

February 1, 2015

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

From: The International Education Committee

Re: General Education Implementation Committee Report

The International Education Committee would like to express its concerns about the proposal for a revision of the General Education requirements at CCSU submitted by the General Education Implementation Committee. While we endorse the changes suggested to the Foreign language requirement, we object to the removal of the existing requirement that students take 6 credits of courses with an International designation. This is for many reasons.

1.) First, by not including a specific international requirement, this proposed General Education program contradicts the Mission Statement and Strategic plan of CCSU, and stated goals of the Provost and President of this University. It will necessitate, therefore, an entire rethinking of the identity of CCSU. For example,

- In the CCSU Mission statement International Education is the first of the 4 elements of distinctiveness, which are:
 - International Education
 - Workforce and State Economic Development
 - Community Engagement
 - Interdisciplinary Studies and Cross-Curricular Initiatives
- In the Mission Statement, the “Vision” of CCSU is to be recognized, first for
 - “Graduating broadly educated, culturally and globally aware students who will contribute meaningfully to their communities as engaged professionals and citizens;” and then for
 - “Contributing to knowledge through scholarship”; and
 - “Fostering societal improvements through responsive and innovative programs”.
- An international focus also is part of the CCSU Strategic Plan, which includes the goals of
 - promoting “global awareness and respect for diversity”
 - and ensuring “the graduation of globally competent students.”
- In his 2007 address to the Faculty, the Provost also affirmed that
 - CCSU has a “commitment to educate students for global citizenship;”
 - CSU has an “identity as a globally oriented university;” and that
 - the goal of our university is “to prepare college graduates for the demands of our global economy and of our increasingly diverse communities.”
- Finally, President Miller, in his address at the opening meeting of 2014, counted as one of the highlights of CCSU the Institute of Education’s 2013 “Open Door Report,” which

ranked CCSU 17th in the nation for its “short study abroad” academic programs, and 27th in the nation for “international study abroad” programs.

- President Miller commented
 - “This is the sixth consecutive year that CCSU has placed in the national rankings. No other Connecticut institution of higher education has placed as highly. That’s something we can all be proud of, and experiences our students definitely need.
- This year CCSU has done even better. Our short-term Course Abroad Program now ranks 8th in the nation in our classification, up from 17th place. CCSU also ranks 18th for total number of study abroad students, up from 27th place.

While the proposed revision to the General Education program echoes CCSU’s mission and vision when it states that one of its goals is the imparting of knowledge and skills to create “broadly educated, culturally and globally aware students,” we do not believe that any of the proposed requirements contribute sufficiently to that global awareness or competency.

2.) In the proposed General Education “Mission” statement international education is not explicitly mentioned.

- It is referred to obliquely in section 4: “Understand historical, natural, and social scientific phenomena.”
- This section suggests that the General Education program will train students to “see themselves as members of a world community, with the ability to impact and alter this community.”
- We believe it is unlikely that students will get that world perspective by studying natural scientific phenomena, or by taking history or social science courses that are entirely, or almost entirely, focused on the United States.
- Without a specific international requirement there is nothing to ensure that historical, natural, and social scientific courses have international content.

3.) In addition, in the 9 “learning outcomes” of the new General Education proposal nothing is stated about students being globally aware or internationally competent, or part of a world community. So it must be assumed that this is not something the proposed General Education plan will teach.

4.) Global awareness also is not part of the General Education “Plan”.

- The area that covers social and behavioral phenomena, which is part of the 4th section of the General Education mission, does not use the words ‘international’, ‘world’, or ‘global’ at all. It reads:

Social and Behavioral phenomena (minimum 9 credits)

Students will study the interrelatedness of various realms of human experience from multiple and diverse social, behavioral, and historical perspectives. Students will understand how scientific and nonscientific methods are used to examine the relationships between individuals, their communities, and the wider societies.

- These “multiple and diverse ... perspectives” could be found within the United States alone. There is nothing in the plan that requires students to understand diverse perspectives from foreign countries or the wider world.

5.) The Foreign Language requirement of the proposed General Education program does include the statement that students will learn to “participate in a globalized culture and economy.”

However, what is contained in this requirement is not sufficient to train students to be globally aware or competent.

