

To: Arts and Sciences Faculty Senators  
From: The Undergraduate Curriculum Review Committee  
Marilyn Blackwell, chair  
Date: April 2, 2003

Dear Senators:

As you know, you have been selected to represent your departments in the Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate which will reconvene starting April 22 to consider and make decisions on the General Education Curriculum in the Arts and Sciences, in accordance with University Rule 3335-5-27 B: “The faculty of the arts and sciences shall have jurisdiction over the general education requirements in the Arts and Sciences.”

The ASC Faculty Senate has been reconvened for this task because twenty-seven months ago, at the request of former President Brit Kirwan, a committee was established with a dual charge:

- to study those factors which may impact retention of students to the baccalaureate degree and which may influence the time required to reach that degree, and
- to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the present General Education Curriculum and prepare suggested modifications that are appropriate to a core curriculum at Ohio State.

This group, the Undergraduate Curriculum Review Committee (UCRC) included twelve faculty members from eight colleges—three of whom were outside Arts and Sciences—and an undergraduate and a graduate student. Three of the faculty members also represented other constituencies (the honors program, the regional campuses, the Council on Academic Affairs) and three held administrative positions related directly to curricular matters (two as Associate Deans and one as Vice Provost).

The Committee convened in January 2000. Much of the first six months was spent mastering the details of the history, principles, and implementations of the current GECs and in reading the work of national experts on general education. Another six months was devoted to consultation across all constituencies of the university community, approximately three months in researching the data on the GEC at OSU (Appendix B), general education curricula at comparable institutions (Appendix C), and hours to graduation at OSU (Appendix E). The Committee was of the view that it was important to obtain and distribute these data, since there was considerable confusion about these matters across the university due to the fact that none of this important

material had ever been accumulated and circulated to the university's faculty and students. UCRC distributed its Draft Final Report last summer and spent Autumn Quarter 2002 soliciting feedback from the University community (see Appendix F). This past Winter Quarter 2003 the Committee revised its report accordingly and is herewith sending it to you for your consideration and decisions. It is important to note that you, not UCRC or any other body, make the final determination as to what the ASC GEC will be.

Executive Dean Michael Hogan and Assistant Executive Associate Dean Ed Adelson have kindly agreed to allow me a few minutes at the April 22 meeting to outline the report for you, but, because the matters upon which you will decide are somewhat involved, I should like to take this chance to enumerate some of the general features of precisely what you will be voting on.

The Faculty Senate of the Arts and Sciences, to repeat, has authority over the curriculum of the GEC and thus you will certainly be voting on all the Curricular Recommendations in the report, a summary of which I have appended to this letter. Because the University Senate has final authority over credit hours to graduation, any vote the ASC Faculty Senate may take on this matter would be influential but would still be advisory to that body. The Final Report also includes Ancillary Recommendations that pertain to improving advising, course delivery, and other matters that are not directly under the purview of the ASC Faculty Senate. Executive Dean of the Arts and Sciences Michael Hogan and his Assistant Executive Associate Dean Ed Adelson have informed UCRC that the ASC Faculty Senate will not be voting on these recommendations, although you yourselves, of course, will decide what issues you wish to address.

UCRC was extremely gratified at the extensive feedback it received from the University community on its Draft Report and you will see that the Final Report is very responsive to that feedback. I would like briefly to summarize some of the major trends in that feedback, even as you are encouraged to consult Appendix F and, if you are interested, to obtain a copy of the raw data from the University Senate office or through Kendra Davitt at [davitt.1@osu.edu](mailto:davitt.1@osu.edu).

