

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
AND VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

# GENERAL EDUCATION BOARD

FINAL REPORT

2006-2007



ILLINOIS  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
GENERAL EDUCATION BOARD  
FINAL REPORT

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor  
for Academic Affairs

Swanlund Administration Building  
601 East John Street  
Champaign, IL 61820



September 27, 2006

**REVISED \***

General Education Board:

John Prussing, *Chair*

Michel Bellini

Dale Brashers

Kai-Wing Chow

Jeanne Connell

Virginia France

Peter Golato

Eve Harwood

Keith Hjelmstad

Kristi Kuntz, *ex officio*

Geoffrey Love

Mankin Mak

Ann Mester

Eric Meyer

Joseph Miles

Heather Hyde Minor

Jerome Packard

Raj Padharipande\*

Bill Simmons

Joseph Squier, *ex officio*

Cynthia Turner

Amy Woods\*

Student Representatives\*

Dear Board Members:

Thank you for your willingness to serve on the General Education Board. For those of you who are new to the Board, I will provide some background on general education on the UIUC campus before outlining what I would like to ask you to emphasize this year.

In May 1989, the UIUC Senate established the General Education Board to “ensure, as much as possible, that general education courses will be valuable intellectual experiences.” Since then, the Board has been responsible for defining the categories of general education requirements for the campus, as well as the criteria for approval of courses within these categories. The Board also reviews individual course proposals, and on a staggered schedule, reviews and recertifies all courses approved for general education credit.

Since its inception, a significant portion of the work completed by the Board has been the implementation of the general education requirements as passed by the Senate in 1989. More recently, the Board has addressed broader issues related to general education. Two years ago, the Board prepared reports on the status of general education on this campus and nationwide. While the reports suggested there is no commonly accepted model to emulate, they were very helpful in suggesting future directions to be considered as the campus drafted the strategic plan, and will be informative as we implement this plan over the next five years.

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For the 2006-2007 year, I would like the Board to focus its attention on the Cultural Studies category. As originally drafted the category was intended to promote cultural understanding through coursework in both western and non-western cultures. However, this approach does not recognize or accommodate the recent growth of integrating interdisciplinary approaches and the need to recognize the global context of our society. Over the course of the year, I ask the Board to complete a comprehensive review of the category, its governing language and ultimately the impact on the educational experience of our students.

Specifically, I am interested in the Board's guidance on the following:

- What, if any, changes or recommendations would you suggest for the governing text of the category? Does this category serve our students despite the continually changing nature of our local and global society?
- In 2003, the Board began approving courses as 'global' allowing particular courses to satisfy either the Western/Comparative Cultures or Non-Western/US Minority Cultures. While this structure has provided some additional flexibility to address our global society, it has also caused confusion for students and faculty alike. How can the category better serve the growing appreciation for our global society?
- Does this category present an opportunity to address issues related to diversity?
- If relevant, what challenges must be addressed before this category is significantly revised?
- What options does the GEB see for revisions to the Cultural Studies category?

If your recommendations suggest a significant revision to the GEB 91.02 document, I ask that you draft a proposal for the Senate Educational Policy Committee.

In addition to these specific issues, the Board will carry out the mandated review and recertification of courses and the evaluation of new courses submitted for certification as general education courses. The first meeting of the Board has been scheduled for Wednesday, October 4 from 10:30 – 12:00 in 500 Swanlund.

Thank you for your willingness to serve on the General Education Board. The Board plays a fundamental role in the nature and quality of the undergraduate experience at the University of Illinois. I am pleased that you will work with me on these important activities during the upcoming year.

Sincerely,



Linda Katehi  
Provost and Vice Chancellor  
for Academic Affairs

**Members:**

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**Global Studies Courses**

The GEB started the academic year with a discussion of Global Studies courses.

Keith Marshal provided a primer for board discussion of the concept and the 12 courses so designated. The Cultural Studies Subcommittee reported previously in 2005 that these courses do not fulfill the same function as western or non-western cultural studies courses. This was reiterated in a December 2006 subcommittee report.

