

SUNY Cortland

General Education Proposal



To: SUNY Cortland Faculty Senate Steering Committee

From: SUNY Cortland General Education Committee
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Date: March 20, 2014

Re: Report and Recommendation for General Education Program Revision

The General Education Committee submits the following report detailing the committee's efforts to elicit and articulate campus perspectives on the General Education (GE) program, understand GE within the current context of the campus and the SUNY system, and a proposal for GE revision that emerged from that work.

The GE Committee unanimously approved the enclosed proposal and requests that the Faculty Senate consider the motion to amend the SUNY Cortland General Education program with these changes.

- Reduction of the natural science requirement to one laboratory course (elimination of GE 13 – a second natural science)
- Allow 3 or 4 credit hour laboratory natural science courses to fulfill the natural science requirement
- Allow students to complete two of the following three categories: GE 3 – Social Science, GE 4 – United States History and Society, and GE 5 – Western Civilizations for a total of six credit hours

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Background: Why Do this? Why Now?

The following background statement was provided to the campus during the most recent discussion of the five specific recommendations that we had asked the community to consider. It bears repeating to underscore the context in which this proposal was created.

General Education is the liberal arts foundation of every undergraduate degree program at SUNY Cortland. It provides the shared intellectual experience for our students; it strives to provide them with a breadth of knowledge, exposure to a range of perspectives through the disciplines, and opportunities to strengthen critical thinking and communication skills.

The nature of GE is a dynamic one—reflection and change should be a natural part of the stewardship of GE in order to maintain its relevance, currency, and mutual engagement for students and faculty. Prior to the implementation of the SUNY General Education requirements of 2000, SUNY Cortland had a full GE program specific to the campus. In 2005, the outcomes of the SUNY and Cortland GE programs were integrated into the current program you know today. The critical examination of Cortland's GE program does not occur in a vacuum. This originated as a SUNY Provost initiative to increase transfer student mobility. It occurred within the context of SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher's emphasis since her installation in 2009 on what she has named "systemness": establishing as an institutional priority greater integration of programs, procedures, and other elements among the SUNY campuses. With this as both backdrop and institutional priority, there are additional factors that impose greater stress on Cortland's curriculum.

1. The gradual expansion of required credit hours in both the GE program and in our majors.

These changes have reduced the degree of flexibility in the curriculum. Limitations on the opportunity for students to take electives have made it challenging for students to take elective courses in new disciplines and departments, to complete minors, and study abroad. For some majors, such as Childhood/Early Childhood Education and Adolescence Education programs, students have limited, or no, opportunity to take purely elective courses. Much of this has occurred because of external requirements imposed by accrediting and state agencies. Obviously, not all departments have experienced this degree of elective constriction in their majors, but these changes affect the institution as a whole and the ability of many Cortland students to take courses aside from those required for GE and their majors. That in turn affects every department in the college.

This raises a further feature of a college education that rarely receives attention. Any student's college coursework should consist of three parts: general education, the student's selected major, and elective coursework. The ability of students to complete their curriculum through the selection of elective courses, guided purely by the students' own preferences, is a vital feature of a liberal arts education. GE, by design, exposes students to a variety of disciplines and intellectual traditions through the imposition of category requirements. But students are no less entitled to engage in that process through their own choice of purely elective coursework. All departments benefit from a viable elective coursework component in student course selection, not only in student

enrollments outside of their major in discrete elective courses, but in students' selection of minors and even second majors. The diminution of this option for Cortland students is worthy of institutional concern.

2. A marked increase in the number of students taking (and paying for) summer/winter session courses in order to complete their degrees.

Although external factors influence this curricular expansion, it is one indication of the inability of students to take required and elective courses within the normal academic year, and by itself suggests the value of considering those options within our control to make degrees, and other educational experiences, feasible and accessible options for all students within the traditional calendar year and four year undergraduate time window.

3. Transfer student mobility.

The SUNY Board of Trustees has begun to more carefully examine program requirements at all institutions, including the majors and general education. Recognizing the challenges for transfer students, campuses are encouraged to consider more flexibility in the GE program. To this effect, SUNY policy now permits SUNY GE to be fulfilled on its campuses by completing coursework in seven out of the ten SUNY GE categories. Quantitative Skills and Basic Communication categories are required along with five of the eight remaining categories. In addition, students must also complete a total of 30 credit hours in GE courses. Each of our peer comprehensive colleges has initiated changes to address this standard.

In a memorandum to campus presidents from the office of the University Provost dated June 13, 2013, pertaining to transfer mobility, it says: "Campuses shall review existing programs with Transfer Paths that lead to an A.A., A.S., and bachelor's degree to determine whether they currently include a sufficient number of Transfer Path courses within the first two years of full-time study in the program . . . to enable a bachelor's degree to be completed in two additional years of full-time study." (B. iii, page 3) This mandate to campuses to review their "transfer paths" bears directly on Cortland's current GE review, central as the GE program is to students' undergraduate education and ability to complete their degrees in a timely manner.

