

**-THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON  
GENERAL EDUCATION STEERING COMMITTEE  
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**TO:** The Faculty Council

**FROM:** General Education Steering Committee (GESC)  
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**SUBJECT:** Proposed General Education Plan for the University of Massachusetts Boston

### Introduction

The following proposal is based on the objectives for general education adopted by the Faculty Council in 1994 (see Appendix A) and builds on the work done since then. It affirms “the aims of a general education program” presented by the GESC in its April 1996 report and is grounded in the recommendations of that report (see Appendix B). It is informed by the working groups of summer, 1996 on the first year experience, science, developmental models, and world languages and cultures. It incorporates the work of the Fall 1996, GESC report on “Follow-up Recommendations.” This proposal also responds to the thoughtful reactions to proposed models provided by the faculty at the campus-wide meeting on general education held in May 1997. In developing the proposal we have tried to be mindful of the importance of majors as part of general education, and have attempted to design a program that would not weaken majors. We hope that it will strengthen them in various ways. Section I states the basic goals and principles of our plan. Section II is a summary of the plan. Section III discusses various elements of the plan and their feasibility. Section IV proposes a process of implementation of this plan, addressing issues of decision-making, timing and need for funding.

This proposal sets forth the overall structure of the general education program. Upon approval, faculty working groups would develop the individual components of the plan under the general supervision of the GESC within an administrative and governance arrangement described below. Courses, competencies, and learning activities would be developed, offered on a pilot basis and assessed within a system that assures that students who participate in these pilots would be able to use them to meet existing collegiate requirements. We suggest a timetable for piloting, assessment, and final approval of each element of the plan, but if experience shows that more time is needed to develop particular elements adequately, the GESC would return to the Faculty Council and request an extension of the implementation of that component. No component in this plan would be instituted until it has been adequately developed, deemed feasible and desirable and returned to Faculty Council for approval. Some of the components should be ready by Fall 1999, but others may require longer periods of development.

This proposal for the revision of general education at the University of Massachusetts Boston emerges from several needs. We believe we need to:

- Close the gaps that allow some students to graduate with no exposure to principal approaches to knowledge, e.g. science or mathematics/quantitative reasoning.
- Support new first-year and transfer students in the transition to the University.
- Assure that work in essential skills is done at the beginning and throughout a student's career.
- Focus on learning outcomes.

## I. Goals and Principles of General Education

The purpose of the General Education Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston is to facilitate the acquisition of the knowledge, capabilities, and attitudes which will help students form a foundation for lifelong learning. As a result of our program, our students should graduate with the capacity and propensity to:

1. Engage in critical reading and analysis
2. Speak, listen and write effectively
3. Reason logically and quantitatively
4. Use technology to further learning
5. Work independently and collaboratively
6. Explore the principal approaches to knowledge
7. Understand and respect human diversity
8. Learn in depth

These eight capabilities would be systematically addressed throughout the general education program.

In order to assist our students in the achievement of these goals and to work within the realities of our institution, we believe that any revision of general education at UMass Boston should:

- Build on present curricular strengths and experiences
- Extend throughout a student's college career
- Consider the needs of transfer students
- Integrate work in general education with the major
- Allow appropriate collegiate variation
- Be periodically assessed and revised

## II. Summary of the Plan

Our general education program is built around a sequence of three phases which provide a framework for intellectual growth:

### A. Initial Phase (4 courses or equivalent competencies)

This phase introduces students to university study and provides them with the tools to succeed in more advanced courses/competencies and in their majors.

All students who enter the University with no college credit or as transfer students with fewer than 30 credits (or equivalent competencies) would in their first year at UMass Boston:

1. Complete two courses in writing and composition (or demonstrate equivalent competence)
2. Complete one course in mathematics/quantitative reasoning (or demonstrate equivalent competence)
3. Complete one First Year Seminar or equivalent CPCS instructional activities/competencies.

Students who on the basis of University assessment testing require additional work in composition or mathematics/quantitative reasoning may need more than 2 semesters to complete these requirements.

### B. Middle Phase (Minimum 8 courses or equivalent competencies)

In this phase students develop more sophisticated intellectual capabilities and explore academic areas.