## Response to Letter from Chancellor and Provost

The GEB received a letter dated 1/18/2007 from Chancellor Herman and Provost Katehi regarding increasing the race and ethnicity requirements. They requested that the board consider requiring a 3-hour U.S. Minority Cultures course as part of the Cultural Studies requirement. An Ad-Hoc Subcommittee was formed to consider this, composed of Kai-Wing Chow (chair), Virginia France, Peter Golato, Ann Mester, and students Seema Kamath and Jawwed Akhtar. Chow and Golato were also chair and member, respectively, of the Cultural Studies Subcommittee.

The Ad-Hoc Subcommittee preliminary report to the GEB was approved on 4/13 with final approval of a slightly revised version on 5/4. The subcommittee conceptually agreed with the chancellor and provost on the need for increased attention to cultural diversity, but disagreed on implementation. They concluded that a single course in U.S. Minority Cultures should not be a stand-alone requirement, but rather that appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity should be part of General Education as a whole.

The Ad-Hoc Subcommittee made three suggested revisions of the General Education Requirements:

1. *The Cultural Studies requirement guidelines should be revised so that they make explicit that an appreciation for cultural diversity is at the heart of the Cultural Studies requirement.*
2. *We recommend a revision of the Gen Ed course proposal application form. Faculty proposing a new course in any of the requirement categories or recertifying an old one will be required to indicate how the course will integrate contents that address the issue of cultural diversity [ , if applicable,]\*, which includes issues such as race, ethnicity, and social justice in both the US and the world.*

\* The phrase "if applicable" was added at the 4/13 GEB meeting when the preliminary report was approved to recognize that this issue might not apply to all Gen Ed courses, e.g., Quantitative Reasoning courses.

*This approach has been used successfully with the Women and Gender requirement. This puts the responsibility for teaching the importance of understanding cultural diversity on all faculty who teach Gen Ed courses, not just on those who submit their proposal for approval in only one requirement category (i.e. currently Cultural Studies). Although only courses which are newly certified or recertified in a given year will have to answer the question immediately, this puts the faculty on notice that the content needs to be eventually included in all Gen Ed courses. This also means that students will be exposed to the issue of cultural diversity early and often in their college careers.*

3. *Another possible place for inclusion of cultural diversity contents might be in the Composition I courses--perhaps course modules could be developed for the Composition I courses that would allow students the opportunity to write about and reflect on issues of cultural diversity.*

*The report concludes: In addition to the above three recommendations for revising Gen Ed requirements guidelines, we also recommend that the university consider the promotion of greater appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity an essential component of a university education, not just a curricular concern of Gen Ed alone. The promotion needs to be conducted through concerted efforts across the campus in both its academic and extra-curricular environments. The Ad Hoc committee recommends that the University initiate and encourage programmatic and extra-curricular activities designed to promote a better understanding of cultural diversity, and that these be a regular experience that begins early in the learning process for our students.*

### **Courses Rejected for Certification Based on Mode of Delivery**

Several courses were rejected because they were in lecture-only format. The General Education guidelines state: *Departments are responsible for developing appropriate instructional formats for courses proposed for General Education. The course format should not only be appropriate to the discipline and course content, but also should be consistent with the aims of General Education. In most instances the goals of General Education as set forth in these guidelines will not be met by instruction in mass lectures without discussion or laboratory sections.*

### **GEB on Record for Adequate Funding**

On April 13 the Board passed a motion going on record that more funding for large courses is needed, allowing for either smaller class sizes or more TAs. Departments are being asked to teach more and more students with fewer and fewer resources. This is especially critical in Humanities, Social Sciences, and Advanced Composition courses, where students do a lot of writing. Failure to reverse this trend will result in a significant decrease in the quality of general education on the campus.

### **Rolling Recertification**

The rolling recertification process has been implemented. Now 1/5 of all courses in each category are evaluate for recertification each year. This replaces evaluating all courses in a given category every 5 years, a "feast or famine" situation for each subcommittee.

### **Concerns Carried Over to Next Year**

1. Consideration of changing the Western Culture and Non-Western Culture categories to be Cultural Diversity and Globalization.
2. A careful look at how Campus Honor courses are approved as Gen Ed.
3. The articulation procedure for transfer courses approved as Gen Ed.  
(In 2. & 3. there is concern than insufficient oversight is being made.)
4. An assessment of whether there simply are too many General Education courses on campus to be sustained by the available funding.

