, they are not expected to meet the full SUNY GER requirement. For Middle States, however, this expectation is substantially different for both AAS and AOS degrees. According to the Commission's senior Vice President Dr. Robert Schneider, "...general education applies to all degree programs offered by an institution." He goes on to convey that, "the standard itself does not mention numbers of credits, much less "courses"--it mentions proficiencies: 'The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.'¹ ... These competencies do not need to be taught in separate stand-alone courses; rather, they can be embedded in the A.O.S. curriculum in ways that are integrated within the content of each specific program. While this may present a bit of a challenge, it is (and always has been) the intent of the Gen Ed standard.... So, the Commission does not require general education courses or even, in the end, general education credits. It requires that students acquire and demonstrate certain proficiencies. How they acquire them and how the proficiencies are assessed is up to the institution." (Dr. Robert Schneider MSCHE.)

In endeavoring to support SUNY institutions in meeting Middle States expectations, the Work Group recommends that guidance be provided that clarifies how these expectations may be met despite limitations on Liberal Arts course content in these two types of degree programs.

Next Steps

The members of the General Education Working Group look forward to the next phase of revising SUNY's general education policies for our current and future students. We hope our recommendations will be thoroughly considered by the Provost's advisory committee on general education, knowing these recommendations are coming from a faculty-led group of committed scholars, instructors and practitioners who have many years of experience in the classroom and in advising SUNY's students.

Upon receiving 30 comments from governance bodies, academic leaders and individual faculty members over seven weeks, the General Education Work Group has considered these comments and agrees that the following items ought to also be weighed by the Provost's advisory committee on general education:

¹ The communication referenced here was based on the Characteristics of Excellence, which were revised and adopted in 2014. The new Standards add information literacy to the list of proficiencies. The study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives are referenced in both sets of standards, and are not required of all institutions and programs, but are indicated as appropriate for inclusion depending on institutional mission.

- The category called 'foreign language' ought to be updated to be more inclusive and culturally sensitive; possibly renamed 'world language'.
- Sustainability and environmental awareness were suggested as new categories/competencies by interested faculty and academic leaders.
- Digital literacy was suggested as a new category and as a skill set that is distinguished from Information management.
- There was strong support in the comments for revising the 'Information Management' category and updating its learning outcomes, and for renaming the 'Other Worlds' category to something akin to global awareness.

The SUNY General Education Working Group consisted of these members:

Nina Tamrowski, Chair and FCCC President

Christy Fogal, Monroe Community College

Tina Good, Suffolk County Community College

Norm Goodman, Stony Brook University

Wendy Gordon, SUNY Plattsburgh

Fred Hildebrand, SUNY Provost's Office

Catherine Ianello, Jamestown Community College

Wendy Johnston, SUNY Adirondack

Gwen Kay, UFS President

Dan Knox, SUNY Provost's Office

Keith Landa, Purchase College

Debbie Moeckel, SUNY Provost's Office

Ron Sarner, SUNY Poly

**Comments on General Education Green Paper
Collected from March 11 to May 7, 2019**

<u>Page</u>	<u>Respondent</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Campus</u>
16	Maryann Faller	Governance body	SUNY Adirondack
17	Richard Fogarty	Assoc. Dean, Gen Ed	University of Albany
19	Donald Nieman	Provost	Binghamton University
21	Sara Reiter	Faculty governance	Binghamton University
23	Francis Battisti	Gen Ed Committee and Faculty governance	SUNY Broome
29	Charles Zukoski	Provost	University of Buffalo
32	Carol Van der Karr	Assoc. Provost	Cortland
33	Kelli Ligeikis	Provost	Delhi
34	Multiple	Academic leaders (chairs, deans)	Empire State College
37	Erikson Neilans	Gen Ed committee chair	Erie Community College
38	FCCC	Governance body resolution	FCCC - 30 comm. colleges
42	Yasemin Jones	Assoc VP, Academic Affairs	FIT
45	Kathy Kimber	Faculty governance	Genesee CC
46	Stacey Robertson	CAOs of Comprehensive colleges	multiple CAOs
47	Cynthia Lonsbary	Faculty leadership	Jefferson CC
48	Logan Rath	Role-alike group	SUNY Librarians' Assoc.
50	Heather Morrison	Dept Chair of History	New Paltz
51	Marc Pietrzykowski	Faculty governance resolution	Niagara CCC
52	Achim Koeddermann	Faculty member & senator	Oneonta
54	Elizabeth Dunn	Faculty member (?)	Oneonta
55	JT Ryan	Faculty governance	Onondaga CC
56	Multiple	Joint task force on ILOs	Old Westbury
59	Scott Furlong	Provost	Oswego
60	Gary Kroll	Faculty governance body	Plattsburgh
61	Multiple	Arts & Sciences faculty resolution	SUNY Poly
62	Mitchell & Harvey	Faculty members	Rockland CC
63	Paul Beaudin	Provost & faculty leadership	Suffolk CCC
65	Michael Wuest	Student governance	SUNY SA
67	Ron Sarnier	UFS Undergraduate Committee	UFS - 34 state-op campuses
68	Eric Edlund	Faculty member	SUNY Cortland

April 15, 2019

Dear Members of the SUNY General Education Working Group,

The shared governance body of SUNY Adirondack, the College Assembly, recently discussed the proposed recommendations in the green paper. We would like to respond to those recommendations.

Immediate Concerns/Recommendations

The College Assembly of SUNY Adirondack supports all the recommendations made in this part of the green paper including the concerns about the infused category of information management and the re-naming of the Other World Civilizations silo. In addition, we support requiring the natural science silo as a means to align SUNY general education with the Middle States requirements.

Long term Concerns/Recommendations

The College Assembly of SUNY Adirondack supports the reduction to 21 credits of general education in 7 different silos within the first two years of a degree. In addition, we support all the other recommendations made by the working group.

There was concern that changes to general education may require changing all of that software programming. There are issues with Transfer Finder that need to be resolved before we add another complication. There is no System solution to managing the course equivalencies between college catalogs, and more importantly, the changes that occur each year when campuses revise courses, add courses, etc. In essence we have a 64 X 64 matrix that needs a system solution, but each campus is trying to handle this on their own.

We were also concerned about the GETA transcript should general education move to an infused, creative mode. Transfer would be difficult to delineate. The current form is discrete, quantifiable and easy to record and manage. Colleges grant degrees based on credits earned. While creativity is applauded we have to keep in mind practical application.

Thank you for the time and effort you devoted to this initiative. It is greatly appreciated.

Regards,
Executive Committee of the College Assembly of SUNY Adirondack

UAlbany Comment on SUNY Working Group on General Education, Green Paper on General Education Revision

Richard Fogarty, Associate Dean for General Education

May 1, 2019

The University at Albany is pleased to see the efforts of the working group proceeding apace. In the spirit of helping to propel further this important work, we would like to offer a few brief comments on the green paper developed and circulated this March.

First of all, we would like to express agreement with several of the green paper's assertions:

- General education should prepare students to be 21st-century global citizens—below we note how UAlbany currently seeks to accomplish this.
- Seamless transfer should be retained as a key priority in any revision, given the importance and large proportion of transfer students in UAlbany's and SUNY's student bodies.
- There should be greater explicit correspondence between MSCHE competencies and SUNY requirements.
- The names and learning outcomes of the Information Management competency and the Other World Civilizations category are urgently in need of updating.
- Reviewing the learning outcomes in all SUNY GER categories is a worthy endeavor, as is considering the addition of a requirement explicitly focused on diversity.

On the other hand, UAlbany would like to express concern about the following issues:

- On the options the working group proposes for reducing the number of general education credit hours required during the first two years of study:
 - Option A has the obvious benefits outlined in the document, but may indeed leave transfer students behind their peers at a similar stage of degree completion in the number of general education requirements fulfilled.
 - Option B, reducing the general education credit requirements to zero seems to present potential problems for transferability between institutions with different approaches to general education. With both SUNY and UAlbany graduating at least 45% transfer students each year, this option may have serious negative implications not only for institutions, but for students.
 - Option C seems best for transferability, and does not preclude innovation at 4-year institutions. Thirty credits is still a relatively small number in the context of a 120-credit degree. However, real problems can exist even at 30 credits of general education for high-credit majors, especially those externally accredited, such as engineering programs of the kind that UAlbany is developing. It is not clear why the work group claims, "general education cannot be integrated into the major" if the 30-credit requirement for first two years is maintained, at least at 4-year institutions, as UAlbany proves (see below).
- It is not clear why the work group believes the MSCHE competency in "scientific reasoning" (longer-term recommendation number 5, p. 11) is not included in the SUNY program already, under Natural Sciences, and even Social Sciences—see the SUNY learning outcomes for both.
- "Ethical reasoning" (longer-term recommendation number 6, p. 11) is not an MSCHE competency. The "study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives" is.

UAlbany has found that explicitly identifying both oral and written communication as competencies under Basic Communication has a salutary effect, as students develop skills in both areas that are essential to participating in the 21st-century world and economy.

- It is not clear why the work group believes that using a single course to satisfy more than two categories of general education undermines the “integrity of the adopted general education categories.” First of all, the 30-credit requirement means that students will still take a sufficient number of credits overall, and denial of, for example, “triple counting” may be a burden to transfer students and students in very high-credit majors. More important, just as courses can meet learning objectives simultaneously in a general education category and in a major or minor curriculum, courses can meet the learning objectives of multiple general education categories if the subject matter is suitable.

Finally, we would like to note several ways UAlbany’s current general education program (<https://www.albany.edu/generaleducation/>) offers a model that satisfies many elements of the work group’s and other reformers’ desires. In other words, UAlbany is one of the “many campuses” that “are already engaged in this important work (5).” Our general education program:

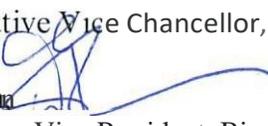
- meets goals of *Chronicle* statement to prepare students for increasingly complex world (UAlbany’s “Challenges for the 21st Century” category) and hone communication skills (Writing and Critical Inquiry, Advanced competencies in Writing and Oral Discourse embedded in disciplines)
- has instituted several elements of what the *Chronicle* report identifies as a 21st-century general education framework, in that the program:
 - seeks to be “coherent and continuous,” e.g., Writing and Critical Inquiry (WCI) and advanced competencies in majors
 - provides “focused ways of thinking”—though there are survey courses among distribution requirements, WCI and advanced competencies focus on “core skills,” as do many distribution requirements
 - is “scaffolded,” in that general education begins in the first year and continues through graduation
 - includes high-impact practices: we have 1st-year experience and writing intensive courses (WCI), and many competencies are achieved in capstones (we also have Living-Learning Communities and internships available outside general education)
 - enhances advising, by simplifying requirements and course selection
- makes use of current SUNY GER as “a framework...to develop innovative, integrative, and relevant general education curricula while maintaining our students’ ability to seamlessly transfer among our institutions (p.3).”
- combines distribution model with skills-based training in the majors
- seeks SUNY goal of facilitating transfer and timely degree completion via 30 credits and only one local requirement (that also may be transferred in), with rest of general education satisfied in majors
- meets Middle States requirements (as pointed out in UAlbany’s response to the work group’s White Paper)

Once again, the University at Albany commends the SUNY and the working group’s pursuit of reform and excellence in general education, and we would be delighted to help in any way we can with this important work.

May 1, 2019

To: Dr. Kristina Johnson,
Chancellor, State University of New York

Dr. Tod Laursen
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, State University of New York

From: Donald Nieman 
Provost and Executive Vice President, Binghamton University

I'm writing in response to your request for feedback on the GREEN PAPER ON GENERAL EDUCATION REVISION produced by the SUNY Working Group on General Education.