All students who enter the University with no college credit or as transfer students with fewer than 90 credits would:

1. Complete one Sophomore/Junior Seminar (or equivalent competency).
2. Demonstrate competence in the following areas of knowledge:
  - A. Arts and Humanities
  - B. Natural Sciences/Mathematics
  - C. Social and Behavioral Sciences
  - D. World Languages and Cultures

We recommend the completion of at least eight courses (or equivalent competencies) with at least one, and no more than three, in each of the four areas. At least one of the natural science/mathematics courses/competencies would have to be in natural science. Each college would be able to add additional requirements. The courses or competencies used to fulfill this requirement would be determined by standing committees consisting of faculty from disciplines in each of the areas, in consultation with the GESC.

3. Complete the existing University diversity requirement.
4. Demonstrate intermediate proficiency in writing through the passing of the Writing Proficiency Requirement, or other collegiate mechanisms.

A particular course might be double- or triple-counted to meet more than one requirement in the middle phase.

### C. Advanced Phase (1 course or equivalent competency)

A capstone experience, when possible, either within or outside the major, or alternative demonstration of general education capabilities.

## **III. Discussion of Elements of the Plan**

### A. The initial phase

#### The Situation

The student new to college faces both academic and social challenges. Although we have many courses and support services to help our students succeed at the University, our present curriculum essentially leaves it up to the students and their advisors to chart a course in the first year that will maximize student learning and academic success. Except for the Assessment program in CPCS and the transition course for RN's in Nursing, students are not required to take any particular course in their first year at the University and we do little to assist them in the adjustment to college level study. Under the banner of flexibility and accommodation of non-traditional students, some UMB colleges allow students to put off taking essential writing courses, complete "core" courses anytime before graduation, ignore any mathematics requirements for as long as possible (or entirely), and enroll themselves in large lecture courses in their critical first year here. The purpose of the initial phase is to provide more rigorous instruction in essential skills, but also to provide a structure for adjustment to the University.

#### Proposed Solution

1. Complete two courses in writing and composition (or demonstrate equivalent competence)

This component of the plan goes beyond present requirements by having the students complete their composition work within the first year. It also leaves the option open for students to seek a waiver of one or both semesters of composition if competence can be demonstrated. We acknowledge that some students need more work in composition than others. Students who are placed into a more basic

composition course would complete appropriate coursework before they move into the main composition sequence. We do not intend to rush students through this work, but we do want to send the clear message that they should be continuously enrolled in composition courses until they complete the sequence. These students would enroll in the First Year Seminar, a mathematics/quantitative reasoning course and other introductory courses while progressing through their composition work.

#### Feasibility

Since every student at the University currently must take two semesters of composition or demonstrate equivalent writing competence, this element of the general education plan makes no additional demands on faculty resources, but it may require changes in scheduling. If the faculty-based writing/composition working group recommends a more extensive assessment procedure or alternate ways of demonstrating this capability, there may be modest administrative/professional staff costs that would have to be considered before implementing any such assessment.

2. Complete one course in mathematics/quantitative reasoning (or demonstrate equivalent competence)

Under current requirements, students in CAS may graduate without ever having taken a math course or demonstrating mathematics/quantitative reasoning competence. Students in all other colleges are required to take or show competence in mathematics. For example, analysis of a sample of the transcripts of the 1996 graduating class shows that CAS students with no mathematics distribution courses comprise 18% of the CAS undergraduate degree recipients and 11% of the graduating class as a whole. It is necessary that all students in CAS develop this capability in mathematics/quantitative reasoning early in their careers, since it is essential for success in middle level courses in the sciences and social sciences. Quantitative skills are assumed and elaborated upon in many of the subsequent courses students will be taking. In addition, given the importance of numeracy skills in our society, we are doing a disservice to our students in allowing some of them to avoid mathematics/quantitative skills.

#### Feasibility

In Fall, 1996, 838 students entered CAS as "first year students." If we make the assumption that at present 18% of them will graduate with no mathematics distribution work, the current proposal would require 150 additional students each fall to receive instruction in mathematics/quantitative reasoning. This is roughly 6 new sections of introductory work, plus new sections of academic skills math courses for students in need of additional assistance. A faculty working group on mathematics/quantitative reasoning has been created to make recommendations on the appropriate level of competence a student should have in this area, and to suggest alternate ways that a student could demonstrate this competence, including testing out of the requirement. The fact that students in CAS have had to take a course to meet the distribution area, i.e. could not "test out," suggests that the number of new course sections needed might be lower than the above numbers. Also, the faculty working group is identifying courses in other departments by which students could meet this requirement.

