

General Education Revitalization Committee Final Report, 2014 – 2015

Leah Berman, Chair

April 29, 2015

The General Education Revitalization Committee (GERC) met on an ad hoc basis during the fall semester, and met biweekly during the spring semester.

1 Communications in the upper-division

The primary occupation of GERC during the fall was to redesign the “communications” upper-division requirement, after receiving feedback from CAC that they didn’t like the requirement included as part of GERC’s final report in Spring 2014. The requirement as initially proposed was that students would be required to take three courses labelled with a “C”, directly analogous to the current O and W requirement.

After much discussion, including dragooning on an ad hoc basis two engineers and a biologist, GERC developed a new proposal. This proposal includes the development of four *Communications Learning Outcomes* that students graduating from any baccalaureate degree program would have to satisfy, as well as a requirement that each baccalaureate program would need to submit a *Communications Plan*, probably as part of the SLOA, detailing how students graduating with that degree would satisfy the Communications Learning Outcomes. Note that this new proposal is in addition to the current requirements that students take two lower-division writing intensive courses (currently ENGL 111 and 211 or 213) and one oral communications course (currently COMM 121/131/141).

GERC’s hope is that this proposed new structure will allow departments and programs more flexibility in helping students achieve these learning outcomes, while still making it clear that these outcomes are an important part of the Common Baccalaureate Requirements.

This new proposal was submitted to and discussed and passed at CAC. It briefly appeared (and then was tabled) at Faculty Senate. GERC and CAC also hosted a “Town Hall” discussion on the new proposal in late Spring.

2 General Education Requirements

In addition to the discussion of the communications requirement, GERC also began discussing implementation details for the rest of the common baccalaureate requirements proposed in their final report from 2014. In particular, the “general education” requirements—those that primarily support Learning Outcome 1, develop knowledge...—were discussed, at the point it became clear what the effects of the Board of Regents’ resolution on alignment of general education requirements across the system were.

As a preliminary fact-finding mission, the chair of GERC emailed schools, colleges, and departments across UAF to solicit courses that departments would like to see be in “buckets”, primarily for Humanities, Social

Sciences and Arts; GERC also proposes having an “interdisciplinary” Humanities/Arts/Social Sciences bucket. She received quite good response from around the university.

GERC proposes that the current “Perspectives” requirement be replaced with the following requirement:

Students must take 5 3-credit courses: one course from a “Humanities” list, one course from a “Social Sciences” list, one course from an “Arts” list, and two other courses, either from the Humanities/Social Science/Arts list, or from a list of interdisciplinary courses that combine (some of) those three areas.

Courses satisfying this requirement may also be used to satisfy major or minor requirements, but not degree requirements.

A resolution supporting the general idea of buckets (but not the specifics of the implementation as described above) is currently under review at Faculty Senate.

In order for this to be implementable, lists of outcomes for Humanities, Social Science and Arts courses will need to be developed, faculty will need to submit courses and rationales as to how/why those courses satisfy those objectives, and some committee (TBD) will need to review the applications and populate the buckets.

3 Alignment

The chair of GERC also was one of the three UAF representatives to the Statewide General Education Alignment Task Force. As part of that process, GERC proposes (to CAC, where it’s still under review) that UAF revise its current requirement for natural sciences and mathematics to be the following:

Students must take three courses, each of which is at least three credits, in Natural Sciences and Mathematics, from lists of approved courses in natural science and mathematics. One of these courses must be a natural science course with laboratory and one of these courses must be a mathematics course. (The third course can either be a natural science course or a mathematics course.)

Note this proposal was developed in consultation with members from CAC and is a change from the original proposal put forward by GERC in Spring 2014. This proposal would also fix some transfer problems caused by the fact that UAA and UAS allow non-lab science courses; currently students who take such courses cannot transfer them in such a way as to satisfy the GER at UAF.

4 Future Directions

Attendance at GERC meetings was sporadic and people are tired. The chair recommends that GERC be officially dissolved, but that certain members of GERC consult (perhaps officially, as ex officio members of CAC, or unofficially via one-on-one conversations) on the implementation processes for the revision to the current core, as pieces of GERC’s spring 2014 proposal are (hopefully) passed by Faculty Senate. Still to do:

- Implement the *General Education Requirements* section of the GERC proposal. This mostly entails modifying the current PHC requirement.
 - In particular, develop “buckets” to replace the current PHC requirements:

- * Have Faculty Senate pass a resolution approving the basic idea of buckets to replace the current PHC requirements (on the agenda)
- * Develop a collection of outcomes for each proposed bucket, perhaps by convening ad hoc committees from CLA for each of the buckets Humanities, Social Science, Arts, Interdisciplinary
- * Develop a process for determining whether a proposed course satisfies the outcomes for the bucket it is proposed for
- * A committee approves a draft list of courses for each bucket
- * Faculty Senate gives final approval for the list of courses for each bucket
- * Faculty Senate approves the requirement that students need to take a certain number of courses from buckets, with some approved distribution (e.g., 5 courses, one from each of H/A/SS buckets and 2 from any of those plus interdisciplinary).
- Revise the current requirement for natural sciences and mathematics to allow one math, one lab science, one either.
- Continue to work on implementing the *Civic Engagement* requirement from the GERC proposal, by implementing a “decorations” requirement
 - Faculty Senate passes a resolution approving the general idea of requiring decorated courses—note it is anticipated that many GER courses will be eligible to be decorated, and courses that are “decorated” may satisfy degree, major, minor or GER requirements (although a decorated course that satisfies a GER cannot also satisfy a degree requirement)
 - Revise the rubrics for **Alaska and the Circumpolar North (A)**, **Civic Engagement (C)** and **Intercultural Competence and Diversity (D)** that were drafted by last year’s GERC.
 - Develop a process for approving courses to be decorated
 - Solicit and approve courses
 - Faculty Senate passes the final requirement
- Finish the new communications requirement
 - Faculty Senate passes the new requirement
 - Finalize a process for developing and submitting initial communications plans
 - Develop a process for assessing the communications plans