Numerous groups at Binghamton University have reviewed the document and its recommendations; I believe that you will separately receive a response from our University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee on behalf of my faculty colleagues. This response represents our administrative perspective and is fully in concert with the faculty perspectives on the Green Paper.

We agree that this is a good time to review approaches to General Education in SUNY. Much work has been done recently, both on individual SUNY campuses and across the country, to review and reinterpret what it means to provide a broad education to students to prepare them for the lives that they will lead after completing their degree. We also support SUNY's commitment to student mobility and the principle that students who begin their SUNY education at a two-year school should be able to make productive transitions when moving on to a four-year campus.

Indeed, Binghamton University's general education curriculum was established by faculty initiative prior to SUNY's initial efforts to institute a system-wide General Education curriculum. When SUNY's guidelines were introduced and later revised, Binghamton found ways to accept the course work that students had done elsewhere in SUNY towards the General Education requirements. At the same time, we have continued to maintain some of the distinctive elements that our faculty have deemed essential components of a Binghamton degree. That local flexibility has been essential for us to continue to hold high expectations in such areas as foreign language proficiency and wellness.

For these reasons, we support the overall direction of the Green Paper's approach, while offering the following specific responses:

1. We agree that alignment with Middle States requirements is important.
2. We are prepared to continue our current policy of allowing credit for completion of specific SUNY Gen Ed requirements at other SUNY campuses.

3. We strongly support the Green Paper's statement that while there is overlap across SUNY, "each institution should have the flexibility to develop a general education curriculum in keeping with its mission and goals." Consistent with that principle, we cannot support Recommendation 5 that would deem that a student has completed Binghamton's general education requirements simply by completing any other SUNY campus's general education requirements. This would completely eliminate the principle of a campus taking ownership of its own general education curriculum. There must continue to be opportunity for campuses to develop their own approaches and identities while facilitating the transferability of individual requirements. The data will clearly show that allowing campuses like ours to maintain local requirements does not impede time to degree.
4. The recommendations concerning Information Management and Other World Civilizations appear to provide a good way to make appropriate changes within the SUNY framework. At Binghamton, we have long taken a broader, more inclusive view by requiring our courses to focus on global interdependencies; SUNY might be interested in reviewing this framework when considering ways to modify the current requirement.
3. While we support the alignment of general education requirements with Middle States requirements, we recommend caution in exploring changes. At Binghamton, our general education requirements can be met across the curriculum, with hundreds of courses approved to meet one or more of the required general education categories. Any significant changes would require broad discussion and significant implementation time.
4. It is not clear to us what is envisioned by the notion of framing general education "in the language of *General education for the 21st century global citizen*." We would caution against developing a theme that might be too restrictive or come with a built-in expiration date.
5. We agree that adding to the current number of content categories would be problematic.
6. We support the principle that students benefit from a general education curriculum that extends across the full undergraduate learning experience and have long considered it problematic to force the entire general education curriculum into the first two years. It seems reasonable to look for ways to structurally create this four-year distribution, including a reduction in the number of requirements that need to be met for a two-year degree.
7. We support a new look at the learning outcomes for the existing categories; should the learning outcomes change significantly, we strongly recommend that the changes be implemented gradually to allow for campus courses to adapt to the new learning outcomes.
8. We caution strongly against establishing any system of requirements that would allow students to complete the requirements by taking a relatively few number of courses; this would fundamentally undermine the benefits and objectives of a general education curriculum.

We look forward to seeing further developments in this process and will be glad to participate in any next steps. We urge that the principles of campus flexibility and system transparency inform all revision discussions.

cc: Harvey Stenger, President
Donald Loewen, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Enrollment

Reply to the GREEN PAPER ON GENERAL EDUCATION REVISION of the SUNY Working Group on General Education, dated March 11, 2019

April 23, 2019

From the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate of Binghamton on behalf of Faculty Governance at Binghamton University

Contact person: Sara Reiter sreiter@binghamton.edu University Faculty Senator

The University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee is charged with approving General Education designations for courses, assessing general education learning outcomes, and making suggestions for improvements and revisions. The committee has been asked to respond to the Green Paper on behalf of faculty governance at Binghamton University.

We applaud the careful analysis of general education reform across the country. Two major themes in the discussion of SUNY general education reforms are preserving campus flexibility to design general education programs which coordinate with their unique learning goals and the need to provide for transferability of general education requirement completion between SUNY schools.

Description of Binghamton's General Education Program

All Binghamton students must take courses in Aesthetics, Composition and Oral Communication, Foreign Language, Global Interdependencies, Humanities, Laboratory Science, Mathematics, Physical Activity/Wellness, Pluralism in the United States, and Social Science. Our unique program, which was developed by faculty over several years of discussion, pre-dates the advent of the SUNY-wide general education requirement and coordinates with it. (A table listing Binghamton's Gen Ed categories with the corresponding SUNY Gen Ed categories is available at <https://www.binghamton.edu/general-education/transfer/index.html#sunygened13>).

However, we have several additional graduation requirements related to Foreign Language and Physical Activity/Wellness (<http://gened.binghamton.edu>). For all requirements except Foreign Language, students who have been certified as meeting a SUNY-wide general education requirement before matriculating at Binghamton are considered to have met the corresponding Binghamton requirement.

Responses to Recommendations needing immediate attention (p. 7 – 8)

(Item 3). We believe that the Binghamton University General Education program conforms to the requirements of Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) and that this coordination is important.

(Item 4). We agree that if a particular SUNY general education requirement has been fulfilled on one SUNY campus, it should be deemed fulfilled by all SUNY campuses, and, except for our more extensive foreign language requirement which goes beyond the SUNY minimum, we adhere to this practice.

(Item 5). We strongly disagree that certification that the SUNY General Education program has been completed on a SUNY campus means that it should be considered completed on our campus. We have additional requirements in the areas of foreign language and physical activity/wellness that are important to our campus and faculty. In addition, completion of another campus's General Education program may not provide a general education background that coordinates with MSCHE requirements. We do not feel that waiting until transfer to our University to complete general education creates an undue hardship because we feel that general education courses should be distributed over four years of study and some general education courses should ideally be taken at a higher level to develop higher level critical thinking and reasoning skills, for example.

Information Management Competency. We agree that the current competency does not reflect the demands of the 21st Century for information management / technology. We look forward to implementing revised goals in this area.

Other World Civilizations Category. We agree that this concept and terminology are outdated. Our coordinating category is called Global Interdependencies where courses “study how two or more distinctive world regions have influenced and interacted with one another and how such interactions have been informed by their respective cultures or civilizations.” (<http://gened.binghamton.edu>)

Responses to Recommendations that require longer term consideration (pp. 8-12).

(Item 1). While the concept of general education for the 21st century global citizen sounds exciting, we are not sure exactly what it means. We continue to believe that general education requirement should reflect the unique educational aspirations of the local campus, so we are not sure about mandating a universal theme.

(Item 2). SUNY general education requirements should enable fulfillment of MSCHE requirements.

(Item 3). Limiting the total categories to ten and requiring seven is a good policy that should be continued.

(Item 4). We support Option A that requires only 21 credits of general education in the first two years. That allows for general education courses to be distributed throughout the curriculum and enables students to interact with general education material in upper level courses where the quality of critical and evaluative thinking can be expected to be higher. We have a number of 300 and 400 level course with general education designations and expect that many students will take some of their general education courses at that level. As explained previously, there is no advantage, and there may actually be a disadvantage, to transfer students who arrive at Binghamton with their general education program completed. Option B (zero credits) does not seem rigorous and Option C (30 credits in the first two years) is a barrier to innovation.

(Item 5). We agree that scientific reasoning is important and require a course in Laboratory Science to develop scientific reasoning skills and a course in Social Science that covers social science research methodology.

(Item 6). While it is important to coordinate with MSCHE requirements, campuses should have flexibility in their approaches.

(Item 7). A revision of category learning outcomes would be welcomed.

(Item 8). If learning outcomes for general education categories change significantly, there must be a phase in period to allow for smooth transition.

(Item 9). We agree that a course should not be used to fulfill more than two categories of general education. While some of our courses are tagged with more than two gen eds, students can fulfill only one category from a single course with the exception that written and oral communications and foreign language can be earned at the same time as another general education category.

(Item 10). We agree that coordination across the system is important.

(Item 11) We agree that System Administration should encourage campus creativity and innovation and that the SUNY requirement should be a resource for development at the campus level. SUNY can play an important role in furthering the development of creative thought about general education throughout the system.



MEMO

To: Tod A. Laursen, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor

From: Francis L. Battisti, Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer

RE: SUNY Broome Community College's Feedback on Green Paper on General Education

Please find comments from SUNY Broome Community College regarding the SUNY's Green Paper on General Education. The document was shared through our Shared Governance (SG) bodies. Collective comments were provided by our General Education Committee, faculty, and through the SG Council for Academic Issues.

Feedback from SUNY Broome's General Education Committee

The General Education Committee (GEC) is in agreement with the report from the Chronicle, cited in the Working Group paper, that general education is designed to assist students to develop skills and knowledge that will prepare them for more complex coursework, and which includes both curricular and co-curricular experiences, culminating in the use of higher-order skills. The emphasis should be on development of core skills, providing students with the foundation for which to later draw upon within their academic and professional pursuits.

It is integral to maintain a rigorous general education requirement. Eliminating these requirements removes the purpose of a liberal arts education for our students and will not prepare them to possess the basic foundational skills and knowledge necessary for their future success. General education lays a solid academic foundation for our students to possess critical thinking skills and the ability to apply this foundational knowledge to their future academic and professional pursuits. A liberal arts education provides integrity and for student success in advanced courses, ultimately allowing them to earn a distinguished place in society and a college degree.

Eliminating general education requirements or decreasing the requirement for students to obtain general education requirements outside of their majors will not provide students with the core liberal arts critical thinking skills required for students to be successful. Relying solely on academic programs to fulfill the general education requirements will result in a student who is not as well-rounded and who will lack essential general education skills. Not all academic programs will include concepts from every general education category. For example, a health sciences, mathematics, art, history, or English discipline does not necessarily require a student to obtain foundational knowledge in foreign language, music, art history. A discipline in English or history may include many general education concepts such as history both within and outside of

the United States and basic communication skills, but may not include concepts in mathematics or natural sciences, which are core skills all learners should possess for a liberal arts education.

- There should be two levels of general education infused throughout curriculum, both at the foundational level (e.g. English or Psychology 101), as well as infused throughout the student's academic program. General education knowledge infused throughout the academic program would allow a student to apply foundational knowledge obtained in lower level general education courses to those courses which require higher-order thinking skills and application of higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy. Eliminating a general education requirement or reducing the number of credits does not allow students to obtain this basic level of foundational knowledge and apply it to advanced courses. It could create a situation where a student will be less successful in their advanced courses.
- General education learning outcomes should map to both college level Institutional Learning Outcomes and the Strategic Plan of the college. Colleges should be required to map to these constructs. Academic programs should be required to demonstrate that students within those programs are obtaining general education learning outcomes both at the foundational level (e.g. Philosophy 101) as well as infused throughout the curriculum within the academic program. This can be achieved by programs simply mapping where students obtained foundational knowledge required of general education and then where they later demonstrated their ability to utilize this foundational knowledge in an academic program required course.
- The GEC does not recommend increasing the number of general education categories. This would create a burden for campuses to realign their current courses to new categories. Collapsing or combining categories would be more feasible and less burdensome.
- Reducing the number of general education credit hours from 30 to 21 will negatively impact community colleges who rely on numbers of students to attain credits at these colleges which will ultimately transfer to advanced degrees. Students from four-year colleges often take general education courses at community colleges for equivalent, but less expensive credit.
- This reduction would however, alleviate some burden on AA and AAS degree programs which had to reduce program requirements to meet seamless transfer policy. A reduction in general education requirements could allow for colleges to implement first year seminars and success courses, which could potentially improve student success. There could also be a potential for these types of courses to provide for some general education core requirements, such as learning to think critically or become more globally sensitive.
- It would be less burdensome for the learning outcomes that SUNY has set to be reworded and made broader than it would be to change credit hours. The wording of the SUNY learning outcomes is restrictive and creates burden for faculty to try to mold courses to meet the wording of these learning outcomes. Faculty often feel that they need to limit their student learning outcomes to meet SUNY language requirements. Middle States

does not have specific learning outcomes that must be met. Perhaps this is a consideration for the SUNY Working Group.