3. Complete one First Year Seminar or equivalent CPCS instructional activities/competencies.

We want to provide a setting where students would receive personal focused attention and assistance in making the academic and personal transition to the University. The First Year Seminars would help the student gain greater competence in the following:

- Careful reading of texts
- Critical thinking
- Clear writing
- Clear speaking
- The ability to work as part of a team
- Use of basic information technology
- Self-assessment
- Analysis of contemporary issues and problems

We propose to build on the work of the CAS Collegiate Seminars, "C" 100 courses and the CPCS Assessment program and to integrate these current programs into the First Year Seminar program. These current programs would be asked to review their courses/competencies for consistency with the approved general education capabilities. New seminars would be developed to take advantage of faculty and student interests. We propose that the overarching theme of the First Year Seminars be "Contemporary Issues and Problems." This theme would build on faculty and student interests and would enable many faculty to teach courses related to urban issues, including courses specifically about Boston. Explicit attention to the learning outcomes of the first year program would be the criteria for designation of courses/activities as First Year Seminars.

Each First Year Seminar would be taught by a faculty member working with an undergraduate "peer mentor" and linked to a professional staff academic advisor. The peer mentors and professional staff advisors would help the students in the class make the transition to UMass Boston by assisting them in making use of academic, advising and other supports on campus. New students often need a push to take advantage of the wide range of workshops and sessions presently run by professional staff in the areas of library use, computer services, study skills, time management, note-taking, and career and major exploration. The faculty and peer mentors would help students assess their academic strengths and weaknesses and have students attend workshops as needed. The demands of this course suggest that it may be a four-credit course. The peer mentors would be recruited for their academic competence, knowledge of the University, and interest in helping new students. The mentors would be in a seminar for which they could receive credit or could receive paid stipends.

First Year Seminars should be integrating the students into the University by creating learning communities among students. Following on the recommendations of the Summer 1996 Working Group on the First Year Experience, faculty teaching First Year Seminars would be encouraged to develop links with composition and/or other courses customarily taken by students in their first year. One linking model could be for a seminar and a composition course to be taught in consecutive time slots in the same classroom, with students enrolling in both classes. Another model could be for faculty to develop and team teach an integrated course for which students would receive double credits or equivalent competencies.

#### Feasibility

The resources for the First Year Seminar would come from shifting and revising current general education courses being taught. In Fall, 1996 there were 1075 entering new students who fell into the category of "first year", i.e. directly from high school or transfer students with fewer than 30 credits. (This excludes the CPCS new students whose First Year Seminars would be a modification of the present Assessment program.) If we wanted an enrollment cap of 25 students in each Seminar, we would need 43 Seminar sections. A capacity of 20 students would require 54 sections. Assuming we would need 54 sections, we looked at present offerings that could be integrated and modified to become First Year Seminars. Twelve sections of CAS Collegiate Seminars, 29 sections of "C" 100 courses, and 7 sections of Academic Skills courses are being offered in Fall, 1997. These three ongoing programs, therefore, are presently providing nearly enough capacity for the First Year Seminar program at the smaller class size. Resources would need to be provided for faculty development and for the development of course materials. If peer mentors are paid, there would be costs for student stipends, but this should be modest in scope, making use of work-study money whenever possible. The First Year Seminar working group should make recommendations on class size, and the feasibility of making this a four-credit course/competency.

### B. The Middle Phase

#### The Situation

We should be doing a better job helping our students in four crucial ways: 1. Following through at a more sophisticated level on essential capabilities that are begun in the initial phase of the curriculum. 2. Introducing students to the principal approaches to knowledge that we feel are critical to an understanding of our world. 3. Linking the course work students take with the learning outcomes that the faculty assess. 4. Assisting students who enter the University in the middle of their college careers in the transition to this particular institution. Currently, some students are allowed to meet all their general education requirements with introductory level coursework. Other students have no opportunity to learn about some

of the principal approaches to knowledge. Still others have the option to avoid such exposure, e.g. CPCS students have no science in their curriculum, CAS students may select a “distribution” area to avoid (usually foreign languages or mathematics), and CM and CN students need not have any work in world languages and cultures. Students in Nursing are required to take the mid-level Writing Proficiency Requirement, but are not required to take courses that directly attempt to teach the skills assessed by that requirement. Except for CPCS and CN students, transfer students are provided with no structure to assist them in the transition to UMB course work.