Process Timeline and Campus Discussion

The proposal presented by the GE Committee represents the culmination of activities spanning three semesters to inform the campus of General Education discussions at campus and system levels, invite feedback and systematically process all information (see table below). Over this time, important reference materials have included the SUNY Board of Trustee Resolution on Transfer Mobility, the SUNY Provost Memorandum to Presidents on Transfer Mobility, SUNY General Education requirements, and information on SUNY Cortland's GE program. The efforts to engage the campus and provide venues for input included:

- 2 Online Surveys of Faculty and Staff
- 2 Online Student Surveys
- 6 Open Campus Meetings
- 2 Facilitated Discussions at Joint Chairs
- Academic Affairs Council Discussion
- Invitation to Chairs to Solicit Department Based Feedback
- General Education email with minimum three formal requests for feedback
- Student Senate Discussion

The initial campus survey was conducted in spring 2013. This survey was emailed to the SUNY Cortland faculty/staff distribution list. There were 65 respondents with 88% of those identifying as faculty. An analogous survey was emailed to SUNY Cortland students and 160 students responded. The survey asked three open ended items: What are the purpose and goals of General Education? How does our current GE program meet the purpose and goals? Additional comments. All responses were reviewed and coded with the following key themes emerging from the responses:

1. An emphasis on the purpose of GE as providing students with the opportunity to study multiple disciplines to encompass a well-rounded educational experience
2. A need for greater flexibility and choice for students within the program
3. The importance of writing and critical thinking.
4. A need to improve the GE assessment process.

The need for greater choice and flexibility within the GE program was the strongest theme and finding. Thus, the GE committee determined that this theme should be explored in more detail.

In the fall of 2013, a follow-up email survey was conducted (68 faculty responded) which provided a menu of possible alterations to the existing GE program guided by the findings and suggestions from the previous survey. While not a strong finding, some respondents felt that no change was needed and thus, the option of making no changes was included. A survey with the same menu of possible alterations was also administered to students. In addition, three open campus forums were held on various GE options, along with presentations and discussions of this at a Joint Chairs meeting and at the Academic Affairs Council.

In January of 2014, the GE Committee held a retreat to analyze the data, encompassing

expressed preferences and recommendations from all campus forums. While some expressed a preference that no change in Cortland's GE be made, the greater sentiment favored some degree of change in the direction of providing students with more options among the GE categories. Operating inductively, the GE Committee used the information gathered to summarize five possible changes in the GE program, which yielded three alternative models for an altered GE program. These were presented to the campus in February 2014. Three open campus meetings were then held, along with presentations and discussions before a Joint Chairs meeting, and a meeting of the student senate, to solicit comments and suggestions. In addition, the General Education email (general.education@cortland.edu) was established and shared to ensure all stakeholders could communicate their perspectives to the committee.

Summary Table of GE Committee Activities: Spring 2013 to Present

Steps in the Process	Inquiry & Information	Themes and Findings
Spring 2013 First Surveys to Faculty/Staff and Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the goals and purpose of General Education How does the current program meet those goals Additional comment 	Emergent themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose is provide students opportunity to learn about multiple discipline; well-rounded; broaden skills Need for greater flexibility and choice for students Writing and Critical Thinking emphasis Improve assessment process
Spring 2013 SUNY Board of Trustees Seamless Transfer Resolution Faculty Senate charges GE Committee with review of resolution and compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review resolution and SUNY Provost Memorandum to Presidents to ensure understanding and determine compliance Review of general education programs at peer institutions 	Among the mandates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SUNY GE may be completed with 7/10 categories met; 1 and 10 required; 30 credit minimum All bachelor degrees must be maximum of 126 credit hours (four year plan review coordinated by Advisement and Transition)
Fall 2013 Second Surveys to Faculty/Staff and Students Meetings: -3 open campus forums -Joint Chairs -Academic Affairs Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploration of major theme calling for greater flexibility in program Feedback on possible options given recommendations and requirements Additional comments 	
January 2014 Content analysis and committee retreat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee members charged with analysis of survey feedback and transcripts, open meetings, and any additional communications with committee January retreat to review findings and identify any potential themes 	Based on feedback, five independent recommendations for change to current GE Program: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Allow students the option between a second natural science OR GE 12 Allow 3 or 4 credit lab sciences Fulfill 2 categories from GE 4, 5, 6 Allow either GE 7 or GE 8 Allow either GE 6 or GE 11 Additionally, some respondents suggested: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Follow SUNY model only (see new mandate) Follow SUNY plus keep local GEs
February 2014 Distributed background, findings and recommendations via faculty and student listservs Created GE email Meetings: -3 open campus meetings -Joint Chairs -Student Senate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of the five recommendations developed earlier Discussion about how to retain distinctive character of SUNY Cortland's GE Program while still permitting greater flexibility for students and programs 	
March 2014 Further content analysis and second committee retreat This proposal created and forwarded to Faculty Senate for consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March retreat to review and synthesize findings to create proposal 	Based on feedback, the following emerged: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Require only one natural science Allow 3 or 4 credit lab sciences Fulfill 2 categories from GE 3, 4, 5 Continue to require GE 11 and 12 Additionally, in order to increase the choices of courses that satisfy various GE categories: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate existing courses in GE 11 and GE 12 and apply for addition SUNY GE status (categories 1-10) where possible Reexamine learning outcomes for categories 1-10 to more closely align with SUNY-wide GE

Range of Responses and Strongest Concerns

The recommendations discussed and presented by the committee represent the emergent and evolving themes from all feedback through an ongoing process. Amidst this information, there was a broad array of responses in regard to the General Education program as a whole and specific categories and recommendations respectively. This could be represented on a continuum ranging from a perspective that supported no change to the GE program to a counterpoint that recommended the elimination of the SUNY Cortland specific (local) GE categories of 11, 12 and 13 and a move toward the 5/8 option that SUNY would allow.

It is important to note that all feedback was indeed reviewed by the committee and that multiple reviewers looked at the information in order to validate and clarify the findings and recommendations. The final proposal represents the strongest thematic recommendations from campus that emerged and sustained through the entire dialogue. At the same time, the committee fully appreciated and considered all perspectives offered.