- It is imperative that students who take general education courses at a community college level within the SUNY system be awarded transfer credit counting toward meeting SUNY and Middle State general education requirements at all SUNY transfer schools. Ensuring the seamless transfer of categories and credits eliminates undue burden of time and cost for students, delaying graduation rates. All SUNY campuses should respect completion of general education courses with grades of C or higher.
- SUNY general education requirements should be in direct relationship to those of Middle States. Rewording current SUNY general education categories and learning outcomes within those categories, rather than adding additional categories could help with this process.
- Information Management, with its current learning outcomes, which requires the basics of personal computer use and the use of basic research techniques be revised. This competency is in need of review, as students are required to possess higher technological skill levels than performing the basics of personal computer use to be competitive in our current market. Requiring advanced use of software packages utilized in today's business and professional environments would allow for more useful skills for our students to possess, and would truly lay the foundation for advanced computer application skills.
- A suggestion that sustainability be included among general education requirements as this will become a major issue in the future (e.g. climate change). This could potentially be added to a current general education category such as information management. Information management could be combined with the Middle States requirement of technological competency.
- The Other World Civilizations category should be relabeled. Using a term such as Global awareness or World Systems would be more respectful of cultural diversity and global awareness requirements. Middle States requires "Cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity" along with "values, ethics, and diverse perspectives". Relabeling this category could also allow for further expansion within academic programs to capture this general education requirement at the program level and not just at the basic 101 level.
- Scientific reasoning can be met within the natural sciences and/or mathematics category, rather than adding an additional general education category.
- It is agreed that a general education courses should not be used to meet more than two categories. Allowing core general education skills to be obtained in too many categories reduces the point of providing students with a broad skill and knowledge base in the liberal arts.

General education requirements need to continue to remain stringent in order to prepare our students for 21st century demands to be marketable and successful. Students have difficulty with developing the critical thinking skills necessary to be successful. Not providing for this foundation will do more harm than good to our students and the future success of our society.

General education categories should not be increased, but do need to be examined for currency in language, ease of use of learning outcomes to allow campuses flexibility to meet general education foundational requirements, and to meet Middle States expectations without additional burden.

Feedback from faculty constituents and the Council for Academic Issues:

- Reducing the Gen Ed credits to 21 would offer more flexibility for transfer students
- We agree with "Scientific reasoning as a required competency"
- Recommendations needing immediate attention:
 - #3, 4, 5, on page 7
 - Agree with the mandates in each number, but how it will be mandated, enforced?
 - What parameters will be put in place to do so?
 - Who will monitor this?
- Page 11 (item 10) the document reads that System will determine a means to document and transcribe courses for infused categories.
 - Will they also do the items on 3, 4,5 on page 7?

Paper: At most colleges, general education, the report continues to say, is delivered through the use of a distribution model similar to the SUNY General Education framework currently in place. Such a model “allows students to pick from approved courses within certain required areas of focus, including social sciences, sciences, humanities, and the arts” (7) Many academic leaders, however, worry that at a time when skepticism about the value of college is rising, rather than serving a useful purpose, general education requirement too often “feel obligatory, lack coherence, fail to teach higher-order skills, or don’t connect with a student’s major in a meaningful way.”

The argument in this paragraph misses the purpose of a general education. The purpose of general education is to develop certain faculties of the mind, and plant the seeds for future thought and the development of critical thinking, which may not happen until years after separation from school. That it happens in the future does not make it less valuable, perhaps it is more value at that time. General education is also meant to help us develop as social human beings and community/societal/global citizens.

We recommend that the title of this category (Other World Civilizations) minimally be revised. In the longer-term, a review of the learning outcomes for this category might also be streamlined and updated.

On most campuses in this country, the category “World History” is sufficient and acceptable to most historians.

There is strong support in the General Education Working Group to reduce the number of General Education credit hours required in the first two years of study. There are both pedagogical and programmatic advantages to a reduction in general education credit hours. Pedagogically, reducing the general education credit requirement allows curriculum designers to meet both SUNY's mission and the individual campus mission regarding general education. Additionally, a reasonable reduction in the general education credit requirement in the first two years would further value the student's general education by enabling depth of study, not just breadth. A reduction of credits would allow associate-degree programs to include more transfer-path courses and other types of courses that facilitate student success while still working to meet the 64-credit limit for the degree.

1. The point of general education courses is to prepare students for their 3rd and 4th years in a 4- year liberal arts and sciences program. If a student is majoring in a professional program, that would require something different because the mix of coursework is very different. For most liberal arts and sciences majors the total number of credits required for the major is 30 to 39 (only about 25% of the total required for the baccalaureate degree). However most professional programs such as social work, nursing, and business require 60 to 70 credit hours of the 120 required (50% to 60%) for the degree.
2. In the liberal arts and sciences, students generally cannot take more than a couple of courses in their chosen major because most of those courses are taught at the 300-400 levels. Courses cannot be taught at this level in community colleges. Furthermore, 4-year schools have the resources and faculty expertise necessary to offer courses within a chosen major that community college simply do not have and are not going to get. The current 30-credit general education requirement for an associate's degree in the liberal arts and sciences only requires one year of full-time study. The student has an additional 34 credits to play with (another academic year) to take any number of interesting courses. Again, for students majoring in a professional area of study, the situation is different.

The disadvantages to this approach may facilitate a 'race to the bottom'. If campuses are motivated to further reduce general education requirements (with no credit minimum) and several competencies are achieved with only a few completed courses, then even more room is available for students to explore. But if those students are ill-advised, they might take courses that don't transfer. Additionally, the removal of a credit hour requirement only harms students who transfer from a credit-based system in that they are released from taking general education courses that currently support their successful transfer. Credits will still be the basis of a transcript even if general education is achieved through infused competencies. Lastly, critics of a 0 credit requirement submit that the way the general education learning outcomes are written (and will need to be revised) already enables competency based general education.

This is a major drawback, and there would be no incentive for any campus to avoid doing this. It is a good reason **NOT** to employ this strategy.

Scientific Reasoning is a required competency that students must fulfill for the Middle States general education program. In order to facilitate its completion, SUNY should require scientific reasoning as part of the SUNY General Education Program.

These competencies already exist in the natural/physical/behavior/social sciences SUNY requirement. Why wasn't this recognized?

System Administration will encourage campus creativity and innovation. More important, perhaps, than an innovative revision of SUNY requirements is the creation of an open field for campuses to tailor local programs for individual campus conditions and traditions. While revising SUNY mandates to eliminate unnecessary restrictions, the system should work to be a resource for education and development of innovative general education programs at the campus level. To encourage campus creativity in general education programming, the System should support statewide and regional conferences, incentive grants, communities of practice.

One way to make a lot of this happen in meaningful ways would be to collaborate directly with the various disciplinary organizations such as the American Sociological Association, the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, Humanities Education and Research Association, etc.

For example, a Business course with a substantial focus on ethics, or oral and written communication might be approvable for either general education and/or Liberal Arts.

This would be a huge mistake for general education and for a liberal arts and sciences education in general. It is not a particular component that is critical; it is the entire thrust of the class, and the way that these components are infused within the entire course. Ethics, oral/written communication, scientific reasoning, creative thinking, etc. are not simply units to be covered. These areas of study are just a few of the elements that provide the basis upon which all else flows. Let us not forget that at one time in human history we had natural philosophy before we had biology! The theories and methods that make up the liberal arts and sciences are the basis for all else. We had natural philosophy long before we had biology and we had social philosophy long before we had sociology.

April 30, 2019

Tod A. Laursen
Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor
The State University of New York
State University Plaza
Albany, NY 12246

Dear Tod,

The University at Buffalo is pleased to respond to the "Green Paper on General Education Revision" provided by the SUNY Working Group on General Education dated March 11, 2019. UB agrees with the assessment that the SUNY General Education program should be modernized to prepare graduates to respond to the challenges of today and align with Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) requirements. The UB Curriculum, our general education program, implemented in Fall 2016, was created to align with MSCHE, LEAP and AAC&U recommendations. Consistent with the background described in the Green Paper, the UB Curriculum provides students with a curriculum that is coherent and continuous (rather than a collection of disparate courses), is focused on ways of thinking (e.g., through a reflective general education capstone), allows flexibility in how students choose courses to complete requirements, is interdisciplinary, is scaffolded (supporting depth as well as breadth through a two semester sequence in communication literacy, and through two multi-course pathways), is focused on learning outcomes and associated assessments, and includes numerous high impact learning practices (e.g., first year seminar, writing intensive courses, capstone experience, use of e-portfolio). At the same time, the UB Curriculum meets all SUNY requirements for transferability and use of the "GETA" transcript annotation.

In Fall 2019, UB will enter the fourth year of implementation of this 21st century general education program, which has already implemented many of the recommendations provided by the Green Paper. Therefore, UB is well positioned to contribute to conversations concerning revision of the SUNY General Education program and how these recommendations can be adapted in a meaningful way.

Office of the Provost

562 Capen Hall, Buffalo, NY 14260-1606
716 645 2992 (F) 716.645 3685
ubprovost@buffalo.edu

buffalo.edu/provost

Regarding the specific recommendations outlined in the paper, the University at Buffalo provides the following responses:

Recommendations needing immediate attention

Recommendations 1 to 5: UB supports these recommendations. The UB Curriculum was developed to align with and fulfill MSCHE requirements. Additionally, general education requirements should be transferable across SUNY campuses.

Information Management Competency and Other World Civilizations Category: UB supports these two recommendations. It is clear that updating the information management competency is necessary to meet the needs of today's students within the current technical climate. Adjusting the title of the "Other World Civilizations" category and streamlining the learning outcomes is also necessary. UB has already discontinued the use of the title "Other World Civilization" in order to be more culturally sensitive.

Recommendations that require longer term consideration:

Reframing of general education in the language of "General Education for the 21st Century Global Citizen (Rec. 1)": UB supports this recommendation: This framing is in alignment with the current UB Curriculum, which includes a required Global Pathway and 21st century learning outcomes.

Aligning SUNY Content Categories with Middle States Requirements and Competencies (Rec. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7): UB supports these recommendations. We can envision ways that the SUNY learning outcomes, along with the inclusion of Middle States competencies such as ethics and diversity, can be collapsed into 10 knowledge areas. UB has already adopted these two Middle States categories and allows students to "double dip" these requirements. For example, a student may take SOC 101 (Introduction to Sociology) to satisfy their social science and diversity learning requirement. UB currently requires students to complete a course in the area of scientific reasoning (consistent with MSCHE). Also consistent with UB's general education requirements, a modernized general education program should explicitly address requirements related to diversity and oral communication.

Reducing General Education Credits Required in Years 1 & 2 (Rec. 4): UB has significant concerns about this recommendation. The possibility of adjusting the credit hour balance, or even eliminating credit hour requirements, is problematic for several reasons. While eliminating all credit hour requirements could encourage innovation, it may also water down the impact and value of general education overall and will, as stated, 'facilitate a 'race to the bottom.'" This could create complications for students who transfer both within and outside the SUNY system, and create the perception (and likely, the reality) that SUNY and UB are not in line with institutional peers in terms of a commitment to strong, 21st century general education. Additionally, reducing the number of general education credits required in the first two years could have serious consequences for students

completing baccalaureate degrees. In particular, it may be more difficult for students who wish to transfer to complete sufficient general education and major requirement courses within the first two years of study, negatively impacting progress towards degree, degree applicable credits, and financial aid.

