

January 20, 2015

To: General Education Implementation Committee
Curriculum Committee
Gen Education Sub-Committee (Curriculum Committee)
President Jack Miller
Provost Carl Lovitt
Dean Susan Pease
Faculty Senate

From: Department of History

Dear Colleagues:

We write to express concerns over the proposed changes to the General Education curriculum at Central Connecticut State University. This has been a subject of discussion for several years. Currently, there are at least three proposals under consideration. One is to leave the General Education as it is, and the other two options, known as Option A and Option B, advocate substantial changes to the curriculum.

Of primary concern to the Department of History is the proposed change in both Options A and B, which would remove a required history elective from the Study Area II Social Sciences category. Whereas such a change may adversely affect our enrollment in entry level history courses, this, in fact, is not our main concern. Rather, what is far more important is the negative educational impact it will have on our students and society, and the way in which it will undermine the standards set by NEASC accreditation.

The Standards for Accreditation (effective July 1, 2011) are quite clear on the outlines for general education. Section 4.16 states distinctly that it “embodies the institution’s definition of an educated person and prepares students for the world in which they will live.” NEASC standards for general education require “adequate breadth” (section 4.17). NEASC standard 4.19, which aligns with the Board of Regents TAP and with the CCSU-TAP pathway, states that students must “demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical, and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind.” That “historical” is specifically listed as a required area makes the proposed Options to remove history from the curriculum entirely unworkable. Professional historians approach history in a way that scholars who teach “the past” of their disciplines usually don’t.

Removing history as a requirement also sends the wrong message to students and teachers in K-12 education, as well as to members of the state legislature, who have watched members of this university’s faculty lead the movement and argue for the importance of history in the new Social Studies Frameworks in Connecticut. Consider also that the State of Connecticut mandates a history course for every person seeking teaching certification, no matter the discipline. Clearly,

this is a legislative statement on the importance of knowing some history and the methodology with which it is taught. This is the same logic as NEASC's "historical" requirement for "adequate breadth" in general education.

The fact that Americans are remarkably ignorant of their own history and that of the rest of the world is hardly a fact that needs to be proven. Study after study reveals this. That our educational system has and is moving to a much heavier focus on STEM rather than the humanities is also a disturbing reality. The very notion of breadth in education, which is the cornerstone of a general education curriculum, is undercut by the failure to have students study history. Nor is the Department of History concerned solely with the deletion of our own field of study from the curriculum. We are also opposed to the removal of literature and an international requirement from the Options under consideration.

Our society has never been in more need of greater history education. Our mission statements in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and for the university as a whole acknowledge our obligation to foster global awareness, develop an educated citizenry, and create a love of learning. History, literature and international courses further those missions. Retaining these mandates in general education will fulfill the requirements NEASC has set for accreditation, create a continuous intellectual standard that aligns with new state frameworks, and meet the mission as established by our university and our College. Students who, perhaps, have no prior measure of what constitutes a university education or defines an educated person will not be left to fend for themselves.

The Department of History welcomes our university colleagues to have a more fully articulated discussion of the many points raised in this letter.