Recognizing the Purpose of General Education

At each round of the data gathering process, the GE Committee carefully considered campus concerns related to any alterations to the current SUNY Cortland General Education Requirements. The following priorities were identified for general education and guided the development of this proposal:

- Retention of cultural competency through the completion of foreign language
- Exposure to issues related to prejudice and discrimination
- Importance of natural science methodology
- Impact of science on society
- Exposure to global issues
- Knowledge of history and cultural differences
- Recognition that state, system, accreditation, and licensure mandates affect curriculum and course offerings
- Benefits for students to have greater choice in their education as an intellectual and developmental process

Spring 2014 Review of the Recommendations and Committee Conclusions

In spring 2014 the GE committee put forth five specific recommendations for changes to the GE program that had emerged from the surveys and open meetings conducted in fall 2013. The committee reviewed all of the feedback received on these recommendations to determine which of them should be included in our recommendation to the Faculty Senate. Here we present a summary of the feedback on each recommendation along with the committee's determination regarding each recommendation.

Allow GE 12 (Science, Technology, Values and Society) to fulfill the second science requirement

In campus discussions, it was noted that this suggestion would be more completely described as follows: In addition to one required science course, students would take either a second science course or a GE 12 course.

Those who supported this recommendation felt that it would be reasonable to expect students to complete one required science course to fulfill SUNY requirements along with either an additional science or a GE 12 course. However, some individuals raised concerns about the impact that this might have. Some felt that any reduction in the number of required science courses would weaken the GE program. Others expressed concerns about the potential impact on the number of students who enrolled in GE 12 courses. There was notable support for preserving the GE 12 category so that all students would have the opportunity to consider issues about science and society (such as climate change) that may not be addressed in traditional science courses.

Conclusion: The GE committee concluded that the campus should consider reducing the number of required natural science courses from two to one (in effect, eliminating the GE 13 category).

Allow either three-credit or four-credit natural science laboratories to fulfill GE 2

While there was not universal agreement, there was strong consensus that the inclusion of a laboratory experience was more critical than the number of credit hours. Some who opposed this change felt that this would weaken the science requirement, noting that courses with fewer contact hours would necessarily include less content.

SUNY describes the laboratory requirement as "highly desirable" but does not require it. Cortland's GE science offerings are currently divided into two categories (A and B). Students may fulfill the current two-course requirement in two ways: either taking two courses from Category A, or one course each from Categories A and B. Cortland's policies state that courses in category A must include a laboratory. Although all courses currently approved in this category carry 4 credit hours, the policies do not explicitly state that 4 credit hours are required.

Conclusion: The GE committee recommends that the campus consider allowing either three or four-credit natural science laboratories.

Require two social sciences instead of three (GE 3 or 4 or 5 - choose 2 categories)

Among all of the recommendations discussed, this one had the clearest support. A frequently-noted concern is the fact that many courses in GE 3 also “double dip”; that is, they also satisfy another GE category. In particular, there are several courses that satisfy both GE 3 and GE 4, or GE 3 and GE 5. We emphasize the fact that students must complete two courses (six credit hours) among these three categories. If a student happens to take a course that double dips, they will still need to take a second course to meet the two course requirement. We also note that students must complete courses in two of these three categories. Completing two courses in the same category will not fulfill this requirement.

Conclusion: The GE committee recommends requiring two of the following three categories for a total of six credits: GE 3, GE 4, GE 5.

Completion of either a humanities course or an arts course (GE 7 or 8)

Repeatedly, individuals pointed out that there are great differences between the courses in these categories, and that the humanities and the arts are both critical components of a well-rounded liberal education.

Conclusion: Given the feedback, the GE committee recommends no change to these category requirements.

Completion of either a contrasting cultures or prejudice and discrimination course (GE 6 or GE 11)

Many respondents (both faculty and students) stated that they considered GE 11 to be an essential category that must be maintained in our GE program. They believe that GE 11 contributes to the uniqueness of the Cortland GE program, and that the courses in this category address important issues regarding prejudice and discrimination that students should be exposed to. Others felt just as strongly that inclusion of the Contrasting Cultures category is necessary to ensure that students have exposure to non-Western thought. While there are some courses that may satisfy both categories, the general consensus was that there was not enough overlap to justify combining the two.

Conclusion: The GE committee is not including this recommendation in the proposal.

Based on the conclusions regarding the initial five recommendations summarized above and a review of all related feedback and information, the GE Committee formulated the following Proposed Revision of SUNY Cortland General Education.

Proposed Revision of SUNY Cortland General Education

The proposal described below is the result of the GE Committee's work to synthesize the feedback we have received throughout the process and develop a proposal that retained the overall purpose of the General Education program while responding to the significant calls to allow more choice and flexibility within the program. We believe that it represents the preferences of our campus as a whole, recognizing that no proposal will reflect the individual preferences of each campus member or department.

The GE Committee unanimously approved the following amendments to the General Education Program:

- Reduction of the natural science requirement to one laboratory course (elimination of GE 13 – a second natural science)
- Allow 3 or 4 credit hour laboratory natural science courses to fulfill the natural science requirement
- Allow students to complete two of the following three categories: GE 3 – Social Science, GE 4 – United States History and Society, and GE 5 – Western Civilizations for a total of six credit hours

These changes would result in the following revised General Education Program:

- 1. Quantitative Skills (3cr)**
- 2. Natural Science (with a lab) (3 or 4cr)**
- 3. Social Science (3cr)**
- 4. United States History and Society (3cr)**
- 5. Western Civilization (3cr)**
- 6. Contrasting Cultures (3cr)**
- 7. Humanities (3cr)**
- 8. The Arts (3cr)**
- 9. Foreign Language (3cr)**
- 10. Basic Communication (3cr)**
- 11. Prejudice and Discrimination (3cr)**
- 12. Science, Technology, Values and Society (3cr)**

Students complete two of the three categories and complete 6 credit hours

Students must complete a minimum of 30 credit hours of approved SUNY General Education course work. Courses in GE 11 and 12 only count towards that total if they are cross listed in categories 1-10.