Administrative Considerations (Rec. 8, 10): UB supports a process to phase in any new requirement and to provide a means (similar to the current "GETA" process) to allow general education completion to be transferable across campuses.

Use of Courses to Meet Multiple General Education Requirements (Rec. 9): UB is in favor of limiting a student's use of a course for more than two categories of general education (or in other words, disallowing use of the same course to satisfy two SUNY knowledge areas). However, UB is not in favor of a policy that would limit a course to meeting only one learning outcome. Courses often appropriately cover the learning outcomes of more than one knowledge area. UB has made a significant effort to associate appropriate knowledge areas with courses; to more accurately reflect course content and learning outcomes.

Allowing only one knowledge area per course would force arbitrary decisions that are not based on an academic rationale.

Campus Level Creativity and Innovation (Rec. 11): UB strongly supports providing options for local requirements beyond the SUNY requirements. Local requirements allow campuses to provide distinctive educational experiences in line with unique campus missions. Current SUNY policies (the "GETA" policy) facilitate student transfer among campuses by requiring that a course that meets a general education requirement at one SUNY campus must fulfill that same requirement at another campus; thus, further standardization is not necessary.

This policy, along with option for local requirements, should be maintained in any revision to general education.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the the SUNY Working Group on General Education's "Green Paper on General Education Revision." We are pleased that SUNY is taking steps to modernize the SUNY General Education program in order to prepare students across the SUNY system for success in the 21st century

Sincerely,



Charles F. Zukoski

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
University at Buffalo

cc: Satish K. Tripathi, President, University at Buffalo
Graham L. Hammill, Vice Provost for Educational Affairs, University at Buffalo

SUNY Cortland Provost

I realize this is late, but our campus General Education Committee solicited feedback and we received the following, which summarized some excellent points:

In reading the green paper, I agree with the purpose of reviewing SUNY general education. I believe students view general education as a checklist of random courses that they have to “get out of the way” in order to take courses for their major. There doesn't seem to be strong cohesion among the categories or feel relevant to students. While I believe students need a strong foundation in a breadth of liberal arts areas (and that requiring those courses ensures that foundation), SUNY – and SUNY Cortland – could be more intentional about connecting GE to a student's overall education and development as a global citizen.

Transferability: I appreciate that the green paper reinforces the importance of transferability of SUNY GE across campuses.

- The General Education Transcript Addendum (GETA) is a valuable tool that accompanies SUNY transcripts and verifies completion of SUNY GE categories at other campuses. Whatever GE program SUNY adopts, the GETA will need to remain to ensure students receive appropriate GE credit upon transfer.

- On page 7, one recommendation to the current Board policy is to “mandate that the certification by any SUNY campus that the SUNY General Education program has been completed by a student shall be respected by all SUNY campuses” (#5). I support this recommendation and note that SUNY Cortland is currently NOT doing this. While current GE policy outlines 7 out of 10 categories, Cortland essentially requires 9 out of 10. Students with completed AA or AS degrees (thus completed SUNY GE) can transfer to Cortland and still need 2 categories. If the GE program remains that 30 credits be required for AA/AS degrees, the GETA would need to be enhanced to indicate not just completion of categories but also certification of completion of full GE program. It currently does not indicate full completion of GE at a campus, which makes implementation of this recommendation difficult.

Diversity

- I would support a SUNY GE category of diversity, both to align to Middle States but also to ensure all students take the category.

- Our overall degree programs have so many requirements, our current policy of giving transfer students GE waivers in categories 11 and 12 remains necessary to assist with degree completion. However, transfer students would benefit from taking a course in Prejudice and Discrimination/Diversity.

Proposed Options: Out of the three proposed options, I would support option A.

- In working with the community colleges on articulation agreements or letters of support for new AA/AS programs, the community colleges have difficulty getting all 30 credits of GE and all transfer path courses into 2 years of study. It leaves them very little flexibility or ability for students to explore. Reducing the number of credits of GE to 21 in the first two years would assist.

- It would also leave some room at bachelor's degree level to incorporate the remaining general education into their schedule, perhaps creating a more balanced schedule at Cortland after transfer.

Thank you for all of your

work. Take care,
Carol

Carol A. Van Der Karr, Ph.D.
Associate Provost for Academic
Affairs SUNY Cortland
607 753 2206
www.cortland.edu

April 29, 2019

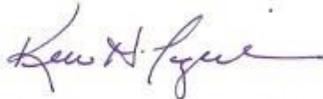
SUNY General Education Working Group:

In response to the Green Paper on SUNY General Education, we offer the following comments:

Overall, we are very concerned about the possibility of eliminating general education requirements altogether. While we understand the idea that some view general education courses as requirements that "take away" time from the major, it is, in our majority opinion, imperative to keep these courses for all majors. General education provides a basic touchstone for student excellence. Only by including courses in basic communication and composition can we ensure that our students will know how to make arguments and articulate their thoughts. Only through mandating a history course (or two) will students be able to contextualize the world around them, making connections between their futures and the past. More and more, our students are coming to us under-prepared, having spent their entire high school class time reading aloud texts to each other, but never having thought for themselves or critically analyzed anything. Eliminating general education requirements would silo students, making them, perhaps, experts in a single area (their major), but without the ability to make connections between their expertise and the world around them. General education provides opportunities for our students to be good citizens and stewards of lifelong learning. Further, at a time when basic historical moments and events are quickly being forgotten, we need general education now more than ever.

As far as the options for credit counting, we support Option A given that it would allow for the infusion of general education courses in to the curriculum but also "alleviate the burden on Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degree programs that were driven to eliminate desired program requirements after the implementation of the SUNY Board's 2012 Seamless Transfer policy." In addition, we support the notion that "Students in baccalaureate programs would also benefit by scaffolding of general education courses from the lower division to upper division work if a 21 credit general education requirement was approved for the first two years of study." That said, the 21-credit GE suggestion might not allow students to have a seamless transfer to other SUNY's if those institutions do not accept Delhi's non-GE courses.

Respectfully submitted,



Kelli Ligeikis, EdD, PE
Provost

SUNY Empire State College's Response to the Green Paper on General Education

April 30, 2019

Introduction

As the college within the SUNY system charged with serving adult learners, Empire State College values lifelong learning and is committed to individualization and flexibility of curriculum and course development.

We maintain that our students, many of whom bring to the institution college-level knowledge gained through work and life experience, may already possess learning that falls within the general education requirements.

As SUNY continues with the work of re-assessing general education, we request that SUNY think creatively about general education, about how there is more than one way to learn, and that a liberal arts education does not necessarily begin in a classroom.

Finally, Empire State College recognizes alternative modes for evaluating students' learning in general education areas and urges SUNY to expand its thinking on how to meet general education requirements.

Recommendations needing immediate attention

1. Information Management Competency:

While Empire State College acknowledges that many students now enter college with a more sophisticated understanding of technology, both in terms of software and hardware, we want to point out that learners vary in their comfort with and access to technology. We are mindful that technological literacy continues to be important in the 21st century, though the learning outcomes currently listed are in need of updating. Implicit in the Green Paper is the assumption that all college students enter college with a comfort, familiarity and access to current technology. We have found that some students, regardless of their age, still lack regular access to devices such as personal computers as well as regular, reliable access to the Internet.

If SUNY changes the competencies on Information Management, Empire State College recommends that colleges assist students with access to the Internet and to required hardware, such as tablets or laptop computers.

Empire State College also recommends that emphasis be placed on student literacy within technology and the role technology plays of facilitating learning within a particular discipline, rather than familiarity with a specific program or piece of hardware.

2. Other World Civilizations:

Empire State College supports a change in title of this general education category for the reasons enumerated in the Green Paper.

Recommendations that require longer term consideration

1. Empire State College agrees that SUNY General Education be framed in the language of General Education for the 21st century global citizen.
2. Empire State College agrees that SUNY General Education outcomes should be aligned more closely with the competencies required for Middle States accreditation. Doing so would make the explanation to accreditors less onerous.
3. Empire State College believes that the issue of how to mesh SUNY General Education outcomes with Middle States outcomes is difficult and requires more discussion than the timeframe for response currently allows.

The SUNY General Education requirement is a blend of competencies and content whereas Middle States mandates competencies in general education. Reconciling these two contrasting modes of measuring learning will require more consideration. There is no support to expand the current list beyond the ten areas; however, there is also no support for collapsing the current ten areas to accommodate the Middle States requirements.

4. Empire State College affirms that the general education requirement strengthens a SUNY degree and has been a part of its reputation as a rigorous statewide institution. We considered the proposal to reduce the number of general education credit hours required in the first two years of college study. Our discussion centered on what the role of general education is and how it fits into a degree program. General Education encourages learners to explore disciplines outside their chosen area of study. The intent is to provide breadth to a degree as well as provide students with introductory courses that will hone their writing, critical thinking, and quantitative skills. Further, general education encourages lifelong learning in graduates.

Currently, Empire State College finds options A (Reduction of general education to 21 credits) and C (Maintain the 30 credit requirement) to be worth further consideration.

We do have a concern that the language in this section of the Green Paper is oriented toward traditional age students. Empire State College is committed to serving non-traditional learners and honoring the knowledge that they bring to their college education. As such, we believe that the discussion should include alternative pathways to meeting the general education requirements.

Respectfully submitted,

Shantih Clemans, Division of Human Services
Cathy Davison, Division of Science, Math and Technology

Leslie Ellis, Undergraduate Committee on Academic Policy
Joel Goldberg, Division of Business
Mary Helen Kolisnyk, Harry Van Arsdale School of Labor Studies
Paul Miller, Undergraduate Committee on Academic Policy
Patricia Pillsworth, Office of Academic Affairs
Anastasia Pratt, Division of Arts and Humanities
Julie Shaw, Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences
Nikki Shrimpton, Interim Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Erie CC – individual response

Erikson Neilans Erie Instructor/Gen Ed Chair

I wanted to share with the SUNY General Education Working Group the following comment our General Education Committee had received. This comment came from our of library staff:

"The concern with this language is that Information Literacy is going to be grouped back in with Information Technology. This has always seemed to mean that if a student knows how to do basic computer skills, they understand how to process information. Information Literacy though is a higher order critical thinking skill and [this individual] would hate to see any challenge to this competency."

Please feel free to reach out to me with any comments or concerns. Our General Education Committee wanted to share any comments we had received from the Green Paper.



