

2008

How We Care for the Curriculum at Hunter College

Summary of the Report by the Mellon Project Special Committee to Review the GER

The Mellon Project Special Committee to Review the GER will present its initial report to the Senate on February 20, 2008 at 3:30 PM in Room W714. The full report will be available to the public on February 14, 2008. Please look for a link to the electronic version in a community-wide email on that date. A link will also be provided on the Senate web site: hunter.cuny.edu/senate. Limited hard copies will be available at a reception on February 14 at 3 p.m. in the Hunter West Lobby.

The committee shall offer a resolution at the February 20 meeting.

The report summarizes the work the committee undertook to study and review the GER, and provides an initial assessment of the GER in light of Hunter's own goals, national trends, and developments within CUNY. It provides data and evidence for further analysis, resources to support further investigation, models for consideration, and a plan for community deliberation.

Key findings include:

Organizational Principles—Senate select committees have repeatedly raised three major concerns that have yet to be sufficiently addressed, including:

- the need for a coordinating structure,
- the need to devise a set of requirements that is suitable for multiple points of entry so as to accommodate transfer students, and
- the need to encourage students to take a greater number of advanced courses and to lower barriers against taking advanced courses for which they are qualified.

The committee finds these matters of urgent concern.

Faculty Participation—There is a need for greater participation in general education teaching, research, and advising among the full-time faculty. Nationally, this has become a focal issue in programmatic designs for general education.

Matters of Content—As Hunter looks toward defining itself in the 21st century as part of the Middle States reaccreditation process, it should consider whether the content of the curriculum reflects the current state of knowledge and the changing demands of accessing and producing research and sharing knowledge with others. Related topics include: creating a culture of reading, writing, and communication; modifying, expanding, and/or integrating pluralism & diversity requirements; developing the science curriculum to enhance research and interdisciplinary opportunities; integrating library faculty and embedding information literacy objectives in general education courses; varying the modes of instruction through instructional technologies; expanding the conception of the role of performance and artistic expression in general education; increasing opportunities to develop quantitative reasoning skills in applications in multiple disciplines; exploring civic understanding in national, multinational, and global contexts; and connecting and broadening co-curricular activities, including study abroad.

Focused attention on student engagement and assessment of student learning —At a minimum, general education courses need to share some common learning objectives in the various divisions and categories to facilitate programmatic assessment. These goals should be clearly communicated to students and all parties who participate in implementation. Milestone and capstone experiences and increased opportunities for student research assistantships might be key experiences that could be incorporated in a general education program.

The committee will welcome formal and informal written and oral comments on the report. During the spring 2008 semester, the committee will conduct open public meetings and hearings about general education at Hunter. A schedule of those meetings will be attached to the report.