The cumulative feedback revealed the following:

- **The colleges, departments, Senate committees, and faculty overwhelmingly support the current GEC, specifically in terms of its length, breadth, and structure.** There was almost no feedback that suggested shortening the curriculum to below 98 credit hours. Because of circumstances delineated in the Introduction to the report, the Committee recommended reducing the overall credit hours in the GEC from 105 to 98 (for BA and most BS degrees) by 1) allowing 3- and 4-credit courses to count towards it and 2) creating an option whereby students could choose between the capstone and the third writing course. Both these suggestions were resoundingly opposed. Thus they are deleted from this Final Report. Furthermore, a number of respondents specifically noted that they found UCRC's extensive research into both how the GEC is configured in different programs at OSU and how it compares to general education curricula at comparable institutions quite informative. The latter clearly demonstrates that OSU's GEC is very much in line with those of our peer institutions. (There had previously been wide-spread misunderstanding on this point.)

- **Undergraduate Student Government, on the other hand, has consistently maintained the need for a shorter GEC.** UCRC specifically asked USG on several occasions for an academic rationale for its position, in what category it would like to see those cuts occur, and why it deemed that area to warrant such cuts, but we could not identify such a rationale.
- **Several of the Committee’s recommendations to impart both more coherence and more flexibility to the curriculum were endorsed in principle, but concerns were expressed about their implementation, to wit: the development of “clusters” and the inculcation of a series of “embedded competencies.”** Throughout UCRC’s deliberations, it was the committee’s understanding that we would make academic recommendations, the implementation of which would lie elsewhere—in the hands of, as appropriate, the Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate, the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee, the faculty of the individual colleges outside the Arts and Sciences, and the Council on Academic Affairs. Some of the Ancillary Recommendations would, of course, have to go to the various groups and offices for implementation. In order, however, to address the request for implementation strategies, this final report includes details as to how these two initiatives might be realized in practice.
- **Although many students, central administration, and some faculty and advisors called for more flexibility in the GEC, the feedback clearly indicates that the university community as a whole is unwilling to impart that flexibility to the curriculum if doing so entails altering its length and breadth.**
- **The university community again overwhelmingly supports maintaining the current the Diversity requirement which mandates that one of the cross-counting courses be in a non-western area.** The Committee had again understood from influential offices that the curriculum should be more flexible. But the university community disagreed in this instance.
- **The feedback also clearly demonstrates strong support (with the exception of Undergraduate Student Government and a few faculty) for retaining the current credit hour to graduation requirement.** The community apparently found the report’s extensive data addressing this issue in Appendix E convincing.
- **The Ancillary Recommendations also received nearly unanimous support except for (in this revision) number 13—the recommendation for the establishment of a permanent university-wide GEC oversight committee.** Here the voices from the Arts and Sciences held that this authority should lie within Arts and Sciences. Those from outside the Arts and Sciences tended not to share that view.

It will be noted that the Undergraduate Curriculum Review Committee carefully considered and weighed all the feedback it received and that that feedback informs the entire Final Report which has been radically revised from the Draft Report. In all but one instance, recommendations that received substantial negative feedback have been either deleted from or greatly modified in the Final Report. In only one instance did the Committee retain a recommendation despite a

majority of negative feedback, and this the Report provides a detailed rationale behind and the principles grounding this decision.

The Undergraduate Curriculum Review Committee has worked for twenty-seven months to fulfill its charge. In March 2003, the Committee voted unanimously to approve this Final Report thus concluding its work and now refers the Report to the Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate for final disposition. We have full confidence that the experience, insight, and sound judgment of the faculty will here, as always, produce decisions that are in the best interests of the university's students and its long-term educational missions.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Blackwell for The Undergraduate Curriculum Review Committee

cc: President Karen Holbrook  
Executive Vice President and Provost Ed Ray  
Senior Vice President for Business and Finance  
Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies Martha Garland  
University Registrar Brad Myers  
Michael Hogan, Executive Dean of the Arts and Sciences  
Glen Hoffsis, Executive Dean of the Health Sciences  
Joseph Alutto, Executive Dean of the Professional Colleges  
All Deans and Directors  
Susan Fisher, Secretary of the University Senate  
Sally Rudmann, Secretary of the Faculty  
Edward Adelson, Associate to the Executive Dean of the Arts and Sciences  
All members of the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee  
Stan Ahalt, Chair of the University Senate Steering Committee  
Gene Mummy, Chair of Faculty Council  
Russell Pitzer, Chair of the Council on Academic Affairs  
Eddie Pauline, President of Undergraduate Student Government  
J. Briggs Cormier, President of the Council of Graduate Students  
Todd Armen, President of the Inter-Professional Council