**Faculty Council of Community Colleges
Resolution in Response to the Green Paper on General Education Revision,
dated March 11, 2019**

**ASA3:2018-2019
Passed Unanimously on Saturday, March 30, 2019**

Whereas the Provost established the SUNY General Education Working Group (GEWG) on November 17, 2017;

Whereas the charge of the GEWG states:

The General Education working group will:

1. Conduct an environmental scan which includes, but is not limited to, studying and analyzing national trends, higher education systems, regional accrediting bodies, and SUNY campus models of General Education. The group will assess the current program in light of the results of the scan and the societal need for an educated populace. A white paper will be produced by April 1, 2018 and shared with appropriate governance and other bodies.
2. Conduct an analysis of feedback generated from groups reviewing the white paper. A report suggesting potential framework(s) for revising SUNY General Education for the 21st-century student will be delivered to appropriate governance and other bodies for consideration by September 15, 2018;

Whereas the SUNY GEWG has submitted a “green paper,” entitled “Green Paper on General Education Revision,” dated March 11, 2019, to the Faculty Council of Community Colleges for consideration;

Whereas the GEWG report confirms that

a general education curriculum can empower our students to constructively engage not only in their chosen disciplines and careers but also to participate thoughtfully in their lives, their communities and in a 21st century world, if the curriculum is intentionally designed to help students meet these goals;

Whereas the current SUNY General Education requirements were established in 1999 and have not been subsequently reviewed or updated to reflect 21st century needs;

Whereas SUNY requires all campus programs be reviewed every 5 to 7 years;

Whereas the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) considers general education to be a program;

Whereas the MSCHE Accreditation Standard III states:

An accredited institution possesses and demonstrates the following attributes or activities at institutions that offer undergraduate education, a general education program, free standing or integrated into academic disciplines, that:

- a. offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field;
- b. offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives;

Whereas the current SUNY general education requirements lack a unifying principle;

Whereas the SUNY general education requirements are not entirely consistent with MSCHE requirements for general education;

Whereas SUNY general education, seamless transfer, and assessment are interrelated;

Whereas one of the major objectives of the SUNY general education and assessment programs has been to promote seamless transfer;

Whereas the SUNY general education and assessment framework should encourage campus-based innovation in curriculum as appropriate to the mission of the college and the individual program degrees;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Faculty Council of Community Colleges (FCCC) appreciates the faculty governance-driven process that produced the “Green Paper on General Education Revision” and thanks the GEWG for its deliberative work on an important system-wide curriculum issue;

Be it further resolved that the FCCC endorses the GEWG rationale for revising SUNY general education and agrees with the “Green Paper” that “given the lack of alignment between Middle States and

SUNY's general education requirements, the national conversation surrounding higher education in general, the general education reform movement, and that fact that the SUNY general education framework has been in place for 20 years despite the SUNY requirement that all programs should be reviewed every five to seven years," that a provost's advisory committee should be convened to establish a system-wide faculty-driven process for reviewing and revising the framework of SUNY general education.

Be it further resolved that the FCCC recommends that the SUNY Chancellor and the SUNY Provost work with the SUNY Board of Trustees to adopt a general education policy that allows for innovation, review and revision without undue bureaucratic obstruction yet enforces current SUNY board policy that reinforces SUNY students' ability to seamlessly transfer among SUNY institutions;

Be it further resolved that the FCCC recommends that the SUNY general education policy support campus-based, faculty and faculty-governance driven development of innovative and academically rigorous general education programs while being consistent with MSCHE general education requirements, including the study of values, ethics and diverse perspectives;

Be it further resolved that the FCCC recommends the yet-to-be formed provost's advisory committee must have appropriate FCCC and UFS representation and should be charged to do the following:

- Develop a broad SUNY general education program mission statement that is rooted in preparing and empowering students to meet the changing demands of a 21st-century global citizen but also allows for campuses to be innovative in developing their own program mission statements that can align with campus-specific goals as well as the broader SUNY general education mission. The SUNY general education mission statement should be approved by the FCCC and the UFS prior to its implementation;
- Develop a review process of the SUNY general education framework that is approved by the FCCC and the UFS prior to its implementation. The review process should allow for comprehensive and timely participation of faculty and faculty-governance bodies across the campuses in a conversation about SUNY general education categories and their related learning outcomes, and the review process should pay particular and immediate attention to
 - a cross-discipline discussion about the scientific reasoning requirement and its relationship to a natural sciences general education category;
 - the development of more culturally sensitive language in the titles of knowledge and skills areas and their related learning outcomes, with urgent reconsideration of the "Other World Civilizations" and "Foreign Language" category titles;
 - an immediate reconsideration of the designation of the Information Management category as an infused competency and a reconsideration of the accompanying learning outcomes;
- Limit the number of content categories to ten, and maintain the seven-category requirement for all SUNY students;

- Maintain the SUNY 30-credit general education requirement for the baccalaureate degree in 7 of 10 areas, but the credit requirement for the AA and AS degrees should be reduced to 21 credits in 7 of 10 areas.
- Stipulate that a student may use a general education course to fulfill a maximum of two SUNY general education categories
- Develop a sustainable plan for cyclic review and assessment of the SUNY general education program that is approved by the FCCC and UFS prior to its implementation;

Be it further resolved that the FCCC recommends that A.A.S. and A.O.S. degrees continue to be exempt from the SUNY general education requirement as they design their programs to be consistent with MSCHE standards.

Be it further resolved that the FCCC recommends that SUNY System Administration encourage campus creativity and innovation by supporting statewide and regional conferences, incentive grants, communities of practice conversations, open-access publications, and additional resources for facilitating the work of general education curriculum design and implementation.



MEMORANDUM

To: SUNY Working Group on General Education
From: Dr. Yasemin Jones, Associate Vice President, Academic
Affairs
Date: April 30, 2019
Re: **Comments, Green Paper on General Education Revision**

FIT welcomes the SUNY General Education Working Group's reexamination of the SUNY framework and shares many of the concerns that the group has outlined. At FIT, while students value their liberal arts courses, some experience the general education requirements as a collection of disparate courses, as the paper notes is common at many institutions. In addition, faculty remain much more vested in their disciplines and departments than in the particular requirements and learning outcomes of the SUNY framework. Under the current framework, it is difficult to communicate the value of this learning and its connection to their majors to students.

We would like to comment on some of the specific recommendations from the green paper on general education revisions.

For Immediate Action:

MSCHE Competencies: We strongly agree that SUNY's General Education program should adapt to Middle States requirements. FIT finds the current lack of complete alignment between the SUNY framework and the Middle States competencies challenging. It is more difficult for our campus to demonstrate student learning in areas not covered by the SUNY framework.

Information Management Competency: FIT agrees that this needs to be revised. We suggest removing technological skills as part of this competency, and making information/research literacy the competency instead. The competency currently implies that students only need technological skills so as to manage information, which is overly narrow.

Other World Civilizations: Faculty at FIT agree strongly that this category needs to be renamed or revised as soon as possible. One concern with renaming this something like "global awareness" or "world systems," in the absence of revising the learning outcomes at the same time, is that the title and substance of the category will not match. Given the current learning outcomes, FIT rejects courses that do not provide "knowledge of either a broad outline of world history" or the "distinctive features....of one non-Western civilization." Some of these courses clearly offer "global awareness," but do not have the historical breadth or the depth of focus on one country to meet the outcomes. We support revising the learning outcomes as well as the title to enable acceptance of these broader globalism courses.

Longer Term Recommendations:

FIT agrees that it would be undesirable to create more than 10 categories and agrees that some categories could be collapsed or eliminated in order to address Middle States competencies. The elimination of categories that are largely or solely taught by one academic department (like Foreign Languages) would be more disruptive than changes to categories that draw classes from a wide number of departments (e.g. The Arts). We suggest that some Middle States competencies could be addressed in the SUNY categories. It is our interpretation that students meeting the SUNY requirements for US History have learned about diverse perspectives, as required by the learning outcomes. US History and Diversity could become a single category. In addition, learning outcomes addressing Information Literacy might be combined with written communication or the Humanities.

Basic Communication: FIT does not combine written and oral communication in its general education courses or assessment projects and views these as two distinct competencies. In addition, the outcome that students should “evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria” is not very meaningful on our campus; it is much more important that students are proficient in oral discourse and public presentations. We support separating oral and written communication. Information literacy skills may be a better fit along with written communication.

Number of Credits/Competencies: FIT strongly supports retaining 30 credits for the baccalaureate degree. The green paper enumerates many important reasons for the existence of SUNY General Education requirements. Moreover, we believe that current and emerging economic, political, and societal conditions have substantially increased the urgency and importance of a broad-based liberal education that enables students to reason, problem-solve, understand diverse perspectives, engage in civics, and succeed in a global economy. This is an argument for not reducing the number of credit hours for general education, since these courses in particular, and especially at a professionally-focused institution like FIT, enable students to think broadly and deeply, develop their communication skills, expand global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and acquire other essential skills.

FIT agrees that reducing the credits for the AAS to 21 could provide our campus with more flexible options.

FIT would find reducing general education to zero credits, and establishing competencies instead, to be very disruptive to its Liberal Arts program. The course-based system has generally worked well and fits with current campus curricular practices. We are working to support the stronger infusion of courses in the majors with Middle States competencies, but believe that general education credit courses are essential to teaching these. Indeed, the idea that major programs should take on covering General Education credits or competencies contradicts the very idea of “general education” and the goals of awarding a college degree rather than a technical certificate. We worry that some of the suggestions here will only serve to further erode academic rigor, sideline broad-based liberal education, and emphasize narrow (and easily outmoded) skills-based training.

Scientific Reasoning: FIT believes the current learning outcomes in the Natural Sciences category covers scientific reasoning. We would encourage revision of the current outcomes rather than a new competency or category. FIT has retained the requirement of Natural Sciences for all of its students.

Diversity and Ethical Reasoning: FIT prefers that the SUNY framework incorporate these requirements. These areas will be strengthened in many programs at FIT, but it is simplest to ensure that all students learn in these areas through general education requirements. FIT supports the idea of a more explicitly stated diversity category if it cannot be incorporated into another area.

Limit to two categories: FIT strongly agrees that courses be limited to two categories of general education. Courses trying to meet more than two categories may cover three categories weakly rather than two strongly. FIT hopes that this issue can be addressed immediately.

cc: Giacomo M. Oliva
Amber Carpenter-Lagattuta
Carolyn Comiskey
Deborah Klesenski-Rispoli
Patrick Knisley
Rita Cammarata
Steven Frumkin
Troy Richards

Kathy Kimber Genesee CC Professor

The following items are a summary of the concerns expressed by Genesee Community College faculty regarding the SUNY Green Paper on General Education.

1. Genesee Community College faculty believe that any revision of the SUNY General Education requirements must strengthen and not weaken the liberal arts.
2. Community College faculty must have meaningful and proportional representation on the Provost's advisory committee on general education.
3. According to the Center for Community College Student Engagement as many as two-thirds of community college students are underprepared. General education courses are essential for underprepared students such that these courses facilitate the development of foundational skills necessary for maintaining academic rigor.
4. Reducing general education from the current 30-hour requirement to a 21-hour requirement at the community college may:
 - Result in issues related to transferability within the SUNY system;
 - Lead to difficulty in fulfilling SED's 30-credit liberal arts regulation;
 - Have unintended negative consequences for community colleges compared to 4-year institutions.
5. Other faculty express the opinion that moving to 21-hours while maintaining a 30-credit hour across 4 years will allow for more flexibility and depth of study in general education courses.
6. Any structural change to SUNY General Education must be done so intentionally and deliberately while considering the long-term impact to community colleges.
7. While consolidation of Middle States Standards and SUNY General Education could simplify the requirements for design, assessment and reporting, it would also lead to the elimination of Arts and Humanities which are essential for the 21-century student.
8. Any structural change to General Education must be intentional, transparent and include a reasonable timeline to be consistent with principles of shared governance.
9. Scientific reasoning must be a requirement of SUNY General Education.

CAOs from Comprehensive Colleges

Stacey Robertson
Geneseo
Provost/VP Academic Affairs

Dear Provost Laursen and Green Paper Committee members:

As CAOs at the 13 SUNY comprehensives, we write as a group to share our general thoughts and concerns around the General Education Green Paper. Thank you for the opportunity. We support a diversity requirement with the hope that institutions will be able to implement with creativity and adaptability. That said, we worry about siloing diversity by suggesting that it is something that can or should be addressed separately from other subject areas. We support a holistic approach that encourages a framework similar to intergroup dialogue.

We agree that SUNY's general education lacks "a unifying mission" and it is critical that this is addressed. Such a unifying mission will assist in answering the "why" question regarding revision, and articulate a clear hope for the future. Also important to us, and an idea we believe can serve as an overarching principle, is that general education is at its best when driven by the mission of the campus and the vision of the faculty.