### Proposed Solution

1. Complete one Sophomore/Junior Seminar (or equivalent competency).

CAS has a “C” 200 course requirement. The purpose of these courses has been to work on basic reading, writing, and critical thinking skills at a more sophisticated level than takes place in an introductory course. These courses have been thematic and problem-focused, and not as concerned with the “coverage” of a sub-discipline as is often the case of courses required for the major. CAS has been replacing the “C” 200 courses with Collegiate Seminars and the 1993 CAS Committee on General Education Reform (COGER) proposed that all entering transfer students take one of these Collegiate Seminars. We propose to build on this work by requiring both first year students and mid-entry transfer students to take a Sophomore/Junior Seminar.

For the student who took a First Year Seminar with us, the Sophomore/Junior Seminar would continue the close focus on general education capabilities of that course and extend these capabilities in the areas of critical reading and writing, plus others appropriate to the course. For the incoming transfer students with between 30 and 90 credits, who represent 40% of incoming students, the Sophomore/Junior Seminar would introduce the student to the UMass Boston general education program and provide a transition to the University similar to what we have proposed for entering first year students. By requiring these courses of these transfer students, we are able to accept transfer students’ courses from other institutions for area requirements while asking of them some of what we ask of students who started as first year students with us. Consultation with administrative officers involved in the various transfer articulation agreements with local community colleges suggests that requiring this Seminar would be within the spirit and the letter of these agreements.

Sophomore/Junior Seminars would be limited in size to 30 students. They would have writing assignments that demand the analysis and sophistication equivalent to those demanded by the CAS Writing Proficiency Requirement and mid-level writing competencies in CPCS. We recommend that a member of the CAS Writing Proficiency Committee be a member of the committee developing Sophomore/Junior Seminars in order to provide as close a link as possible between these two learning activities. Further, we recommend that any revisions/improvements of the Writing Proficiency Requirement, such as might emerge from the upcoming validity study, be incorporated into the planning and implementation of these seminars. Although the content of these Seminars would be open to faculty interest consistent with general education guidelines, we would expect that many of these Seminars would be interdisciplinary in scope and draw on a wide range of approaches to a problem or issue. Since students will have already completed the mathematics/quantitative reasoning requirement before they take this Seminar, we would expect many of the Seminars to extend this capability when appropriate to the subject. As with the first year seminars, the pedagogy utilized should encourage the development of learning communities. The Sophomore/Junior Seminar committee should consider the option of linking some sections of this course with other mid-level courses. The faculty subcommittee developing these Seminars should consider whether there might be conditions under which advanced students (the 10% or so who enter with 60-90 credits) could demonstrate competency in the learning capabilities that define the Sophomore/Junior Seminar and be able to request a waiver.

### Feasibility

Using data from the Fall of 1996, we have estimated that 42 sections of Sophomore/Junior Seminars with 30 students each would have to be offered to meet the demands of all continuing first year students and incoming mid-level transfer students. In the Fall of 1997, CAS offered 16 “C” 200 courses, 3 Collegiate Seminars that could become Sophomore/Junior Seminars, and 44 sections of 200 and 300 level courses in interdisciplinary areas such as American Studies, Africana Studies and Women’s Studies.

These courses, plus the number of 200 level courses in other departments that are taught in small sections with a broad problem-solving approach, suggest that we have the resources to provide enough Sophomore/Junior Seminars to cover student demand. Of note here is that under present CAS collegiate requirements, students must take five "C" courses that are kept deliberately small in size. CAS had been moving to a requirement of three Collegiate Seminars of small size to replace the old requirement (COGER report recommendation). Our proposal of two Seminars kept small in size - one at the initial phase and one at the middle phase of the student's career - is, therefore, well in keeping with the program CAS had already embarked upon. The inclusion of CM, CN and HPF students into these courses moves the resource needs back to, but not beyond, the needs projected by CAS when considering its three course requirement. Concerns about whether there is enough general education work being done by students is addressed in the following section in which we propose that general education capabilities be infused throughout courses used to cover the areas of knowledge requirement.

2. Demonstrate competence in the following areas of knowledge:

- A. Arts and Humanities
- B. Natural Sciences/Mathematics
- C. Social and Behavioral Sciences
- D. World Languages and Cultures

We recommend the completion of at least eight courses (or equivalent competencies) with at least one, and no more than three, in each of the four areas. At least one of the natural science/mathematics courses/competencies would have to be in natural science. Each college would be able to add additional requirements. The courses or competencies used to fulfill this requirement would be determined by standing committees consisting of faculty from disciplines in each of the areas, in consultation with the GESC.