Further Considerations

Several recommendations for future consideration have emerged as a result of the open meeting discussions, surveys and other feedback. These include suggestions regarding course offerings, attributes, learning outcomes and processes. These recommendations are a complement to the proposal and should be considered for future discussion.

Related GE Policy Review and Implementation

The Committee recognizes that following any change in requirements, implementation and education plans would be critical to address:

- Review of GE Policies including transfer student specific policies such as waivers
- Timeline for implementation (recommended fall 2015 implementation)
- Update of all publications and media (e.g., College Catalog; advising materials)
- Banner and Degree Works updates
- Advising outreach

Continued review to monitor compliance with requirements of the SUNY Provost's Memorandum to Presidents on Seamless Transfer

Review the learning outcomes of the SUNY GE Categories at Cortland

As a result of the work of the 2006 General Education Taskforce, SUNY GE and Cortland GE learning outcomes were integrated into a single set of learning outcomes for each category. With the good intention of reflecting both, the result has created a large set of learning outcomes in each category that may be inhibiting the approval of courses (and expansion of offerings) in GE categories. In some instances, such as Western Civilization, there were questions about the interpretation of the category. In addition, instructors may find it difficult to interpret and incorporate all learning outcomes as required. The GE Committee and campus should review learning outcomes for all categories for clarity as well as rigor, meaning, and ability to measure.

Review local learning outcomes

Discussions revealed divergent views on the purpose and outcomes of the local General Education categories GE 11: Prejudice and Discrimination and GE 12: Science, Technology, Values, and Society. Exploring the local learning outcomes in depth could clarify their role in the GE program, and could lead to more options within each of our local categories.

Local GEs to be submitted for SUNY GEs where possible

Allowing students to fulfill multiple GEs through double dipping is already possible in some instances, and could benefit the local GEs as well. The campus should consider a review of courses currently in the local GEs and review their appropriate fit in SUNY GE categories according to learning outcomes as it is possible that some might already meet these outcomes. Allowing students to fulfill SUNY GEs at the same time as local GEs could potentially free up credits for students to take more electives.

Provide more course offerings within the categories

Providing more course offerings to choose from is another theme that strongly emerged in the open meetings. Comparisons with other SUNYs have demonstrated that other campuses have broader definitions of what may count for their GEs and thus more opportunities for students (both in terms of course availability and range of experience).

Strengthening critical thinking and writing

Throughout the discussions over the past year, there was clear support for the importance of students' critical thinking and writing skills. Although embedded in GE and throughout majors, we recommend that we continue to look at ways to assess and strengthen this throughout the curriculum. This goes beyond General Education and may be something to consider as an institutional initiative with partners such as the College Writing Committee.

Improve assessment process

The assessment process for GE could also be improved, in order to make the findings more relevant and useful in meeting the purpose of General Education. This could also help us better understand the impact on students and better articulate the purpose of General Education to all stakeholders.

Greater involvement and investment across campus

While there is strong consensus among all members of SUNY Cortland that General Education is important to the education of all students, the level of participation and contribution to the sustainability of the program needs to be addressed. The GE Committee is often recruiting new members well into the year, there is consistently resistance to participation in the assessment process or even in discussing the process, and there have been fewer than five GE course proposals in the past three years. The purpose of GE and its role need to be clearly understood by faculty and students alike. Frequent communication is also important to maintain a thriving GE program.

Resources

SUNY Provost Memorandum to Presidents on Seamless Transfer

<http://old.suny.edu/provost/mtp/files/MTP13-3SeamlessTransfer6-14-13.pdf>

SUNY Board of Trustees Resolution on Seamless Transfer

<http://www.suny.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/meetings/webcastdocs/Tab%2018%20-%20Seamless%20Transfer%20-%20Revised.pdf>

SUNY General Education Requirements

<http://system.suny.edu/academic-affairs/app/general-education/>

SUNY Cortland General Education Requirements (2013-14 College Catalog)

http://catalog.cortland.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=19&poid=2684

American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) General Education

<http://www.aacu.org/resources/generaleducation/>

Revising General Education and Avoiding the Potholes (AACU Publication)

http://leap.aacu.org/toolkit/wp-content/files_mf/gened_potholes_excerpt.pdf

Appendix of Committee Materials and Communication

Email Correspondence from the GE Committee to the campus Over the last three semesters

SPRING 2013

Date	Subject	Content
April 25, 2013	Your Thoughts on General Education	<p>Dear Faculty and Staff:</p> <p>As part of the effort to enhance the General Education (GE) assessment, the General Education Committee is soliciting feedback from the campus community. This year, we are piloting the following open-ended survey to understand perceptions of SUNY Cortland's GE program. Students will have the opportunity to take a similar version of the survey and are being sent an invitation via email. Please encourage students to complete the survey as well.</p> <p>The results of this survey will be kept confidential. Results will be analyzed to help inform our understanding of GE and add dimension to our assessment efforts. Findings will be distributed at the beginning of the fall semester. We request that surveys be completed by May 31, 2013.</p> <p>The survey link: Faculty/Staff General Education Survey</p> <p>Thank you for your time and insight, SUNY Cortland General Education Committee</p>