# Summary of Curricular Recommendations from The Undergraduate Curriculum Review Committee

## I. Curricular Recommendations

### A. Coursework Requirements (pages 27-33)

The Faculty Senate of the Arts and Sciences may choose to vote on each of these coursework requirements separately or to vote on them as a “bundle” as it deems appropriate.

*(In each instance where the text below requires a given number of credit hours, we expect that the current system of course lists constraining the coursework from which those hours may be drawn will continue to exist. The Committee stands by the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee Panel Guidelines and, unless otherwise stated, expects that the principles governing inclusion on the GEC course lists will remain unchanged).*

*(Changes from the current practice are delineated with underlining.)*

**1 A. Writing:** (fifteen credit hours). This requirement has three components.

- **First Course:** English 110 or equivalent. (Students who receive EM credit for this course would be exempted).
- **Second Course:** Five hours
- **Third Course:** Five hours. The course(s) taken to meet this requirement may be taken either as part of the major or outside the major (Here both BA and BS students are required to take the third writing course.)

**1 B.** The Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee Panel on Writing considers the following options for second writing oversight:

- establishing a 367 coordinator
- conducting a rigorous course review of all 367 courses (perhaps on a staggered basis) involving classroom visits, interviews with instructors, examination of student evaluations, and other forms of detailed scrutiny
- investigating and developing a mechanism for “decertifying” courses that no longer meet the goals of the requirement

**2. Quantitative and Logical Skills:** This requirement has three components; the courses chosen to satisfy requirements (b) and (c) must total at least nine hours.

- **Basic Computational Skills:** Mathematics Placement Level R or higher, or completion of Mathematics 075 (credit hours earned for Mathematics 075 do not count toward the minimum required for the degree)
- **Mathematical and Logical Analysis:** For the BA, Mathematics Placement Level L or one approved course; for the BS, Mathematics 151 and 152
- **Data Analysis:** For the BA, one approved course; for the BS, this requirement is met in the major. Each BS major program is required to document the course(s) in its

curriculum that have been designed to meet this requirement and the curricular panel for Data Analysis reviews such documentation on a regular basis.

**3. Foreign Language:** proficiency at the level of completion of 104.

**4. Natural Science:** twenty hours of coursework [twenty-five for BS programs] chosen so as to include study in both the biological and physical sciences and to include a cluster. At least one course taken to satisfy this requirement must be a laboratory course.

**5. Humanities and Visual and Performing Arts:** fifteen hours of coursework, including at least one course in “Literature”, one course in “Visual and Performing Arts”, and one course from either of the two previous categories or the “Cultures and Ideas” category.

**6. Social Sciences: Individuals, Society, and Institutions:** fifteen hours of coursework (from at least two departments) including one two-course cluster/sequence.

**7. Historical Survey:** ten hours of coursework, including one two-course cluster/sequence.

**8. Diversity:** fifteen hours of coursework. The courses taken to satisfy this requirement may double-count with other GEC requirements; they must meet the following distribution:

- a) **Social Diversity in the United States:** One course
- b) **International Issues:** Two courses, one of which must focus on non-western or global issues.