- This requirement reads:

Foreign Language (6 credits)

To introduce them to the skills needed to participate in a globalized culture and economy, students will learn a foreign language at the second semester level. Students may demonstrate this proficiency through an examination; those unable to do so by exam will do so through course work (1 or 2 semesters, depending on placement via exam), which may be counted as general education elective credit

- We agree that studying a foreign language is a crucially important skill for global competency. But it cannot be the only element of a General Education plan designed to impart global awareness.
 - Only one or two lower level courses are required. And there is no guarantee that at the same time as they learn language skills students also will learn about the diverse cultures, ideas, or history of a foreign country, or participate in any “globalized culture and economy” other than the United States.
 - Moreover, the requirement can be waived with an examination. It is possible that students can graduate without taking any language courses at the University level or at CCSU.

6.) The language requirement, therefore, provides an essential skill for global competency, but it is not sufficient to develop a knowledge, understanding, or sensitivity to cultural difference. It is well accepted by the educational community that global awareness and competency require an understanding of geography, culture, and history, as well as language. For example, one noted scholar of International education, Fernando Reimers of the Harvard Graduate School of Education has defined global competency in his book, *International Perspectives on the Goals of Universal Basic and Secondary Education* (Routledge, 2009). He argues that “global competency includes three interdependent dimensions:

1. A positive disposition toward cultural difference and a framework of global values to engage in difference. This requires a sense of identity and self-esteem but also empathy toward others with different identities. An interest and understanding of different civilizational streams and the ability to see those differences as opportunities for constructive, respectful and peaceful transactions among people.

2. An ability to speak, understand and think in languages in addition to the dominant language in the country in which people are born.

3. Deep knowledge and understanding of world history, geography, the global dimensions of topics such as health, climate and economics and of the process of globalization itself (the disciplinary and interdisciplinary dimension) and a capacity to think critically and creatively about the complexity of current global challenges.”

The proposed General Education program has only one part of these essential dimensions.

- The other two dimensions could be taught in upper-level foreign language courses or by a requirement to study abroad, which some Universities are instituting. But neither of these are included in the proposed General Education plan.
- In the absence of those requirements, this knowledge must come from courses in other disciplines. And it must come from courses in those disciplines that have been designated as having International content.

7.) By removing the International requirement, the new General Education plan also removes the incentive for students to study abroad and experience foreign cultures first hand.

- Some students use courses abroad or semesters abroad to fulfill the existing 6 credit requirement.
- The lack of an International requirement also sends a message that study abroad experiences are not valued by the faculty or considered part of a well-rounded education.
- This puts into jeopardy the very successful and expanding programs of the Center for International Education of which President Miller is so proud.

Professor Reimers makes it very clear why true global competency is important in education:

“Globalization has led to an increase in the frequency and type of interactions among people of different cultural origins. Individuals’ or groups’ responses to the changes around them depend in part on how they are prepared to understand cultural differences, and to think about globalization and its attendant processes.

Unless schools effectively develop tolerance, cosmopolitanism, deep knowledge of global affairs and a commitment to peace, the likelihood of the civilizational clashes ... will increase.”

.....

“While the economic advantages that accrue to global competency have received more attention than the civic advantages, global competency is helpful not only from an economic standpoint but as a cornerstone of democratic leadership and citizenship. Because the boundaries between international and domestic problems have become increasingly porous, the demands of government and citizenship now require knowledge of international topics. Elected representatives and voters will be able to make informed decisions about issues such as trade, health epidemics, environmental conservation, energy use, immigration, and especially global stability only if they are educated to understand the global determinants and consequences of those issues and decisions.”

Other scholars point to the importance of global awareness for understanding domestic diversity, which is another part of CCSU’s strategic plan. By being aware of differences between the

United States and international cultures, students learn to be more tolerant of differences at home. Because of this, some Universities are trying to erase the dichotomy between education in domestic multiculturalism and international diversity and join the two. To remove the International component from our General Education program makes such an effort impossible.

The International Education Committee endorses a vision of education in which international awareness is essential and the connections between the global and local are stressed. We believe that if our University does not have a real commitment to training global competency it is doing our students a serious disservice. And we contend that this competency cannot be achieved without a strong International component in any General Education plan.

Therefore, the International Education Committee cannot endorse the proposed General Education plan as it stands. In the meantime, we will work to improve the “I” designations that now exist. We are a new Faculty Senate Committee, which first met in late November 2014. In that meeting we decided that our most pressing item of business is a review of courses that have been granted the “I” designation. We plan to publish a clear definition of what can be considered such a course, and remove the “I” designation from those courses that do not fit our definition. That definition will be based on the latest theories of what is necessary for global competency.