FALL 2013

Date	Subject	Content
Nov 4, 2013	Campus Discussions on General Education Revision: An Invitation to	<p>Last spring, the SUNY Cortland GE Committee surveyed students and faculty/staff as an initial step in the review of the GE program. The strongest theme that emerged in the responses was a call for greater flexibility and options within the GE program. Additional themes included a continued focus on students' writing and critical thinking skills as well as formulating a discussion on effective ways to measure and utilize GE assessment outcomes. The GE committee will continue this dialogue through a second campus</p>

	<p>Participate</p> <p>survey and by hosting three open meetings in November. The committee will also be meeting with the SGA and surveying students for their perspectives. Based on campus feedback, the committee will be formulating a proposal for the Faculty Senate.</p> <p>We strongly encourage everyone on campus to engage with this discussion and provide constructive recommendations. The online survey will be coming soon in another email and the open meetings to discuss the GE program and possibilities for revision will be held as follows:</p> <p>Monday, Nov. 11, 2013 3:00-4:30 p.m. Old Main Faculty Colloquium</p> <p>Friday, Nov. 15, 2013 3:00-4:30 p.m. Corey Union Exhibition Lounge</p> <p>Tuesday, Nov. 19, 2013 3:00-4:30 p.m. Park Center Hall of Fame Room</p> <p>We understand that some people may have to come late or leave early to these meetings. Please RSVP by emailing Pam Schroeder to help us with arrangements.</p> <p>Background General Education is the liberal arts foundation of every undergraduate degree program at SUNY Cortland. It is the shared experience of our students that strives to provide them with a breadth of knowledge, exposure to a range of perspectives through the disciplines and opportunities to strengthen critical thinking and communication skills.</p> <p>The nature of GE is a dynamic one—reflection and change should be a natural part of the stewardship of GE in order to keep it relevant and engaging for students and faculty alike. Prior to the implementation of the SUNY General Education requirements of 2000, SUNY Cortland had a full GE program specific to the campus. In 2005, the outcomes of the SUNY and Cortland GE programs were integrated into the current program you see today.</p> <p>It is an opportune time for us to revisit our GE program as we reflect on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Over time, the expansion of credit hours in both the GE program and in our majors has reduced the amount of flexibility in the curriculum. Limitations on electives have made it challenging for students to complete minors and study abroad. In addition, there is a marked increase in the number
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		<p>of students taking (and paying for) summer/winter session courses in order to complete their degrees. Although there are external factors that impact this curricular expansion, it is worthwhile to consider the options within our control to make degrees, and other educational experiences, feasible and accessible options for all students.</p> <p>2. In order to increase transfer student mobility, SUNY has begun to more carefully examine program requirements at all institutions including the majors and general education. Recognizing the challenges for transfer students, they are encouraging campuses to consider more flexibility in the GE program. To this effect, institutions may permit SUNY GE to be fulfilled by 7/10 categories (Quantitative and Basic Communication must be included) and 30 credit hours in GE courses. Each of our peer institutions has adopted this standard.</p> <p>Approaches to GE Revision</p> <p>SUNY now allows four year programs to require only 7/10 of the SUNY categories and a total of 30 credits in SUNY GE (Quantitative Skill and Basic Communication must be included). In looking at our peer SUNY comprehensive colleges, there are several approaches being used in general education revision. With any option, we must retain categories 1 and 10, and we must require 30 credits hours of SUNY GE coursework. Options that we could consider include (but are not limited to):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain all categories and allow students to select categories <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students choose (number of choices range at schools). Examples include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Students choose 5 categories from number 2 through 9 ii. Require specific and then allow options; iii. Require 1, 10, 2 and 9 and then have options of remaining categories (Oswego) 2. Allow students to select within merged categories. Student chose of merged categories. For example at Plattsburgh: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Either US Civilization or Western Civilization b. Wither World Systems (non-Western) or Foreign Language c. Either Humanities or The Arts 3. Remove SUNY or Local General Education requirements. Fredonia eliminated a second speaking intensive course and an upper level GE requirement.
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		<p>SUNY Cortland Current General Education Program</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quantitative Skills 2. Natural Sciences (two course requirement; one must include lab) 3. Social Sciences 4. United States History and Society 5. Western Civilization 6. Contrasting Cultures 7. Humanities 8. The Arts 9. Foreign Language (refer to degree program) 10. Basic Communication: Academic Writing and Presentation Skills 11. Prejudice and Discrimination 12. Science, Technology, Values and Society 13. Natural Science (second science course)
Nov 11, 2013	General Education Survey and Open Forums	<p>General Education: Survey and Reminder of Campus Open Forums</p> <p>As part of an on-going discussion of the General Education program and potential changes, the General Education Committee invites you to participate in the following online survey:</p> <p>http://survey.cortland.edu/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=7153378</p> <p>Students will have an opportunity to respond to a similar survey. For more background information and reminders about the upcoming open forums on General Education, see below. (Content of Nov 4 email above repeated)</p>
Dec 16, 2013	General Education Committee Update	<p>Dear Faculty and Staff,</p> <p>The General Education Committee would like to thank those of you who participated in the open meetings and/or completed our survey this semester. We value your input and feedback as we evaluate the GE program on our campus. Our previous campus survey indicated an interest for greater flexibility within the GE program and the Committee felt that it was important to explore this idea in greater detail.</p> <p>The Committee will be reviewing the results of the survey and open meetings over winter break. Based</p>

		<p>on the findings and emergent themes from the survey and open meetings, the committee will explore possible recommendations. If any recommendations for revision emerge, these will be shared with the campus for discussion at the start of the spring semester.</p> <p>If you are interested in providing additional feedback about the program, do so by contacting Brooke Burk, GE Committee Chair at 753-2448 or brooke.burk@cortland.edu.</p> <p>Again, we thank you for your time and interest. Sincerely, General Education Committee</p>
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SPRING 2014