**9 A. Capstone Experience:** five hours of coursework for BA students (*The capstone will, as is currently the case, not be required of BS students*)

**9 B.** Any capstone course that counts toward a department’s major will also be open to non-majors.

*(As all the following recommendations constitute new initiatives, underlining is no longer necessary.)*

**B. GEC/Major Overlap:** (pp. 34-35) ASC major programs may petition the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee to have their students exempted from one or more GEC requirements on the grounds that equivalent coursework (that is, coursework meeting the same goals at an equal or higher level of rigor) is done as part of the major. Each curricular panel has the responsibility of reviewing equivalence requests in its area, and these decisions will be regularly reviewed by those panels on the same schedule as the other courses in that area.

**C. Clusters:** (pp. 25-26) The Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee will study and establish a procedure for implementing “clusters” as an expansion of “sequencing” in the GEC.

**D. Embedded Competencies:** (pp. 27-28) “Embedded competencies” (pp. 27-28) support the GEC and are incorporated into it as follows:

- Each proposal for a new GEC course is expected to show how that course supports and contributes to the acquisition of some or all of these competencies.

- When a new major curriculum is proposed or an existing one significantly modified, the proposal will document how the curriculum supports and contributes to the acquisition of these competencies.
- Part of the periodic review of all GEC courses by the relevant faculty panels will include a determination as to whether GEC courses are contributing to the inculcation of these competencies and what strategies the offering unit is developing to ensure that they do.
- The success of the implementation of these embedded competencies is determined as a part of a university-wide system of outcomes assessment conducted by the GEC Oversight Committee.

#### **D. Further Curricular Recommendations**

**1. The Drop-a-GEC-Course Option:** (p. 33) Those students currently in five BS programs (Astronomy, Chemistry, Computer and Information Science, Geological Sciences, Physics) are exempted from five hours of the current GEC if certain current requirements are met. *(UCRC does not recommend any changes to the Drop-a-GEC-Course Option at this time.)*

**2. Ethics and Professional Responsibility:** (p. 33) The Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee will study and make recommendations on the inclusion of an Ethics and Professional Responsibility requirement in the GEC.

**3. Technology:** (pp. 33-34) The Council on Academic Affairs will conduct a study and make recommendations on the inclusion of technology (and not merely computer literacy) in the GEC. *(Because this recommendation has been referred to CAA, the Faculty Senate of the Arts and Sciences has advisory rather than legislative powers on this matter.)*

**4. Freshman Seminars:** (p. 34) If funding is available and such courses do not constitute a teaching overload for faculty, the University will offer first-year students small faculty-taught seminars. *(Again the Faculty Senate of the Arts and Sciences has advisory rather than legislative authority here, as such courses are not a part of the GEC.)*

#### **E. The Cost of the Recommended Curriculum** (pages 36-37)

The Office of Academic Affairs will provide central funding and/or sufficient fiscal incentives to individual units so that enough third writing courses are offered to accommodate all ASC students and enough capstone courses that ASC BA students will have real choices in fulfilling this requirement *(at the moment there are enough capstone seats to accommodate BA students, but they often cannot get into the courses of their choice)*. This call is justified by the following observations:

- (concerning the third writing course) that there is virtual unanimity among the many faculty and students with whom UCRC consulted that our undergraduates need fully three courses of writing instruction;
- that students (Undergraduate Student Government as a whole as well as the students whom we interviewed) agree with this view. Indeed one of USG's major policy initiatives this year centers on increased faculty-student interaction and the role of class size in that interaction;
- (concerning the capstone course) that the advisors and students with whom UCRC consulted consistently held that smaller classes are of much higher quality than larger ones;
- (concerning the capstone course) that the capstone is essential to general education since it represents the culmination of a student's GEC work, embodying the interconnection of various disciplines in the study of important contemporary issues. Furthermore this is the only GEC course (and potentially the only course at all) in students' programs that mandates interdisciplinarity. It is also the only GEC course in which students are assured of a faculty-led learning experience in an environment that promotes discussion and close faculty/student interaction; and
- that the GEC is an absolutely central academic commitment from the institution as whole to its undergraduate students and not a unit-specific one.