This component of the middle phase is what many people refer to as "general education" - exposure to traditional areas of the liberal arts and sciences. This is a critical part of our curriculum, but it does not stand alone. It is infused with the learning outcomes of the entire program. We want our students to explore the major areas of knowledge not because there are pieces of information that are "essential" for an educated person to know, but because these areas provide a broad and, hopefully, coherent look at various kinds of knowledge which can serve as a framework for lifelong learning. We also want to make sure that a critical number of the general education capabilities are addressed in any course/competency that is used to meet a general education requirement.

The areas of knowledge listed here are those identified in the 1994 Faculty Council general education resolution. Both the Faculty Council and the CAS Committee on General Education Reform (COGER) recommended four areas instead of the seven previously defined by CAS, or the three used by CM. We believe that learning in all four areas is crucial. Each college should determine the number of courses/competencies required in each area, but there should be at least eight distributed across the four areas with at least one and no more than three in any area. At least one of the natural science/mathematics course/competencies would have to be in natural science. As is now the case, any college could increase the number of required courses in any area as part of collegiate or major requirements outside of general education. Since we expect that Sophomore/Junior Seminars could be designed to fulfill area requirements, and since the diversity requirement can also do "double duty," a student could complete the middle phase of our plan with only eight courses. These eight, plus the four in the initial phase, and the 1 advanced course, total 13 courses, or about one-third of the total curriculum. Additional collegiate requirements, therefore, could be added without undue concern about general education "taking up too much" of the curriculum.

How is a course "designated" as meeting an area requirement? Presently, CAS places almost all of its 100 and 200 level courses into certain "distribution areas," excluding from distribution status composition courses and certain courses designated by a "Z" prefix. A "Z" course carries "elective" credit toward graduation but no distribution credit. Most "Z" courses are so designated because they are of a specialized nature or are pilot courses not yet approved for distribution credit. The result is that students

in CAS, CN, CM and HPF can use almost every lower-division course taught in CAS to fulfill their general education requirements.

Under the implementation plan being proposed, courses and competencies would not be assumed to meet area requirements simply because they are being taught in traditional liberal arts and science disciplines. Each course would be reviewed by faculty-based committees (just as a CAS faculty committee currently reviews Collegiate Seminars and diversity courses) to see if it addresses general education capabilities as well as providing an appropriate exposure to the area of knowledge. The committees would work in a two-pronged way asking: What are the essential elements of (the area) that must be included? and How are general education capabilities being incorporated? Course syllabi would explicitly state what capabilities of the general education program the course addresses. As is the case with the current diversity requirement, every course would not have to meet every capability to be designated as a general education course. The faculty committee would look at the course as a whole and determine whether general education capabilities are systematically addressed. Mid-level general education learning outcomes should be specified in advance, emerging from the list of general education capabilities outlined on page two of this report. As a general guideline, we recommend that at least two of the first five general education capabilities be systematically addressed in any designated course. The GESC would be responsible for assuring that a sufficient range of courses were being offered that address the various general education capabilities. We encourage the faculty working committees to consider whether appropriate upper-level courses could be used as general education courses. This would provide opportunities for students to develop and deepen general education capabilities in their upper-division study.

We are aware that the areas of knowledge are not mutually exclusive categories. A task to be handled by faculty approving courses for general education will be to determine into which category a course should be placed (e.g., might a course on German literature be acceptable for the "World Languages and Cultures" area, or the "Arts and Humanities" area?). CAS faculty have been assigning courses to various areas for decades, and we assume that this expertise will facilitate the development and assignment of courses in these newly defined areas.

Eighty percent of our undergraduate degree recipients enter UMass Boston as transfer students. Analysis of a sample of the transcripts of 1996 graduates shows that almost 70% of the general education courses of these transfer students are taken outside UMass Boston. We propose that first year students choose their general education area courses from the selection developed, while transfer students would be granted area credit for courses equivalent to the wider range of department offerings as is currently done. Once matriculated at UMass Boston, the transfer student would complete any additional area requirements from the same selected list as applies to the first year student.