Date	Subject	Content
Feb 6, 2014	General Education Discussions	<p>General Education Discussions for Spring 2014</p> <p>Attached is a memo presenting background information and recommendations that have emerged from the on-going campus discussions about the SUNY Cortland General Education program. The General Education Committee is inviting feedback on the recommendations. This may include general impressions, implications of recommendations, alternative suggestions and additional considerations. This round of discussions and feedback will be critical to whether any recommendations will be made to the Faculty Senate regarding changes in the General Education program.</p> <p>We encourage departments and offices to discuss these materials and look forward to feedback from groups and individuals.</p> <p>Opportunities for feedback include:</p> <p>Campus Open Meetings on GE Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Friday, Feb. 14, 2-4:00 p.m. in Brockway Hall, Jacobus Lounge o Monday, Feb. 17, 3-4:30 p.m. in Brockway Hall, Jacobus Lounge o Thursday, Feb. 20, 8:30-10:00 a.m. in Park Center, Hall of Fame Room

		Email correspondence sent to the General Education Committee via general.education@cortland.edu
Feb 13, 2014	GE Open Discussion Reminder	Reminder – There will be a General Education open discussion this Friday, Feb. 14, 2-4:00 p.m. located in Brockway Hall, Jacobus Lounge. The memo presenting background information and recommendations is attached.
Feb 17, 2014	GE Open Discussion Reminder - 2/17	<p>Reminder – The next General Education open discussion is scheduled for <u>Monday, Feb. 17, 3-4:30 p.m. located in Brockway Hall, Jacobus Lounge.</u> The memo presenting background information and recommendations is attached.</p> <p>If you are not able to attend this session, a third open meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 20, 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. in Park Center, Hall of Fame Room.</p>
Feb 25, 2014	Call for Comments on General Education Recommendations	<p>Thank you to everyone who participated in the recent open meetings regarding General Education and/or have sent comments to the General Education Committee via email. Whether or not you were able to attend, the General Education Committee is requesting that additional comments or suggestions be contributed by emailing general.education@cortland.edu by Friday, February 28, 2014. For your reference, we have attached the General Education Discussion document distributed earlier this month.</p> <p>All of these contributions will be shared with the entire committee for review and consideration.</p> <p>Thank you, The General Education Committee</p>

Relevant document most of which were shared with the campus through emails or open meetings

I. SEAMLESS TRANSFER MEMO FROM THE SENATE



TO: Brooke Burk, Chair
General Education Committee

FROM: Joy L. Hendrick, Faculty Senate Chair
Mark J. Prus, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

RE: Cortland's General Education Program and SUNY Seamless Transfer

DATE: February 8, 2013

As you and many of the members of the General Education Committee are likely aware, the SUNY Board of Trustees has recently passed a new resolution that more clearly dictates aspects of campus requirements relating to seamless transfer from one SUNY institution to another. A complete copy of this resolution can be found at: http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic_affairs/SeamlessTransfer.cfm. While a memorandum to the college presidents has yet to be sent, it is the sentiment of the Faculty Senate Steering Committee that it is not too early to begin a review of our transfer policies regarding general education.

Several major aspects of this resolution are that:

- "1. Each curriculum leading to an A.A., A.S., and bachelor's degree shall enable students to complete seven of ten SUNY General Education Requirement academic areas (including mathematics and basic communication), two competency areas, and 30 credits of SUNY General Education courses within the first two years of full-time study of the program (or 60 credits, whichever is greater), unless a program-level waiver applies.
2. When a campus or curriculum has lower-division, locally defined general education requirements that exceed the SUNY General Education Requirement, it shall ensure that those local requirements do not prevent a student from completing an undergraduate degree within the program's usual credit requirement.
3. Consistent with prior policy, each incoming transfer student shall have fulfilled a SUNY General Education area, as distinguished from the particular course, if the original SUNY campus deemed it fulfilled.
4. The student shall receive credit for a SUNY General Education Requirement course that applies to the major if successfully completed with a grade of C or above."

The Faculty Senate Steering Committee with the support of the Provost are charging the General Education Committee to review Cortland's transfer policies relating to General Education to bring them in line with SUNY's (available at: https://www.suny.edu/student/academic_general_education.cfm). According to our current policy as written in College Catalog:

Any approved SUNY General Education course taken at another institution will be accepted into the related Cortland General Education category. Courses from non-SUNY institutions and courses for Cortland Category 11, Prejudice and Discrimination, and Category 12, Science, Technology, Values and Society, may also be transferred, providing they meet the learning outcomes of these categories. Natural sciences courses that provide a survey of a traditional discipline with a laboratory will be accepted into category 2A; all others will be accepted into category 2B.

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II. CURRENT GE PROGRAM AND REVISION APPROACHES

General Education Categories and Options

SUNY Cortland Current [General Education Program](#)

1. Quantitative Skills
2. Natural Sciences (two course requirement; one must include lab)
3. Social Sciences
4. United States History and Society
5. Western Civilization
6. Contrasting Cultures
7. Humanities
8. The Arts
9. Foreign Language (refer to degree program)
10. Basic Communication: Academic Writing and Presentation Skills
11. Prejudice and Discrimination
12. Science, Technology, Values and Society
13. Natural Science (second science course)

SUNY now allows four year programs to require only 7/10 of the SUNY categories and a total of 30 credits in SUNY GE (Quantitative Skill and Basic Communication must be included).