As to how such funds might be made available, we note the following as but three of various potential implementation strategies:

- (as former President Edward Jennings has endorsed) targeting this initiative for Selective Investment funding. One can think of few more worthy recipients of Selective Investment than an initiative that ensures that OSU graduates better educated men and women.
- directing funds into these courses from English 110 from which students with EM credit will be exempt (*if UCRC's recommendation on such exemption is approved by the Faculty Senate of the College of the Arts and Science*). This would constitute only a partial solution since funding for more (typically faculty-led) capstones could not be covered by eliminating GTA-led courses.
- (as Senior Vice President Bill Shkurti has suggested) folding this initiative in with the special central funding for Honors programs.

We therefore request that the Office of Academic Affairs commit itself to full ASC-wide implementation of the third writing course and to assuring that enough faculty-taught capstones are offered to accommodate all BA students with an appropriate range of choices. Only through a commitment on the part of central administration to these essential parts of GEC can OSU fulfill its responsibility its undergraduate educational mission.

**II. Ancillary Recommendations:** *(Again the University Rules do not accord ASC FS authority over these recommendations but that body may choose to support one or more them.)*

**1) Address inaccurate perceptions about general education in general and the GEC in particular.** (page 39)

Implementation recommendation: The Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee, in consultation with the Council of Student Affairs, Undergraduate Student Government, and Undergraduate Student Advisory Services, develops guidelines as to how to address this problem and distributes these guidelines to all advisors within USAS, all advisors in colleges and departments with undergraduate programs, all deans and directors, all chairs, all departmental advisors, and all faculty.

**2) Publicize the GEC petition process.** (page 39)

Implementation recommendation: The ASC Curriculum Committee disseminates its guidelines on GEC petitions and equivalencies to all advisors (USAS, college, and departmental), CSA, USG, and all faculty. These guidelines also go to the Office of the University Registrar for prominent posting on the GEC web page recommended in Ancillary Recommendation 8.

**2A: Students should be encouraged to substitute upper-level GEC courses for lower-level ones, where appropriate.** (page 39)

Implementation recommendation: The Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee drafts a policy on this matter and distributes it to all advisors within USAS, advisors in colleges and departments with undergraduate programs, all deans and directors, all chairs, all departmental advisors, and all faculty.

**3) Include more GEC courses as a part of faculty teaching responsibilities and continue to improve Graduate Teaching Associate teaching.** (pages 40)

Implementation recommendation: The Council of Deans, after consulting with CAA, the Council of Graduate Students, USG, and Faculty Council, develops guidelines for approval by University Senate.

**4) Offer more sections of oversubscribed GEC courses.** (page 40)

Implementation recommendation: The Office of Academic Affairs continues to monitor and address this situation as appropriate.

**5) Increase the variety of time of course offerings across the academic day.** (page 40)

Implementation recommendation: The Office of Academic Affairs, in consultation with the University's department chairs, the Deans, and Faculty Council, develops guidelines and distributes them for the approval of the University Senate.

**6) Improve the GEC course approval process.** (page 41)

Implementation recommendation: The ASC Curriculum Committee, after surveying all USAS advisors, all advisors in colleges with undergraduate programs, and all departmental advisors, develops and implements an improved course approval process.

**7) Encourage the addition of upper-level courses to the GEC lists.** (pages 41)

Implementation recommendation: The ASC Curriculum Committee distributes a memo to all university departments with undergraduate course offerings encouraging them to submit new upper-level GEC course proposals.

**8) Develop a web-based tool to help students navigate the GEC.** (page 41)

Implementation recommendation: The Office of the University Registrar, in consultation with USG, CSA, and the ASC Curriculum Committee, establishes a GEC web site linked to its registration site.