### Feasibility

#### A. Arts and Humanities

At the moment, the area of Arts/Humanities is covered in each college's graduation requirements at a level at or above that recommended here. There are, therefore, adequate faculty resources to meet this requirement. Pending the development of the learning outcomes in the area of Arts/Humanities, there may be a desire to increase the number of courses required by some of the colleges in this area. For example, within the present CAS seven-area distribution, many students take as many as six or seven arts and humanities courses. Thus, CAS might want to set the minimum number of courses in Arts/Humanities at more than two. The faculty group in Arts/Humanities should develop the content and methods of general education courses in this area and develop a set of guidelines for course approval.

#### B. Natural Sciences/Mathematics

Students in the College of Nursing, the College of Management and science majors in CAS all take two or more natural sciences and one or more mathematics courses under present requirements. CPCS students all demonstrate competence in mathematics but have no natural science offered to them. CAS non-science majors can choose to eliminate either natural science or mathematics from their distribution and fulfill that area with one course. Our review of the transcripts of a sample of 1996



graduates showed that 13% of all graduates had no natural science work and 15% had just one science course.

A working group in the summer of 1996 discussed the kind of science education that would be appropriate for all students. They developed a set of learning outcomes that conform to the rationale stated in the April 1996 GESC report (see Appendix C for the executive summary of the science working group report). The working group report also discusses how science should be taught and sets out guidelines for course approval for a science requirement. These guidelines suggest that each course: should have science as a central focus; should speak to the relevance and value of science to society and/or culture as well as to the uses and abuses of scientific understanding and investigation; should have a hands-on inquiry-based component, so that students actually engage in the process of investigation; and, that the desired student outcomes should be achieved in a learning environment in which the student plays an active role and is part of a community of learners. The working group recommended a three course requirement one of which could be mathematics. We recommend that each college sets its own requirements for the Natural Sciences/Mathematics area (as is the case with the other three areas), but that at least one of the courses/competencies be in natural science. Many of these courses will build upon and deepen the mathematics/quantitative skills learned in the first year.

Assuming past practices of student enrollment, if all the colleges were to require the two semesters of natural science recommended by the working group, the university would need to offer courses to satisfy an increased enrollment of approximately 375 students each semester. The sciences are already offering more general education courses than in the past in anticipation of a science requirement. Science faculty are also participating in a nationwide program addressing science education reform in which participating universities are helping each other develop pedagogies that will facilitate active student learning in large classes. These developments will help offset the need for a large influx of new resources.

#### C. Social and Behavioral Sciences

Social and behavioral sciences are presently covered in each college's graduation requirements. As is the case with Arts/Humanities, the University has the faculty resources to support this requirement. The faculty group in the social/behavioral sciences should develop the content and methods of general education courses in this area and develop a set of guidelines for course approval.

#### D. World Languages and Cultures

The Faculty Council resolution of 1994 stated that the World Languages and Cultures objective "may be achieved through intensive study of unfamiliar cultures, or by the study of a foreign language or foreign literature in translation." The "Working Group on General Education Requirements in World Languages and Cultures" in September 1996 recommended a four-semester requirement including at least two semesters of foreign language study. Our review of graduates' transcripts shows that 46% of all our graduates have taken no foreign language coursework/competencies. The percentages range from 33% in CAS to 80% in Nursing and 85% in CPCS. Although we acknowledge the work of the Summer 1996 working group and share a desire to have as many of our students as possible study a second language, we do not think we can require such study for all graduates, given the resource demands this would require. We propose that the faculty working committee explore the variety of ways of introducing students to World Languages and Cultures mentioned in the 1994 Faculty Council Resolution. We also suggest that a range of approaches to language instruction be explored and developed in the future. We expect that the current capacity to deliver instruction in foreign language combined with the wide range of culturally-focused courses already in existence on campus (including many developed or adapted to meet the diversity requirement), will provide enough resources to meet the demands of this requirement. We hope that the working group will recommend ways to move us in the direction of second-language study for all our students, and will find ways to increase the proportion of students currently studying a foreign language.

#### 3. Complete the existing University diversity requirement.

We propose the continuation of the current diversity requirement. Under the present system,

CPCS and CN require students to take certain courses or demonstrate competencies that fulfill diversity requirements, CAS and HPF students complete two diversity courses from a designated selection, and CM students take one diversity course from this selection.

4. Demonstrate intermediate proficiency in writing through the passing of the Writing Proficiency Requirement, or other collegiate mechanisms.

Under the current system, students in CAS, CN, and HPF all must pass the Writing Proficiency Requirement administered by CAS, and CPCS students must complete Advanced Writing competencies. Students in CM take a required 200-level course. Although we believe that the Writing Proficiency Requirement should be continued, and that CM should consider using the CAS model for its students, we support the efforts currently being taken to review and improve the implementation of this requirement.

### C. Advanced Phase (1 course or equivalent competency)

The GESC has discussed 3 primary ways in which the advanced phase learning activities might be provided: 1. THE GESC'S April 1996 report recommended that general education continue throughout a student's academic career and that we provide a "...culminating experience which synthesizes what a student has learned how to do and which also looks forward to what a student is capable of doing after receiving the degree." The Working Group on the Capstone Experience in Fall, 1996, supported the notion of a capstone experience for all students, and recommended that there be a multiplicity of ways and programs designed to meet this requirement. 2. The 1996 GESC report also recommended the development of an advanced writing competency beyond the level of the CAS Writing Proficiency Requirement. 3. Our committee has recently discussed the possibility of asking departments to clarify and deepen how they help students become competent in general education capabilities in the majors.

Our discussions with members of several departments convince us that many of these advanced-level learning activities are already provided to a large proportion of our students. For example, many upper level courses pay careful attention to writing within their respective disciplines, and most departments provide an array of training in general education capabilities in the process of delivering courses for the major. Our current curricular and extra-curricular programs provide a number of capstone experiences for students. Nursing students demonstrate their capabilities and test themselves in their clinical placements. Students in the teacher certification program spend their last semester in classrooms as student teachers. Some students in management, computer science and other disciplines have supervised co-op placements. Internships allow many social science and humanities students to receive course credit for supervised volunteer opportunities in government, business, community, and non-profit organizations. Many of these activities would qualify as "service learning" as currently defined in curricular discussions across the country. Senior honors projects allow students planning to go on for graduate study to do independent work at an advanced level. For other students, the college career ends without any defining experience or any opportunity to demonstrate their developed intellectual capabilities.

Discussions with various department chairs, with the Capstone Working Group (Fall 1996), and within the current GESC lead us to withhold a recommendation at this time, based on concern about resources. We suggest that the capstone working group reconvene with an expanded charge to address the advanced phase of general education more inclusively. We hope that it will be possible to assure that at least one aspect of advanced general education learning be provided to all students. We encourage the colleges to incorporate advanced phase activities such as those listed above wherever possible.

## **IV. Process for Curricular Development**

Because of our concern with resources and other institutional realities, we have developed a plan that builds on current curricular strengths and, therefore, requires a minimum of new faculty or staff lines. The plan we present is realistic in the long term, providing that substantial faculty development can be accomplished within the next five years and that funds be included in the permanent budget for incorporating new faculty into the system, assessing the effectiveness of the program, and administering the program. A commitment from the Chancellor and Provost to support faculty development and other

planning, piloting and administrative activities is an essential aspect of this plan. We have applied for a President's Reserve Fund grant for Spring, 1998 to support the development of the First Year Seminars and other elements of the first year experience. We envision paying stipends or providing release time for faculty to develop not just curricula but pedagogical strategies. Monies such as these are essential for this plan to be successfully implemented. Campus-wide general education has been a major item on the campus agenda since the 1995 NEASC accreditation report. An initiative of this magnitude and importance warrants a stable planning process, and this, in turn, a stable, predictable share of resources over the next several years. "Imagining a New Century: The Year 2000 Strategic Plan" highlights general education in the second of its five goals: "to have demonstrably stronger, more effective undergraduate and graduate programs and learning experiences for our students." (p. 6) Resource allocation must match the importance of this strategic goal.

A timetable is outlined below. As stated in our introduction, we propose that elements be piloted and assessed before becoming permanent parts of the general education program.

### Fall 1997

GESC continues to discuss the plan with Faculty Council, chairs, program directors and other interested faculty, staff and administrators.

GESC defines general education learning outcomes for the middle phase area courses.

Subcommittees in Arts and Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and World Languages and Cultures meet to define learning outcomes for their areas.

First Year Seminar and Sophomore/Junior Seminar subcommittees meet to define learning outcomes of these activities.

Subcommittee on Writing/composition works on defining learning outcomes for first year writing, including addressing the needs of students at different levels of skill and preparation.

Mathematics/quantitative reasoning subcommittee continues to meet and define learning outcomes.

Subcommittee on the Advanced Phase reconvenes to define learning outcomes of this phase.

### Spring 1998 (Pending acceptance of the plan by the Faculty Council and adequate funding)

Colleges determine their general education requirements, within the plan passed by the Faculty Council.

First Year Seminar group develops a series of syllabi for seminars focused on contemporary issues and problems. These syllabi would directly address the general education capabilities on page five of this report. The syllabi would include detailed pedagogical plans for how various skills/capabilities would be practiced by students in these seminars. These syllabi would serve as models for further faculty development in June. Participants would receive course releases or stipends.

Subcommittees on the four areas of knowledge refine learning outcomes within their areas by March. Tentative presentation of learning outcomes for all areas to faculty in an open meeting.

Piloting of new CPCS second semester assessment course.

Development of new mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses, including pedagogical strategies.

Development of Sophomore/Junior Seminars, similar to that of First Year Seminar above.

Writing/composition subcommittee disseminates material on suggestions for developing this capability in general education courses. Recommends procedures for assessing first year writing/composition outcomes.

Subcommittee on Advanced Phase presents proposal to GESC.

### Summer 1998

Faculty development workshops on First Year Seminars, Sophomore/Junior Seminars, and mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses. Stipends provided by Provost's Office (or other funding).

GESC continues to monitor development of various elements.

Subcommittees continue to meet where needed. Stipends from Provost's office.

### Fall, 1998

Piloting of 10-15 First Year Seminars.

Piloting of new mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses.

Piloting of 5-10 Sophomore/Junior Seminars.

The four area working groups review course syllabi and designate general education courses.

Assessment of CPCS second semester assessment course.

### Spring, 1999

Assessment of Fall, 1998 First Year Seminars, Sophomore/Junior Seminars, and mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses.

Recommendation to Faculty Council regarding implementation of general education plan based on assessment of pilots and further feasibility studies.

### The Role of the GESC

Working within the plan approved by the Faculty Council, during the period of planning and piloting that will last at least until the Summer of 1999, we propose that the GESC continue to function as it has, with the present Director of General Education Development as chair along with a faculty co-chair.

We suggest that the GESC do the following:

- Decide which specific courses/learning activities should be piloted and assessed for inclusion in the general education plan.
- Work with appropriate collegiate curricular bodies to assure that students receive credit for any courses taken within the piloting/assessment period.
- Facilitate the development and piloting of various elements of the plan.
- Propose for Faculty Council approval all elements that are ready for implementation, as they become ready.

- Facilitate implementation of those elements ready for implementation.
- Report monthly to the Faculty Council, including any proposed changes in the plan or in the schedule of implementation.
- Appoint subcommittees to work on the planning and development of the various elements of the plan. At present we see the need for the following subcommittees:

First Year Seminars  
 Writing/Composition  
 Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning  
 Sophomore/Junior Seminars  
 Arts and Humanities  
 Natural Sciences/Mathematics  
 Social and Behavioral Sciences  
 World Languages and Cultures  
 Diversity  
 Advanced Phase of General Education

Many faculty have expressed interest in working on a general education committee or are already doing so. (See Appendix D for a list of working committees). We suggest that some members of the Faculty Council diversity committee become part of the diversity subcommittee of the GESC.

- Work closely with the subcommittees and facilitate communication among them when appropriate.
- Address any resource conflicts that emerge.
- Propose a plan for a permanent administrative/curricular governance structure to run the program on an ongoing basis once the elements have been piloted, approved, and begun to be implemented.
- Meet regularly and handle other tasks, as necessary

### **Concluding Comment**

The GESC has discussed many possible components of general education during the past twenty months. We have seriously considered a number of other elements which we thought would improve our students' education, but which, for reasons of resources, faculty commitment or the realities of our students' needs were not proposed as requirements at this time. We hope that faculty development and other incentives will be provided to encourage the development of these elements so that substantial numbers of our graduates will be able to benefit from them even if they are not required of every student. They include, among others: interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary courses (including team-taught courses); second language proficiency; a capstone experience; service learning; explicit attention to ethics and social responsibility; and required work in urban issues.

The plan we present is rooted in our curricular strengths, and extends them in ways that will improve the learning experiences of our students. We look forward to working with the Faculty Council on the implementation of this plan.