Since general education offers the ability for each campus to "brand" itself, we enthusiastically agree that revisions should feature flexibility and allow for tailoring attuned to "individual campus conditions and traditions." Although we appreciate the opportunities afforded by being a part of a larger system, it is the distinctiveness of each of our campuses – our culture, values, and people – that attract and retain students.

Drawing from this idea, we suggest a set of system-wide general education parameters that allows each campus to enact creativity consistent with its unique mission. In the end, we believe that campuses can innovate while remaining aligned with a set of standards that answers to a renewed consistency between three critical characteristics: SUNY's aspiration to deliver a 21st century education; reductions in general education credit hours to allow further distinctiveness and specialization for campuses and students; and full alignment with Middle States standards.

Sincerely,
Lorin Basden Arnold, New Paltz
Meg Benke, ESC
Bette Bergeron, Potsdam
Terry Brown, Fredonia
Scott Furlong, Oswego
Katy Heyning, Brockport
David Hill, Plattsburgh
James Mayrose, Buffalo State
Andre Melendez, Oneonta
Patrick O'Sullivan, Old Westbury
Barry Pearson, Purchase
Mark Prus, Cortland
Stacey Robertson, SUNY Geneseo

Jefferson Community College endorses the need for general education and endorses the Working Group's proposal that "general education must empower students to become citizens in a globalized society and prepare them for advanced study and eventually successful employment" (1). We further endorse the idea that a general education program should "ensure that Associate of Arts, Associate of Science and baccalaureate degree recipients have breadth of study in multiple subject areas" (2).

We further agree on the following specific points:

That the requirement to fulfill 7 out of the 10 General Education categories shall be retained. If new categories are needed, existing categories should be removed or condensed to ensure that the total number of categories does not exceed 10.

That the language of the General Education Program be updated, specifically for "Other World Civilization" with a preference for "Non-Western Civilizations".

That there is a need to infuse technical competency and information literacy throughout the curriculum.

That there is a need for diversity and ethical responsibility requirements but that these should be infused as well, rather than become separate categories.

That the general education program be regularly reviewed.

That campuses be free to revise how general education works in an innovative and efficient manner.

That some process be established to document infused competencies to facilitate transfer between SUNY campuses.

We are interested in but not in consensus about the following areas:

How to reduce the credit burden of General Education requirements on AA and AS degrees. Some are in favor of reducing the requirements from 30 to 21, while others are more focused on ensuring that students fulfill at least 7 categories.

How to define a 21st century global citizen.

The extent to which General Education should be required for AAS and AOS degrees. There is agreement that those degrees should include some General Education, but how much and in which form is contested.

We agree that Scientific Reasoning needs to be more strongly required, but there is disagreement about whether that should be as a new General Education Category, or as an infused competency.

Whether a General Education course may be used to fulfill two General Education Categories. If a course is listed as having more than 2 attributes, who decides which category that course can fill?

We further would like to recommend that the following points be considered:

- 1) The appropriate number of Learning Objectives for each General Education Category. For example, Mathematics has 5 learning objectives, which make assessment a tedious process.
- 2) That the term "foreign languages" in the current language be updated to the more current term "world languages".
- 3) That the General Education revision Process include as many faculty voices as possible and that a clear timeline for the revision be established.
- 4) That removal or condensing of General Education Categories be done in a thoughtful, deliberative process, keeping in mind the effects on seamless transfer to a baccalaureate program.

Jefferson Community College appreciates to efforts of the Working Group and looks forward to the next phase of the SUNY General Education Program Review.

FROM: SUNY Librarians' Association
WGIL Task Force on Information Management

RE: Task Force review and recommendation

THE CHARGE OF THE WGIL TASK FORCE ON INFORMATION MANAGEMENT IS AS FOLLOWS:

In the fall of 2013, the SUNY Librarians Association formed our Task Force in an effort to address the growing concern over the adequacy of the current General Education outcomes for Information Management. Our specific charge was to review the outcomes, determine whether they would benefit from revision, and if so, provide suggestions for that revision.

REVIEW PROCESS:

The review process spanned a period of nine months. We started by administering a survey that was distributed to all General Education representatives across SUNY. The purpose of the survey was to determine if and how the competencies were being measured or assessed on SUNY campuses. We also felt it was important to seek out as much insight and feedback from as wide a range of educators and stakeholders as we could.

To accomplish this, we hosted three Special Interest Groups throughout the year at the following conferences:

3T's 2014: At the Core of Teaching, Transliteracy, Teaching
SUNY CIT 2014: Conference on Instructional and Technology
SUNY Library Association Annual Conference¹

After evaluating the survey results and feedback from participants attending the Special Interest Groups, a few common areas of concern surfaced.

1. The Gen Ed competencies for Information Management encompasses both information literacy skills and computer skills simultaneously. Several statements from participants favored the idea of addressing the two separately in order to allow each a more comprehensive treatment.
2. Outcome 1 covers basic computer use, however the wording of this requirement is vague and does not cover the more intricate and fundamental computer skills students need to be successful in their college courses.
3. Outcomes 2 and 3 cover research techniques and other basic skills falling within the information literacy sphere. Locating, evaluating and synthesizing information are all necessary, however, the language fails to address the need for students to be able to translate those skills across a range of information landscapes, nor does it acknowledge related literacies, such as digital literacy, media literacy and visual literacy.
4. The current language for the learning outcomes is so generalized that it seems to make it harder for faculty to understand how to relate them to their specific discipline. In many cases there is an expectation from faculty that students should have already acquired these skills by the time they reach their class, but this is not always the case. The learning outcomes need a change in language that will more clearly draw attention to their applicability across all disciplines.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Our task force recommends two main changes to the current outcomes:

1. We suggest dividing the current Information Management section into two, one for information literacy and the other for digital literacy. Although the two are undeniably interconnected, in order to produce learning outcomes with the appropriate scope, they need to be addressed independently of each other.
2. When composing the learning outcomes, we suggest incorporating more definitive language reflective of current pedagogy and which is also responsive to the changing information technology environment.
3. We recommend avoiding the use of the umbrella term Information Management to describe both skill sets, since it does not appropriately encompass the pedagogical elements covered in the outcomes.

SUGGESTED REVISIONS:

The outcomes for the Information Literacy section are influenced directly by the new Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education that was recently developed by the Association for Colleges and Research Libraries (ACRL). The Framework consists of six threshold concepts, intended to be used as a paradigm by librarians to translate into whatever measurable outcomes they feel most suitable for the educational environment they are teaching in.

The outcomes for the Digital Literacy section were composed by members of our task force who have additional expertise in the area of instructional technology and design.

Information Literacy

Students will be able to understand how information is produced and valued

Students will engage in critical inquiry in order to create new knowledge

Students will be able to discover credible sources to be used for specific purposes

Students will be able to participate ethically in a community of scholars

Digital Literacy

Students will effectively and efficiently use appropriate software programs in order to succeed in the global workforce

Students will be able to save and share information using various file types (e.g. .pdf, .docx, image)

Students will understand the importance of privacy and ethical use of information with electronic communication

FURTHER RECOMMENDATION IF REVISIONS ARE APPROVED:

We further recommend that a new task force be charged with creating corresponding rubrics for the revised outcomes. These rubrics will help support the full integration of the outcomes across the disciplines and assist faculty with measuring student abilities. A few members of our current task force have already volunteered to be on the new task force. Other potential members might include additional SUNYLA members, FACT2 members or faculty members from all other disciplines who may have an invested interest in information literacy and digital literacy skills in the SUNY General Education Curriculum.

Question from New Paltz

Hi Wendy,

I see you have done quite a bit of work for the SUNY Green Paper! Our campus is working on distributing the paper and getting feedback now. I will be doing some of the work of presenting the Green paper to a few groups and I have one question. I don't see directions on the Green Paper to send questions, so I thought I'd just reach out to you since I know you. Please forward me on if I shouldn't be bothering you about this.

I just want clarification on the recommendation on page 7 that:

"Establish that there shall be a SUNY General Education program applicable to all campuses of the State University of New York,"

And then the discussion of the options for credits in connection with GE.

Does this mean that all campuses would be expected to have the same General Education system with the same number of credits required, without variation from campus to campus? Or, am I misinterpreting that and the process would still be SUNY has a general framework that individual campuses could use as a baseline to then craft their own GEs reflective of campus mission? So, if SUNY determined to reduce GE to 21 credit program, then a campus would or would not have the option of retaining a 30 credit program?

Thanks for any help you can send my way.

Best,
Heather

Heather Morrison
Associate Professor and Chair
Department of History
State University of New York at New Paltz

"Whereas some form of General Education program is the core of the modern college curriculum and mission, and Whereas SUNY and Middle States have recognized the need to review and revise our system-wide General Education requirements, and

Whereas SUNY needs a broadly applicable set of General Education guidelines to help make Seamless Transfer effective and consistent across the system, and

Whereas all Colleges across the SUNY system need to adhere to the same guidelines in order to make General Education and Seamless transfer effective, and

Whereas Community Colleges occupy a special position in the SUNY system, intended to emphasize their connection with their local communities, and

Whereas every Community College has to balance the needs and desires of a wide variety of constituencies when deciding what constitutes the mission and requirements of a General Education Program, therefore

Be it resolved that the Faculty Senate of Niagara County Community College requests that SUNY allow the Community Colleges of SUNY the greatest latitude possible in determining the mission and requirement of their own General Education programs within the system-wide guidelines developed by the General Education work group.

Be it further resolved that the Faculty Senate of Niagara County Community College requests that SUNY continue giving Community Colleges proportional representation on the General Education work group and all subsequent General Education committees."

Passed 04/30/2019

I appreciate the Working Group's effort to distill the national conversation about general education and to capture facets of the SUNY General Education conundrum. I would like to know, however, if the Working Group considered the option of abandoning altogether System requirements (a SUNY General Education program) in favor of allowing campuses to align with the standard for general education required by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).

Ending a System-wide general education would enable SUNY institutions to shift more fully to outcomes-based learning rather than to preserve a general education program that awkwardly straddles both a distribution system—recognized in the Green Paper as a product of another era—and an outcomes-based program. Eliminating SUNY GER would also encourage students to focus on learning rather than completing requirements, and it would enable campuses to integrate learning experiences into degree programs—the way we register general education with the New York State Education Department—rather than to continue to treat general education as a program unto itself.

The idea that SUNY should have a unifying mission for general education (expressed on page 4) contravenes the Middle States emphasis on general education programs aligning with the specific missions of individual institutions. Taking even the most obvious differences among institutions—degree award types and levels—suggests the problem with a system-wide general education program: Community colleges, ag and tech colleges, comprehensives and research institutions should not have the same general education programs. The Middle States phrase for its expectation of a general education program that is “consonant with degree” summarizes this point. (On this point I also find it interesting that the Seamless Transfer and Student Mobility Policy, like the Green Paper, treat General Education and the transfer pathways as discrete when on most, if not all campuses, there is considerable overlap between and among general education courses and transfer-path courses. Undoing this artificial separation seems key to achieving integration of general education into degree programs while preserving the transfer pathways.)

If SUNY were to reverse course and simply require institutions to demonstrate compliance with the Middle States standard for general education without also overlaying disciplinary distribution and credit requirements, another type of articulation among the general education programs of different institutions would be possible. In other words, SUNY could protect seamless transfer and student mobility by insisting that all campuses use a common attribute system, perhaps paired with some indicator of learning level, for designating learning experiences that fulfill the outcomes established by Middle States (e.g. “sr-b” for basic scientific reasoning, “sr-i” for intermediate scientific reasoning, or some similar schema). Just as they do now, receiving campuses would have to honor the outcomes already completed by transfer students, but they would have more opportunity to see the level of learning achievement demonstrated and thus more opportunity to build into the degree program in a scaffolded fashion the appropriate subsequent learning opportunities.