Approaches to GE Revision

In looking at our peer SUNY comprehensive colleges, there are several approaches being used in general education revision. With any option, we must retain categories 1 and 10, and we must require 30 credits hours of SUNY GE coursework. Options that we could consider include (but are not limited to):

1. Maintain all categories and allow students to select categories
 - a. Students choose (number of choices ranges at schools). Examples include:
 - i. Students choose 5 categories from number 2 through 9
 - ii. Require specific and then allow options; Require 1, 10, 2 and 9 and then have options of remaining categories ([Oswego](#))
2. Allow students to select within merged categories. Student chose of merged categories. For example at [Plattsburgh](#):
 - i. Either US Civilization or Western Civilization
 - ii. Wither World Systems (non–Western) or Foreign Language
 - iii. Either Humanities or The Arts
3. Remove SUNY or Local General Education Requirements. Fredonia eliminated a second speaking intensive course and an upper level GE requirement.

III. GE CAMPUS DISCUSSION - SPRING 2014

SUNY Cortland General Education Spring 2014 Campus Discussion



Introduction

In the spring of 2013, the SUNY Cortland GE Committee surveyed students, faculty and staff as an initial step in the review of the GE program. The strongest theme that emerged in the responses was a call for greater flexibility and options within the GE program. Additional themes included a continued focus on students' writing and critical thinking skills as well as formulating a discussion on effective ways to measure and utilize GE assessment outcomes.

The GE Committee continued this dialogue by conducting a second campus survey during the fall 2013 semester, by hosting three open meetings in November, and meeting with the joint department chairs. The committee also surveyed students for their perspectives. In January of 2014, the GE Committee met to assess the results from these surveys and meetings. Based on those results, the committee summarized five recommendations for amending the Cortland GE program. From these recommendations three models emerged illustrating possible changes. These are being presented to the campus for discussion.

Before proceeding to those, however, we begin with the understanding that our GE program, like that on any campus, involves two parts. The first is the practical realization that every department that delivers GE courses sees a concrete benefit for doing so. That benefit takes the form of enhanced enrollments in GE courses and the prospect of attracting students to courses and programs. Students who take a survey-level course in a department that they likely would not have otherwise taken, decide that the subject matter is interesting, and then take additional courses in the department, resulting in added enrollments in other department courses and the possible addition of new majors or minors. It is difficult to chart how much this actually occurs, but there is a general belief that GE has this effect.

Overall decisions regarding the construction and composition of GE cannot be based on whether departments will gain or lose students. That is because of the second component of GE: its purpose and design is to provide all students with a comprehensive and coherent general education that spans disciplines, subjects, and types of learning. General education decisions must be made based on the program's coherence, intellectual and pedagogical integrity, balanced against the other curricular imperatives that compose an undergraduate student education.

Background: Why Do this? Why Now?

General Education is the liberal arts foundation of every undergraduate degree program at SUNY Cortland. It provides the shared intellectual experience for our students; it strives to provide them with a breadth of knowledge, exposure to a range of perspectives through the disciplines, and opportunities to strengthen critical thinking and communication skills.

The nature of GE is a dynamic one—reflection and change should be a natural part of the stewardship of GE in order to maintain its relevance, currency, and mutual engagement for students and faculty. Prior to the implementation of the SUNY General Education requirements of 2000, SUNY Cortland had a full GE program specific to the campus. In 2005, the outcomes of the SUNY and Cortland GE programs were integrated into the current program you know today. The critical examination of Cortland's GE program does not occur in a vacuum. This originated as a SUNY Provost initiative to increase transfer student mobility. It occurred within the context of SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher's emphasis since her installation in 2009 on what she has named "systemness": establishing as an institutional priority greater integration of programs, procedures, and other elements among the SUNY campuses. With this as both backdrop and institutional priority, there are additional factors that impose greater stress on Cortland's curriculum.

Campus Recommendations and Models

During a winter retreat, the General Education Committee reviewed the following surveys and discussions in the fall 2013 semester: faculty/staff and student survey responses, open campus meeting transcriptions, and Joint Chairs' Council focus group notes. Based on that retreat and emergent themes from the data, the committee has summarized five recommendations presented by members of the campus and integrated these into three models for discussion. Along with suggestions for the GE program structure, the campus showed interest in supporting student writing and critical thinking development. This will be an agenda item for broader campus discussion.

The importance of creating balance, breadth and choice in the GE program was a major focus of the campus suggestions. As you review the potential changes, keep in mind that according to SUNY GE Requirements ([Memorandum to Presidents](#), pg. 2), students must complete:

- Quantitative Skills (GE 1) and Basic Communication (GE 10)
- 5 out of the 8 remaining SUNY GE categories
- 30 total credits in SUNY GE

The SUNY Cortland Current [General Education Program](#) includes the following categories representing both SUNY and SUNY Cortland local requirements

1. Quantitative Skills
2. Natural Sciences (two course requirement; one must include lab)
3. Social Sciences
4. United States History and Society
5. Western Civilization
6. Contrasting Cultures
7. Humanities
8. The Arts
9. Foreign Language (refer to degree program)
10. Basic Communication: Academic Writing and Presentation Skills
11. Prejudice and Discrimination
12. Science, Technology, Values and Society
13. Natural Science (two course requirement; one lab)

Recommendations from the Campus

- Allow GE 12 to fulfill the second science requirement
- Allow either three-credit or four-credit natural science laboratories to fulfill GE2
- Require two social sciences instead of three (GE 3 or 4 or 5 - choose 2 categories)
- Completion of either a humanities course or an arts course (GE 7 or 8)
- Completion of either a contrasting cultures or prejudice and discrimination course (GE 6 or GE11)

1. The gradual expansion of required credit hours in both the GE program and in our majors.

These changes have reduced the degree of flexibility in the curriculum. Limitations on the opportunity for students to take electives have made it challenging for students to take elective courses in new disciplines and departments, to complete minors, and study abroad. For some majors, such as Childhood/Early Childhood Education and Adolescence Education programs, students have limited, or no, opportunity to take purely elective courses. Much of this has occurred because of external requirements imposed by accrediting and state agencies. Obviously, not all departments have experienced this degree of elective constriction in their majors, but these changes affect the institution as a whole and the ability of many Cortland students to take courses aside from those required for GE and their majors. That in turn affects every department in the college.

