

Summary of the Annual 1996-97 Report of the General Education Committee of the University Senate

The accomplishments of the Committee on General Education included arbitrating petitions of exception for general education requirements, functioning as a curriculum committee for the university general education program, conducting a triennial review of specified courses, and participating in the assessment of the university-wide general education program.

Petitions of Exception

A total of 65 petitions were received and decided upon. The majority of these petitions related to requests to have a course taken at another college be accepted as general education. Another common theme was students asking to waive one or two credits in a required category. The committee spent a great deal of time and effort in being fair and equitable to all students while maintaining the spirit of the general education program. Members felt that high standards of general education needed to be maintained. Of the original 65 petitions, 38 were approved and 16 were denied on first presentation to the committee. The remaining eleven cases required more information; a few had been misrouted.

Curriculum Committee Activities

Two issues were addressed by General Education that were pertinent to the curriculum. These issues were American Sign Language as a General Education Language course and our response to the Mackinaw Center Report, a report, given to the General Education Committee in December, 1996 by William Connellan, Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs. The committee was asked to respond since it addressed issues of general education.

A proposal to include COM 114 (American Sign Language I) as a general education language offering was approved by the Student Congress and presented to our committee by the Department of Rhetoric, Communication and Journalism. In order to make the best decision and to better understand the issues surrounding the course, representatives from Linguistics and Modern Languages and Literatures were invited to present to the committee. Besides these presentations, the committee received a communication from the University Committee on Instruction (UCUI)--which is considering a related proposal to approve COM 115, American Sign Language II, as meeting the language distribution requirement--outlining their concerns and recommendations related to the courses. The issues they address include understanding ASL, the academic home of the course, resources, and enrollment responses. Based on the above input, the committee felt it could not make a decision until the Department of Rhetoric, Communication and Journalism addresses the issues raised by these various groups.

Triennial Review of Courses

The following courses were reviewed for consistency with the General Education requirements: Mathematics, Logic and Computer Science - CSE 125, 130 MTH 118, 121, 122 PHL 102, 202 STA 225, 226.

Language - ALS 176, CHE 114, FRH 114, GRM 114, HIU 114, IT 114, JPN 114, LIN 207, ML 191, 192 RUS 114, SPN 114.

Natural Science and Technology - BIO 104, 110, 111, 113, 300 CHM 104, 444, 164, 300, ENV 308, HS 201, PHY 101, 104, 105, 106, 107, 125, 127, 131, 151.

The reviews revealed that all courses but one (PHY 125, The Physics of Music) met General Education Requirements. The reviews were sent to the department chairs. Suggestions were made related to offering more evening classes and including a writing component in several courses. Many strengths were recognized in the courses, such as content and teaching methods.

Assessment

Members of the General Education Committee have discussed assessment issues in depth and have questioned whether we should be evaluating student achievement rather than student perceptions of general education programming, which the assessment instruments currently in use for evaluation do measure. Under the guidance of Kathleen Moore, chair of the University Committee on Assessment, it was suggested that assessment of general education should be aimed at whether student learning is occurring which ultimately achieves the general education objectives within that distribution area. Ms. Moore would like to have a joint group of both committees meet in the future to make the assessment task more manageable. At the present time, the Kansas State IDEA Survey (KSIS) and the College Outcomes Survey (COS) will continue to be used. This is the second year of data collection with these instruments and the information may be useful to future decisions.