I would like to address a few related points made late in the Green Paper, particularly the idea that credits ensure the quality of learning (implied in the discussion of Option B's disadvantages on page 10). This viewpoint, and the accompanying discussion of a “race to the bottom,” forget that campuses need to satisfy the quality assurance standards of Middle States (which, incidentally, do not require credits whatsoever). In highlighting this point I am not so much endorsing Option B as identifying evidence of outdated thinking. Similarly, the concern with maximizing “student choice” expressed in this same section of the paper disregards the recent literature exposing how having too many courses to choose

from has disadvantaged students, particularly students from under-served populations who struggle to navigate unstructured and/or excessive elective options. (The University of Maryland is a good example of a state institution that deromanticized “student choice” a handful of years to great gains in learning and retention, not to mention cost savings.)

Finally, if focusing on the MSCHE competencies rather than the SUNY requirements is not possible, then the next best option is Option A. Again, I find it odd that transfer path courses are conceived of separately from general education courses when so many t-path courses serve double duty. As for students arriving at four-year institutions without receiving as much credit as they had previously, I am favor in pressuring receiving institutions into accepted transfer credit rather than allowing them to accept less credit because of changes to system-wide general education requirements.

Oneonta (2) from Elizabeth Dunn Prof

It's easy to see that the group tried to consider a wide variety of opinions and factors. Some items are in conflict with one another and seem to lead in very different directions, but the inclusivity is appreciated.

Briefly:

1. Opportunities

More flexibility for the local campuses. The system is so large and varied in its mission, this aspect seems imperative. Plus each campus should be putting its own stamp on their particular student body through the General Education program rather than having a generic, laundry list approach that encourages a check-off the box attitude among students.

More faculty ownership might be possible. This is a problem on many campuses. Gen Ed courses are viewed as a burden—simply service courses to be suffered because it pays the bills. Faculty must take ownership of Gen Ed and recognize the privilege involved in teaching students from all over campus.

We could embed more choice architecture. Research shows that students may make poor choices when there are too many and they are unstructured. Students have no means by which to make informed choices in many Gen Ed programs. Whatever fits the schedule will serve. Campuses have an opportunity to structure choice in Gen Ed so that students will design a more coherent plan for themselves.

2. Concerns

Zero credit. This is an idea that can lead to very poor outcomes, especially for transfer students and those moving from CCs to the four-year institutions. For one thing, we aren't that great at writing and adhering to learning outcomes. Nor are we terribly good at assessing effectively for them.

21 credits. A mixed bag. It provides more flexibility for campuses but also more opportunities for underdevelopment of the essential skills, dispositions, and knowledge base that both the four-year institutions require and employers are increasingly demanding.

Transferability. Obviously key and it can be a little tricky in any system. Strong cross-walks can solve a lot of issues, but this aspect much be watched carefully so that we don't disadvantage transfer students. If they have completed a SUNY gen ed somewhere, they should be done (as they are now). It's the partial completion cases that are trickier. But competencies and cross walks again can solve a lot of this.

There is no explicit recognition of a skill that underlies any decent education. The ability to create and analyze human expression—this is really what employers seem to think is missing even though they don't quite put it this way. It doesn't matter whether we are talking about narrative, music, visual art, mathematics et al. These are all coded systems of human expression and the ability to understand and create them underlies adult success.

Thanks for your hard work.

Onondaga CC

The Onondaga Community College Faculty Senate charged its Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC) to review the Green Paper on General Education Revision prepared by the SUNY Working Group on General Education, and to return its comments and conclusions to the Senate. LOAC commended the efforts of the Working Group, and endorsed the recommendations made in the green paper. The Senate accepted and confirmed LOAC's endorsement.

Good Morning -

I apologize for the duplicate email, but I wanted to clarify and correct my earlier message. Please ignore my previous email and use this one instead:

The Onondaga Community College Faculty Senate charged its Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC) to review the FCCC Resolution in Response to the Green Paper on General Education Revision (March 11, 2019, ASA3:2018-2019), and to return its comments and conclusions to the Senate.

LOAC commended the efforts of the Working Group, and endorsed the recommendations made in the resolution. The Senate accepted and confirmed LOAC's endorsement.

J.T. Ryan
President, OCC Faculty Senate
Professor, Business Administration

Comments on THE GREEN PAPER AND RECOMMENDATIONS, May 1, 2019

Prepared by the Old Westbury Institutional Learning Outcomes Faculty/Administration Joint Task Force

One thrust of the SUNY Green Paper concerns problems encountered by other institutions with enacting SUNY General Education (GE) requirements (e.g. community colleges), sometimes resulting in difficulties with accreditation bodies. In the SUNY White Paper, Old Westbury's more demanding program put us in the vanguard. However, the Green Paper while espousing "breadth", "flexibility," and "higher order skills," has the potential of pushing us back towards minimal GE programs.

In recent years, and in spite of ever changing and frequently conflicting SUNY demands, many campuses, including Old Westbury (OW), have developed and assessed our own curriculum without much direction from SUNY System, and as a result, we have anticipated the White Paper's acknowledgment that Middle States and LEAP will become the SUNY standard. Since OW already complies with seamless transfer and meets the existing SUNY GE requirements, we expect that this will continue to be the case. However, as we anticipate a series of top leadership transitions at OW, we offer our experience as evidence that demonstrates the centrality of strong faculty leadership to the success of the OW curriculum and our assessment practices.

We find it perplexing, in fact, that despite the thrust of the SUNY White Paper, nowhere in the Green Paper is the term "Institutional Learning Outcomes" (ILO's) mentioned. For a number of years, the AAC&U has been promoting LEAP institutional outcomes that go beyond General Education. At OW we adopted LEAP three years ago, and changed the name of the GEC to LEC partially in response to Middle States expectations, but also because our past, present, and anticipated future College-wide curriculum reaches beyond SUNY General Education requirements. We expect to continue to meet the SUNY minimum for GE as we implement LEAP and Institutional Learning Outcomes as they align with the Mission and Goals of the College.

We are concerned about potential problems created by the Green Paper's apparent endorsement of "higher order skills" and inter- and multi-disciplinary courses, and the LEAP category of "integrative learning" as a possible replacement for existing substantive SUNY GE learning domains. There is a danger that in trying to do more with less there will be pressure to adopt an approach that focuses on thinking *processes* but without direct reference to the *content* of the Liberal Arts and Sciences. At OW, we engage students and assess critical thinking in GE courses as well as in the content, skills, and methodology of the specific disciplines. Further, our LEC domains reflect a commitment to an inter-departmental curriculum that values the disciplinary contributions to knowledge and perspectives in terms of their content, not simply in terms of their ways of understanding or thinking. Since faculty train in and achieve tenure on the basis of publishing and producing work within disciplinary frameworks, and because we often work within narrow silos related to our disciplines and departmental self-interests, we seek – both in responding to the Green Paper and the further implementation of LEAP – to find a balance that respects the value in disciplines and interdisciplinarity, in ways of thinking and seeing, and in the content that students consider and come to understand. Specifically, we offer the following responses and recommendations:

Credits

We support option C, to maintain the 30 GE credit requirement. The argument that reducing (or eliminating) credit requirements would lead to innovation on campuses presumes that less is more, when in fact less is almost always less – particularly when it comes to the breadth and depth of a higher education program; a college major requiring only 24 course credits might spur "innovation," but would almost certainly encompass fewer skills,

opportunities for growth, and cover less substantive content. The Green Paper's proposal for "scaffolded" GE programs, "weaving General education throughout the undergraduate experience" would align with our initiatives, and conform to both LEAP and meet Middle States expectations. We also support the wider distribution of GE learning outcomes throughout the undergraduate curriculum, rather than as a burdensome credit/course obligation during students' first two years.

Diversity

We find that the Green Paper's recommendation to merge diversity into other GE areas risks diluting the conceptual content and intellectual rigor with which we have developed diversity as an ILO. Our innovative policies allowing and encouraging double-counting of courses ensures that the majority of our diversity courses also fulfill other domains – doing more with more. An understanding and practical application of diversity is central to our Mission, and results in students encountering diversity courses throughout the curriculum even after they have fulfilled the diversity requirement. This is one of our strongest aspects, imparting coherence and integration to our Liberal Education program.

LEAP and Disciplinary Areas

In our implementation of LEAP learning outcomes, we intentionally continue to require specific content areas that are central to a Liberal Arts Education, including the arts and humanities. Our mapping of LEAP to the OW curriculum, therefore, does not replace existing knowledge areas, but assures that they are aligned with LEAP, and with Middle States expectations. We affirm our successful approach to interdisciplinary student learning within General Education that is deep and broad, substantive and integrated. We also anticipate incorporating aspects of our disciplinary, *program-level* SLOs as part of our articulation of LEAP learning outcomes.

Critical Thinking

We intend to proceed with our planned schedule to assess critical thinking in the 2020-2021 year. We develop our assessment sample so that it includes GE courses as well as courses at varying levels in the majors. We continue to consider implementation of training faculty and scoring with the AAC&U's Value LEAP critical thinking rubric.

Civic Engagement

We support the Green Paper emphasis on the importance of including ethical reasoning, interdisciplinary courses, high impact practices, and co-curricular experiences that culminate in the use of higher-order skills. Our coordinated First Year/Community Learning program achieves this. The FY1000 seminar has both a diversity and humanities designation within our Liberal Education program. The CALL courses are required for incoming first-year students, but not part of GE. Once again, the SUNY suggestions of incorporating such programs into GE while requiring fewer credits seems contradictory. Given that LEAP outcomes refer to civic engagement, ethical reasoning, and action we anticipate further articulation, perhaps in our Middle States report, of how this program contributes to our meeting LEAP ILOs and clarify how we can enforce participation in this program as a graduation requirement. As always, consideration of the resources necessary to offer a quality program to all students will likely become a concern. The implementation of second year program that includes community involvement presents possibilities for meeting the Green Paper suggestion of integrating civic engagement into the majors and throughout the undergraduate experience.

Students' GE choices

We intend to research our students' experience of the GE/LE program and develop initiatives to educate and engage them in the program. Given the results of a recent analysis of our academic schedule offering, which found that our GE courses are packed, we recognize the need to add more GE sections. Expanding GE through all four years could also offer some relief for students' problems of access to GE/LE courses in the lower-division segments of the curriculum.

Other World Civilizations

We support the Green Paper recommendation to change the knowledge area/domain name "Other World Civilizations." OW faculty decided from the start to change the domain name to "Major Cultures," though we acknowledge that this domain needs attention and revision, which will occur as part of our faculty governance committee structure. We will review the outcomes, expand and make the global content explicit and integral, and increase the number of offerings. We intend also to examine and perhaps further articulate the relationship of this domain to Diversity. We are assessing this domain this semester and these recommendations will be included in our annual Assessment Report.

Information Management

As recommended in the Green Paper, the criteria/standards for the SUNY Information Management competency needs to be updated and upgraded. As a longer-term goal, our LEC intends to revisit the inclusion of the competency in our Writing Competency courses.

Oral Communication

Following up on the Green Paper's suggestion, we intend to begin discussion with our English Department about how best to incorporate the SUNY's two oral communications outcomes, as well as their assessment.

Unfunded Mandates?

We emphatically endorse the Green Paper's statement that "resources should be made available to facilitate this work," and look forward to the establishment of a reliable SUNY funding stream, with appropriate processes for campuses to apply for it (perhaps along the lines of the Performance Improvement Fund model).

TO: Tod A. Laursen, Senior Vice Chancellor and Provost
SUNY

FROM: Scott R. Furlong, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
SUNY Oswego

SUBJECT: General Education Green Paper

While I responded as one of the 13 SUNY comprehensive provosts to the General Education Green Paper, I wanted to submit a response from SUNY Oswego to the Green Paper. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Let me first echo the comments that came from the SUNY comprehensive provosts.