This raises a further feature of a college education that rarely receives attention. Any student's college coursework should consist of three parts: general education, the student's selected major, and elective coursework. The ability of students to complete their curriculum through the selection of elective courses, guided purely by the students' own preferences, is a vital feature of a liberal arts education. GE, by design, exposes students to a variety of disciplines and intellectual traditions through the imposition of category requirements. But students are no less entitled to engage in that process through their own choice of purely elective coursework. All departments benefit from a viable elective coursework component in student course selection, not only in student enrollments outside of their major in discrete elective courses, but in students' selection of minors and even second majors. The diminution of this option for Cortland students is worthy of institutional concern.

2. A marked increase in the number of students taking (and paying for) summer/winter session courses in order to complete their degrees.

Although external factors influence this curricular expansion, it is one indication of the inability of students to take required and elective courses within the normal academic year, and by itself suggests the value of considering those options within our control to make degrees, and other educational experiences, feasible and accessible options for all students within the traditional calendar year and four year undergraduate time window.

3. Transfer student mobility.

The SUNY Board of Trustees has begun to more carefully examine program requirements at all institutions, including the majors and general education. Recognizing the challenges for transfer students, campuses are encouraged to consider more flexibility in the GE program. To this effect, SUNY policy now permits SUNY GE to be fulfilled on its campuses by completing coursework in seven out of the ten SUNY GE categories. Quantitative Skills and Basic Communication categories are required along with five of the eight remaining categories. In addition, students must also complete a total of 30 credit hours in GE courses. Each of our peer comprehensive colleges has initiated changes to address this standard.

In a memorandum to campus presidents from the office of the University Provost dated June 13, 2013, pertaining to transfer mobility, it says: "Campuses shall review existing programs with Transfer Paths that lead to an A.A., A.S., and bachelor's degree to determine whether they currently include a sufficient number of Transfer Path courses within the first two years of full-time study in the program . . . to enable a bachelor's degree to be completed in two additional years of full-time study." (B. iii, page 3) This mandate to campuses to review their "transfer paths" bears directly on Cortland's current GE review, central as the GE program is to students' undergraduate education and ability to complete their degrees in a timely manner.

Campus Recommendations and Models

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Program Models

Based on these recommendations from the campus, three models were developed to illustrate possible GE program revisions. Keep in mind that not changing the current program or different iterations of these changes are also options.

Model 1

If all of these changes were incorporated in our GE program, the following would result.

- **Quantitative Skills (3cr) – GE 1**
- **Natural Science (3cr) – GE 2 (all GE 13 courses would be included in GE 2)**
- **Science Breadth (3cr) – GE 2 or 12 (choose one course from either category)**
- **Social Science (6cr) – GE 3 or 4 or 5 (complete two of three categories)**
- **Diversity (3cr) – GE 6 or 11 (choose one course from either category)**
- **Humanities and Arts (3cr) – GE 7 or 8 (choose one course from either category)**
- **Foreign Language (3cr) – GE 9**
- **Basic Communication (3cr) – GE 10**
- **Minimum total 30 credit hours of SUNY GE (students may need GE electives to meet)**

Other alterations to the current GE Requirements were suggested in the surveys and at the meetings. Many individuals felt that it was important for students to have the greatest amount of choice possible when it comes to their GE education, which resulted in the following options.

Model 2

5 out of 8 SUNY GE Requirements

- **Students must complete GE 1 and GE 10 and choose 5 categories from GE 2-9**
- **GE 11-13 are not required**

Model 3

5 out of 8 SUNY GE Requirements

- **Students must complete GE 1 and GE 10 and choose 5 categories from GE 2-9**
- **GE 11-13 are required (subject to waiver for transfer students, as per existing policy, according to the number of credits they transfer in)**

Feedback, Discussions and Next Steps

The General Education Committee is interested in feedback, comments, and further recommendations from all members of the college community which will inform a possible recommendation(s) to the Faculty Senate regarding the GE program. We encourage departments and offices to discuss these materials and welcome feedback from groups and individuals. Opportunities for feedback include:

- **General Education is on the agenda for the Monday, February 10th Joint Chairs Meeting**
- **Campus Open Meetings on GE Recommendations**
 - Friday, Feb. 14, 2-4:00 p.m. in Brockway Hall, Jacobus Lounge
 - Monday, Feb. 17, 3-4:30 p.m. in Brockway Hall, Jacobus Lounge
 - Thursday, Feb. 20, 8:30-10:00 a.m. in Park Center, Hall of Fame Room
- **Email correspondence sent to the General Education Committee via general.education@cortland.edu**

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IV. OPEN MEETING DISCUSSION HANDOUT EXAMPLE

Campus Discussion of General Education

- Allow GE 12 to fulfill the second science requirement

Comments:

- Allow either three-credit or four-credit natural science laboratories to fulfill GE2

Comments:

- Require two social sciences instead of three (GE 3 or 4 or 5 - choose 2 categories)

Comments:

- Completion of either a humanities course or an arts course (GE 7 or 8)

Comments:

- Completion of either a contrasting cultures or prejudice and discrimination course (GE 6 or GE11)

Comments:

- General comments/recommendations:

Comments:
