




MEMORANDUM

Office of the Dean and Vice Provost
Undergraduate Education
College of Letters and Science
2300 Murphy Hall
143801

Date: November 7, 2018

To: Robert L. Gould, Chair, Undergraduate Council

From: Patricia A. Turner, Dean and Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education 

Re: **Proposal for Comprehensive Eight-year Review of UCLA's General Education Curriculum**

In 2002, the College of Letters and Science inaugurated a comprehensive reform of its General Education (GE) curriculum, creating a framework based on three foundation areas of knowledge: Arts and Humanities, Society and Culture, and Scientific Inquiry. The General Education Governance Committee (GEGC) was established in 1998-99 to oversee the implementation of this new GE curriculum, including the re-certification of existing courses and the development of new ones. Faculty from departments and interdisciplinary programs across campus have developed courses that receive GE credit, introducing students to academic disciplines and providing them with foundational skills for university success. The GE curriculum provides our undergraduate students with rigorous classes that expose them to university thinking and make up approximately a quarter of their undergraduate coursework.

The UCLA Cluster Program, established in 1998, has provided a slate of interdisciplinary course sequences that were certified as part of the new GE framework. These year-long courses are designed to offer a multi-disciplinary look at a "big idea," while creating a learning community and fulfilling a number of College/School requirements, including GE, Writing II, and in some cases Diversity. Cluster courses now enroll approximately one-third of our incoming College freshmen and satisfy nearly half of their GE requirements. As such, the Cluster Program has become an integral part of the GE curriculum, and its interdisciplinary approach has been cited as a model for the instruction of general education.

Over the years, the GEGC has worked with academic units across campus to extend the GE framework and develop a common course list for all undergraduate degree programs (*i.e.*, Arts and Architecture; Engineering and Applied Science; Music; Nursing; Public Affairs; and Theater, Film, and Television), while allowing variations in the required number of courses to satisfy each foundation area. All units responsible for undergraduate education have worked to contribute new courses.

To maintain and strengthen the quality of UCLA's GE program, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Undergraduate Council (UgC) worked closely with the GEGC in 2002 to establish a process for the systematic review of course offerings. The plan was to have each of the foundation areas and the Cluster Program reviewed separately in two-year intervals over an eight-year cycle. As with departments, these GE curricular reviews include a self-review, a site visit by campus and extramural scholars, and a response to the Senate recommendations.

This plan has yielded two full reviews of each of the three foundation areas and the Cluster Program since 2003. Each of these reviews has been the result of the year-long deliberations of an *ad hoc* faculty committee convened to look at a particular area and has involved extensive compilation of data and analyses of assessment findings. An examination of the recommendations from these reviews suggests a great deal of overlap across the GE areas:

- The need to ensure that faculty are aware when they are teaching a GE course and help them understand how their course fits into the larger GE curriculum
- The need to help students understand the purposes and importance of the GE portion of their curriculum and to know when they are enrolled in a GE
- The need to manage the drift in quality and appropriateness for GE certification that can occur over multiple instructors
- The lack of archival systems for collecting and storing the syllabi of GE courses that would allow for ongoing monitoring of quality and longitudinal assessments

The two Cluster self-reviews (June 2003 and August 2011) have provided detailed documentation of this pedagogical model and the “best practices” it supports, including three in-depth case studies that capture the complex inner workings of individual Clusters. The reports also provide extensive assessment findings showing the Cluster impact on faculty, undergraduates, and graduate student instructors. The external reviewers of both these reviews were laudatory, calling UCLA’s Cluster Program “a true gem in the crown of undergraduate education at UCLA.”

What we do not see from these separate reviews is any broader understanding of how the GE curriculum fits together and its impact on the education of our undergraduates. The data collection seems largely repetitive and in some cases not useful to the faculty committees for making recommendations. Additionally, in compliance with WSCUC reaffirmation of accreditation commitments, there is an expectation that well-organized and assessable learning outcomes have been developed for each institution’s GE curriculum. While we cannot predict the recommendations of the site visit team or the WSCUC Commission, we anticipate that this missing element of our GE curriculum may be a Line of Inquiry that we receive in Winter 2019.

In order to understand and examine where GE at UCLA needs to go in the future, I believe the time is right to combine the four reviews into a single comprehensive review of GE as a whole on an eight-year cycle. This would have the following advantages:

- Illuminate the big picture of how we ensure quality in this critical portion of the undergraduate curriculum, and through comparisons, identify any weaknesses in the individual components
- Develop a better understanding of how Clusters fit vis-a-vis the stand-alone GE courses as we look at enrollment patterns, learning outcomes, interdisciplinary connections, best practices, and overall satisfaction, along with other measures of success
- Create a framework that would ensure the self-review is collecting the useful data and asking the right questions

I propose to use the next two academic years (2018-19 & 2019-20) to complete the following projects that will lay the groundwork for a comprehensive GE curricular review:

- Complete the creation of student learning outcomes in Foundation Areas of Arts & Humanities and Society & Culture to go along with recently created outcomes for Scientific Inquiry

- Complete the external review and Senate recommendations for Arts & Humanities (2018-19) and GEGC's response to the recommendations and closure of the review (2019-20)
- Launch the assessment of the Scientific Inquiry Foundation Area, as initiated by the UgC, including the development of a comprehensive assessment plan (2018-19) and implementation of the assessment and preliminary findings (2019-20)
- Receive the WSCUC visit team report (December 2019) and Commission action letter (February 2020)

We would present a framework to the UgC for the self-review before the end of the 2019-20 academic year for feedback and suggestions on areas that should be addressed. Based on this input, we will establish the data categories and broad questions to form the basis of a comprehensive self-review. I will then work with UgC to appoint an *ad hoc* faculty committee from across the College and undergraduate programs in the professional schools to deliberate and produce the self-review during the 2020-21 academic year. The Senate would then conduct a site visit and review during the 2021-22 academic year.

I believe this approach will help sustain the highest quality GE curriculum and achieve the stated goals of the Academic Senate Program Review process. It will allow us to recognize the strengths and achievements of our GE curriculum, establish new goals for the program, and identify areas in need of attention. Professor Tornell, Chair of the Faculty Executive Committee, and Professor Hackett, Chair of the GE Governance Committee, both support this proposed consolidation of the GE review process.

I look forward to discussing this proposal with you.

Cc Professor Michael Hackett (Theater, Film and Television), Chair of GE Governance Committee
Professor Aaron Tornell (Economics), Chair of the College Faculty Executive Committee