

**Faculty Senate Ad Hoc General Education Committee**  
Progress Report – December 2011

In October 2011 the Ad Hoc Committee presented the campus community with four potential plans for General Education. Based on the feedback received the committee now presents the following for campus discussion. Simply put, CCSU faces a choice between retaining its existing General Education program and embracing a more flexible set of requirements such as the ones outlined below. The Ad Hoc Committee will hold an open meeting this Thursday, December 8, at 3:05 in NC 210. All members of the campus community are invited to attend.

**1. General Education Course Requirements** (44 credits)

**Foundations** (7 or 8 cr.):

ENG 110 Freshman Composition (3 or 4 cr.)  
Critical Inquiry Seminar (CIS) (4 cr.)

**Areas of General Education:**

**Arts & Culture** (6 cr. minimum)  
**Self and Society** (6 cr. minimum)  
**Physical and Natural Worlds** (6 cr. minimum)  
**Mathematical and Statistical Understanding** (6 cr. minimum)

**Electives:** (as needed to reach 44 cr. total, provided that no more than 12 cr. may be counted toward any of the four areas above)

**2. General Education Proficiency Requirements**

**Foreign Language Proficiency Requirement**

Retain existing proficiency requirement but require testing of all first-year students to determine at what level they would place.

**Writing Across the Curriculum**

In addition to foundational writing taught in ENG 110 and CIS, require all students to complete a mid- and upper-level writing course appropriate for their majors.

**Information Literacy**

Require basic information literacy as a component of CIS.

**3. Further Guidelines**

**Double-Counting**

Up to twelve credits in General Education may be applied toward the major and minor (e.g., 12 cr. toward the major; 6 cr. toward the major and 6 cr. to the minor)

**Tagged Courses**

Areas approved by the Curriculum Committee and Faculty Senate may serve as the basis for tagged courses. Tagged courses can be used to satisfy the four areas above or counted as electives in General Education. Possibilities include CE (Community Engagement), DIV (Diversity), and INTL (International).

#### 4. Additional Recommendations

##### **Creation of General Education Oversight Committee**

Develop a standing committee to review General Education goals and objectives, programmatic changes, and assessment data. To work in conjunction with the Curriculum Committee and the General Education Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee.

##### **Timetable**

Spring 2012: Submission of final Ad Hoc Committee Report. If approved, then...

2012-2013: Review of courses for re-designation in new General Education program. Development of CIS courses. Final passage of program.

Fall 2014: Earliest implementation of new General Education Program

##### **Additional Comments:**

In developing its proposal for a revised General Education Program, the Ad Hoc Committee relied upon information gathered from a campus-wide survey, open meetings, blog entries, and innumerable conversations with individual colleagues and groups. The following plan reflects our best effort to identify the features of a General Education program that members of the campus community share. More than anything else, it reflects the constant refrain that General Education should be less complex. Greater flexibility, however, must not come at the expense of intellectual rigor. All current courses proposed for inclusion in the new program should be reviewed by their sponsoring departments and the Curriculum Committee.

It is important to add that if approved, the new General Education Program can be further defined by departments and programs if they wish to require specific course or tagged requirements.

##### **General Education Course Requirements:**

All students will complete **ENG 110** (Freshman Composition) as a foundational course in writing and as the beginning of Writing Across the Curriculum sequence. Concurrently, if possible, entering first-year students will complete a Critical Inquiry Seminar. Transfer students will take a Critical Inquiry Seminar in their first semester in residence. Some sections will be designated each term for transfer students, and designed to help smooth their transition to CCSU.

The **Critical Inquiry Seminar** will be the hallmark of a revised General Education Program. Designed to emphasize critical thinking with strong guidance in writing and information literacy, Critical Inquiry Seminars should be taught by faculty from a wide variety of disciplines with representation from all four schools of the university. Faculty members may emphasize their own disciplinary expertise but are encouraged to consider interdisciplinary subjects as well as their own particular intellectual interests that may fall outside their discipline. Faculty should take the students through the process of critical inquiry—close observation, discernment of patterns, finding and evaluating sources, marshalling evidence, formulating conclusions, presenting those conclusions both orally and in writing, setting one's own conclusions into the context of others' thoughts on the subject.

Critical Inquiry Seminars will better prepare students for collegiate work, foster a sense of community among students, and aid in the institutional goal of retention. Although the format of these seminars differs

from that of the First Year Experience program, the Ad Hoc Committee believes that Critical Inquiry Seminars can incorporate the objectives of the current FYE program. The Ad Hoc Committee also proposes that the University sponsor a Critical Inquiry conference each semester at which students can showcase their work and learn about further opportunities for research and inquiry in areas of interest. Critical Inquiry conferences might also be scheduled alongside Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement Day (URCAD) activities.<sup>1</sup>

The revised General Education Program should consist of four core areas, each requiring students to complete at least six credits. This configuration will require students to acquire some degree of both breadth and depth yet provide flexibility for departments and programs that want to tailor requirements to their own needs. This design should also facilitate the transfer of credits from Connecticut's community colleges to CCSU. The Ad Hoc Committee encourages colleagues to re-think the existing categories and suggests the following core areas for further discussion.

**Art & Culture**, because they explore expressions of human imagination and belief.

**Self and Society**, to examine the relationship between individuals and the communities in which they live.

**Physical and Natural Worlds**, because methods of scientific inquiry are essential for understanding the world around us.

**Mathematics and Statistics**, because concepts beyond basic algebra allow for the construction and interpretation of mathematical models to reach quantitative conclusions.

After students have completed both the foundational and area requirements above, they can fill the remainder of their General Education program with **Electives**. These courses will be drawn from the areas above with the proviso that the students may not count more than 12 credits in any one of the four areas toward the 44 credits required in General Education.

### **General Education Proficiency Requirements:**

CCSU's **Foreign Language Proficiency Requirement** proved especially vexing for the Ad Hoc Committee. Some members of the faculty advocate for an expanded requirement that mandates completion of an intermediate language course or demonstrated proficiency in a language other than English. Others wish to see this requirement eliminated entirely. Many seem content with CCSU's current standard, which most entering first-year students meet through completion of three consecutive years of a second language in high school.

It is anomalous that students are permitted to satisfy a university General Education requirement through high school seat-time yet there does not seem to be an alternative that will readily meet with the approval of the faculty. With this in mind, the Ad Hoc Committee recommends retention of the current requirement while requiring incoming first-year students to take a placement test in a second language (if they completed at least one year of a second language in high school). The proposed General Education Oversight Committee should review data from these tests.

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<sup>1</sup> Some FYE courses currently serve as majors-only introductions to a particular discipline or school. Working in conjunction with the FYE Steering Committee, the members of the Ad Hoc Committee believe that these programs can adopt the Critical Inquiry Seminar model without adding credits or eliminating FYE objectives.

The Ad Hoc Committee also recommends that CCSU adopt a **Writing Across the Curriculum** program following the broad outlines proposed by the Senate's Ad Hoc Committee on that subject. First-year students should receive foundational support in writing from ENG 110 and the Critical Inquiry Seminar, while completing mid- and upper-level courses in their major that reinforce skills and develop writing appropriate to their major disciplines.

The Critical Inquiry Seminars should also provide a basic foundation in **Information Literacy**, drawing in part upon the expertise available in the Burritt Library and in the Office of Information Technology. Additional training with the goal of information fluency should be provided within the major.

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