**9) Identify and publicize advising “best practices.”** (page 41)

Implementation recommendation: Undergraduate Student Academic Services, in consultation with USG, CSA, and the ASC Curriculum Committee and after surveying all advisors, develops a list of best practices which it then circulates for implementation to all advisors, all colleges, all departments, and all advising entities.

**10) Develop more effective ways of communicating GEC requirements to students.**  
(page 41-42)

**10A: Improve the way in which print information about the GEC is presented.**

Implementation recommendation: The Assistant to the Dean of Arts and Sciences, Mona Dove-McGlaughlin, commissions the Department of Industrial, Interior, and Visual Communications Design to re-design all GEC material routinely distributed to the university (faculty, students, and staff), including the “pink,” “green,” and “yellow” sheets, that explain the GEC.

**10B: Include at new student orientation explicit information to the effect that while 12 credit hours per term constitutes full-time status for financial purposes, students need to take an average of 16 hours per term in order to graduate in four years.**

Implementation recommendation: Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies takes responsibility here.

**10C: At orientation and in each advising session (independent of which level of advising is taking place) students should receive or be offered as appropriate a sheet entitled “What You Need To Do To Graduate”** (per a suggestion from USG). Such a document should include (or refer students to) major requirements, GEC requirements, and the number of credit hours per term required to graduate in a timely fashion.

Implementation recommendation: USAS develops and disseminates this document to all advisors and advising entities.

**10D: Both faculty advisors and college/USAS advisors share with students the data in Appendix E on the connection between employment commitments and untimely graduation.**

Implementation recommendation: USAS disseminates this policy and a summary of the pertinent data (see “Executive Summary” and “Time to Degree”) to all advisors and advising entities.

**10E: Both faculty advisors and college/USAS advisors remind students frequently of the necessity for them to seek the counsel of their advisors on a regular basis.**

Implementation recommendation: USAS disseminates this policy to all advisors and advising entities.

**10F: Advisors repeatedly point out to students that certain majors have enrollment management plans and distribute these plans as required so that students have all the requisite information to help them select and arrange their courses across their academic careers.**

Implementation recommendation: USAS disseminates this policy to all advisors and advising entities.

**10G: Faculty advisors be encouraged to direct students to USAS or college advisors for advice about the GEC.**

Implementation recommendation: USAS disseminates this policy to all advisors and advising entities as well as all to departments.

**10H: Students be reminded (repeatedly) that different majors have different GECs and that they should choose their GEC courses accordingly.**

Implementation recommendation: USAS disseminates this policy to all advisors and advising entities.

**11) Urge the University to continue to explore a four-year graduation plan.** (page 42)

Implementation recommendation: The Office of Academic Affairs, in consultation with Faculty Council, CAA, CSA, and USG, explores this issue and distributes to the university community a policy on the matter.

**12) Continue to allow Honors students flexibility in meeting GEC requirements.**

(page 42-43)

Implementation recommendation: None required.

**13) Establish a permanent oversight committee for the GEC within The Council on Academic Affairs.** (page 43-45)

Implementation recommendation: None required; CAA is in the process of determining whether or not it approves the inclusion of this committee within its structure.

**III. Credit Hours to Graduation:** (pages 46-52) *(The Rules do not accord the ASC Faculty Senate binding authority over this recommendation but it may choose to support them).*

**Retain Current Credit Hours to Graduation until such time as the misalignment between credit hours and course content has been resolved:**

Implementation: The Provost empanels a committee and charges it to:

- study how other universities have dealt with this problem (the University of Washington is a case in point),

- develop a series of recommendations as to how OSU might most productively address this problem and assure that credit hours per course reflect appropriate content and workload, and
- undertake any other activities that he or she feels would be appropriate to this issue.

### **Implementation Oversight:**

Since the University Senate and the University Senate Steering Committee are the highest-ranking governance bodies that jointly include representation from all the different constituencies delineated in the implementation recommendations, UCRC respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate and the chair of the Steering Committee follow up, as appropriate, on the recommendations in Parts II and III.