- SUNY Oswego supports the diversity requirement, particularly with the idea that implementation can be done creatively and with adaptability. We support a holistic approach to this.
- SUNY Oswego also believes in the need for a unifying mission around general education, but also believes that general education is best addressed when it serves the mission of the individual campus. Having this flexibility will be important.
- Transferability is an important quality in an era where students may be attending different campuses. But as noted, we need to ensure the distinctiveness of individual campuses as well.

Beyond the above, SUNY Oswego supports the general ideas within the Green Paper that align closely with the AAC&U's LEAP Initiative.

On personal point, please know that in my previous position as Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, I was active in the AAC&U LEAP activities system-wide and working my campus through a general education reform that incorporated the LEAP Learning Outcomes as well as its perspectives regarding high impact practices. I believe Gwen Kay may have mentioned this, but I'm willing and eager to serve on the next committee as this moves forward.

SUNY Plattsburgh

General Education Committee Response to SUNY Working Group on General Education Green Paper on General Education Revision

The SUNY Plattsburgh General Education Committee has concluded that Option A (allowing associate-granting institutions to reduce their GE programs to 21 credits while maintaining at least 30 credits in the GE programs for baccalaureate-granting institutions) was the best of the options presented, with the following qualifications: (a) Baccalaureate institutions should be provided the flexibility to distinguish themselves through their GE programs by having complete control over the remaining 9 baccalaureate GE credits; (b) SUNY should reconsider the SUNY-mandated GE categories.



Whereas, the SUNY general education requirements were pared down in 2010 following their 1998 inception, thereby significantly reducing the impact of liberal arts and science influences in developing a well-rounded student;

Whereas authentic college learning should go beyond the acquisition of employment-based skills and competencies and should instill and develop the critical thinking that global citizens need;

Whereas, many of the current array of general education course offerings incorporate applied learning, project based learning, and diversity in their curricula;

Whereas, the SUNY Poly College of Arts & Sciences faculty are contending not only with the demands of employers and a global economy, but also instructing students who have largely experienced an educational system that does not particularly reward effective communication, critical thinking, diverse perspectives, or civil deliberation;

Whereas, general education courses teach students to evaluate and marshal historical, cultural, statistical, and scientific evidence, and to express themselves persuasively as they learn to understand and appreciate the world as they cultivate their own aesthetic sensibilities and capabilities;

Whereas, we must be rigorous in our demand for early, prolonged, and sustained adherence to these aforementioned objectives and must ensure curricular flexibility coexists with academic standards;

Whereas, the objectives of general education cannot be fused as competencies into major coursework, since these objectives require concentrated, sustained, and directed work;

Whereas disciplinary knowledge is important, we assert that the integrated thinking instilled by vigorous general education offerings is vital to the development of 21st century global citizens;

Whereas a general education curriculum should ensure every student, "whether they are from New York State, the United States, or abroad" comes away from their SUNY experience having developed the ability to "think broadly and deeply, hone their communication skills, and address the tough and timeless questions embedded in every discipline," "to be successful global citizens in the 21st century,"

Therefore, the faculty of the SUNY Poly College of Arts & Sciences opposes "Option B) Zero Credits of general education" described by the SUNY Working Group on General Education Green Paper on General Education Revision.

Signed,
Faculty of the College of Arts & Sciences, SUNY Polytechnic Institute

Rockland CC individual faculty members

1. Shamika Mitchell

Regarding the Other World Civilizations Category, the title is just as much a problem as the criteria for this title. Traditionally, the word "Western" is coded for "white," so that anything non-white is considered as Other or global. Perhaps the criteria for this category should be non-USA and those that are international. By doing this, we are centering the United States of America instead of centering whiteness. Or, another option is centering all of the Americas - South, Central and North - and having a category that reflects this difference. Technically, anything not centered on the USA should be Other, in this sense, and is also inclusive of national imperialist efforts such as Samoa and Puerto Rico, both are part of the USA. The main question about this category is determining its purpose and intention. What is the expected learning outcome? How inclusive is it? Is the focus on international materials, histories, voices? Is the focus on race and whiteness? Is the focus on language? As we know, there are several Western nations that are not English language, and so a linguistic centering is also a problem. If we are emphasizing hemisphere, then there are other nations to include. As it currently exists, the agenda for "Other Worlds" suggests its primary aim is to uplift and center whiteness, no matter where it is located in the world, and to Otherize, thus marginalize, non-White voices wherever they exist. This is not easy work and I appreciate your efforts.

2. Emily Dennis Harvey

I read the Green Paper on General Education revision with interest and have a suggestion for consideration. Along with global awareness, I believe **environmental awareness** should be included in the SUNY mission statement. This is now such an urgent issue, do we not have a responsibility to address it?



April 30, 2019 Via Email provost@suny.edu

Tod A. Laursen, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor
The State University of New York
State University Plaza
Albany, New York 12246

RE: SUNY Green Paper on General Education Revision

Dear Dr. Laursen:

Thank you for inviting us to respond to the March 11 SUNY Green Paper on General Education Revision. I have met with our three faculty governance leaders. Together, we have reviewed the document as well as the March 30 response of the Faculty Council of Community Colleges.

Here at Suffolk, the faculty and the administration are committed to a holistic curriculum which values an approach to academic study that bridges the liberal arts and sciences and provides an education which trains the hands, inspires the heart, and challenges the mind of every learner.

Acknowledging the importance of assessment for self-reflection, improvement, and accreditation, we have already aligned our institutional educational goals with Middle States. The desire of SUNY to now align general education with Middle States requirements is a further affirmation of what we have already done.

We affirm the committee members for their desire to emphasize curricular development and innovation at the campus level and to reaffirm the core principle of transferability from the community college to the baccalaureate institution.

We affirm the modifications to Board policy needing immediate attention, the updating of information management competencies, and the renaming of the *Other World Civilizations* category. Likewise, we concur with the recommendations that require longer-term consideration. In particular, we support Option A of the draft document which provides for a reduction of general education to 21 credits. Considering the heft of our local requirements, this may, in some programs, provide us additional credits for our student success course, for applied learning or research experiences, and for elective opportunities. We continue to value the opportunities which SUNY provides as a curricular resource fostering innovation, the use of open educational resources, and grant opportunities related to developmental education redesign, online education, and guided pathways training.

Suffolk County Community College promotes intellectual discovery, physical development, social and ethical awareness, and economic opportunities for all through education that transforms lives, builds communities and improves society.

Central Administration
533 College Road
Selden, NY 11784-2899
(631) 451-4112

**Ammerman
Campus**
533 College Road
Selden, NY 11784-2899
(631) 451-4110

Grant Campus
Crooked Hill Road
Brentwood, NY 11717-1092
(631) 851-6700

Eastern Campus
121 Speonk-Riverhead Road
Riverhead, NY 11901-3499
(631) 548-2500

On behalf, then, of the academic leaders of the College and of our faculty governance leadership, I am very grateful for the opportunity to offer feedback on this matter. Please contact me if any clarification is needed. As you begin to consider next steps, please allow me to recommend both our faculty and academic administrators to the teams of professional you will gather to provide flesh to the option that is chosen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul M. Beaudin, PhD".

Paul M. Beaudin, PhD

Vice President for Academic Affairs



SUNY SA Comment on the Green Paper on SUNY General Education Revision

<https://www.sunysa.org/>

SUNY SA is grateful for the opportunity to discuss the Green Paper on SUNY General Education Revision. We are excited to participate in the following stage of this process as the working group adjusts to forming a task force. Student involvement and testimony on the modern challenges of higher education is crucial to implementing academic policy.

The Green Paper is an effective and comprehensive study of the current status of reforming SUNY general education policies. In our analysis, the SUNY SA wants to use this opportunity to discuss what we believe should be further evaluated or explained. These comments are produced from our experiences as students and professional student advocates:

The SUNY SA wishes the body to remember the high rate of academic turnover between departments. Specialization is a useful tool to assist in providing a direct pathway to a degree, however it also can become restrictive for those who decide to change majors or concentrations. The lay-time is important for students to discover their passion.

The SUNY SA also believes in the importance of a diverse and intersectional education. The Green Paper highlights the importance of reevaluating what it means to be a 21st century citizen. Liberal arts and general education serve as a gateway to exploring new thoughts or ideals as students begin their collegiate careers. A tremendous benefit to both institutions and students are classes that simultaneously achieve both a requirement for liberal arts and major-related study.

Credit classification is an important step in this process. The Green Paper understands the importance of respecting credit from any SUNY institution at another SUNY institution. Reinforcing this practice of full faith and credit is necessary. However, one source of credits that is not discussed in the Green Paper is secondary education Advanced Placement or earned college credit coursework. For students pursuing higher education it is important to remember those who will soon be SUNY students and respect the work completed prior to college.

Answering the question of whether or not these completed courses will be accepted for general education or major requirements should be further discussed by the task force. Additionally, evaluating what processes exist for departments to allow students to petition for exemption or approval for additional credit is an aspect that should also be researched.

Finally, the discussion of whether to reduce, eliminate, or sustain the current number of credits required for

general education requires more explanation. Evidence of why a number of required credits is selected is absent. Discerning the reasoning as to why the numbers 30 or 21 are selected will assist in deciding if that number is at all subject to alteration.

To: SUNY General Education Work Group

From: **UFS Undergraduate Programs and Policies Committee**

There was a robust discussion of the draft General Education Green Paper. The committee expresses its gratitude to those who served on the drafting group. During the discussion the committee reviewed the sense of the resolution passed by the Faculty Council of Community Colleges at its plenary meeting last weekend. That resolution amounted to a formal endorsement of many of the points in the Green Paper. This committee is not prepared to present a formal resolution at this time. In particular, the Undergraduate Committee identifies the following concerns:

(1) certain classes and competencies (e.g., writing, library skills) need to be mastered early in the student's academic career;

(2) the principle that campuses should be able to tailor the General Education program to their respective campus culture and mission as articulated in a statement drafted by the Comprehensive College Chief Academic Officers, needs to be preserved;

(3) the "Option B: Zero Credits of General Education" is a misnomer that needs to be re-phrased perhaps with "Remove the Credit Requirement";

(4) that any decision with respect to the three credit options presented requires consultation with all the constituent campuses (the composition of this committee is not sufficiently broad-based that it should weigh in on this matter). Parenthetically, the committee discussed most of the topics described in the aforementioned statement by the Comprehensive College Chief Academic Officers and was supportive of those principles, though the committee did not have access to the specific language of that document during the conference call.

Dear SUNY General Education Committee,

I am writing to you today to express my concern for the state of education in the SUNY system. In particular, I believe that the general education requirements are too many and that we are depriving our students of critical discipline-specific learning that will ultimately make them more competitive in the careers. This leads me to strongly support the proposed option of reducing the number of General Education courses by 9 credit hours.

My convictions on this issues come about from personal experience. Having come through a state school system myself, earning my BS degree from CSU Chico, I am a product of a school system very similar to the SUNY system. However, I believe that I was far better prepared for graduate school coming out of the CSU system than any of my students are coming out of the SUNY system. A quick comparison of the course requirements for physics degrees at SUNY Cortland and CSU Chico shows that the California system requires about 50% more classes than we do. This is a non-trivial difference, especially so in light of my experience of great struggle in graduate school where I was competing against students from Stanford, Caltech, Yale and other top-tier universities.

By enforcing so many general education requirements we are ultimately depriving our students of the training that they came here to receive. At the least, in making decisions regarding the SUNY GE policy we need to compare our degree programs against our California competition. I would be happy to help organize a set of such comparisons for your assessment if you believe that would be informative in considering programmatic changes.

Please let me know if I can be of further help in this process. Thank you for raising this important issue.

Kind Regards,

Dr. Eric Edlund

Assistant Professor of Physics
SUNY Cortland
607-753-5697