



# How We Care for the Curriculum at Hunter College

Initial Report of the Senate Mellon Project Special Committee to Review the GER

February 14, 2008

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Letter from the committee

## This initial report provides an account of the organization and work of the Senate Mellon Project Special Committee to Review the General Education Requirements (GER) and the subcommittees that met during the summer of 2007.

Our Senate charge includes the following:

- **Review** of the Senate's archives, including reports of the Select Committee on the Distribution Requirement that recommended the GER so as to better understand the aims and purposes of the existing requirements.
- **Assess**, to the extent possible, whether and how well the GER achieves its aims and purposes.
- **Engage** the entire academic community in discussion and deliberation of the aims and purposes of general education, and practical considerations of implementation, sustained development, and future assessment.
- **Recommend changes**, if deemed necessary, including those that might not require Senate action or approval but which might be relevant for supporting the general education curriculum.

With this report, we hereby discharge our first duty to study and review the GER. In addition, we supply a preliminary account of our second duty, to provide the College with an assessment of the GER. We intend the report to provide a specific and concrete basis for community-wide discussion and deliberation.

A distinctive feature of this report is that we have done our best to examine Hunter's general education and the curriculum generally in the context of the extensive deliberations of the faculty during the past fifty years as well as in light of our research of recent developments at other institutions. In addition to raising questions that we think are helpful guides to broader discussion, the report includes data and evidence for further

analysis, resources to support further investigation, models for consideration, and a plan for community participation and deliberation.

The committee welcomes formal and informal written and oral comments on this report. During the spring 2008 semester, the committee will conduct open public meetings and hearings about general education at Hunter. Groups and individuals are invited to request to be added to the committee's agenda. The meetings will be digitally recorded and easily accessible to all.

It is the intention of the committee to digest the response and testimony of the faculty, students, and administration of the College, and to report back to the Senate in May 2008.

Respectfully submitted by the Mellon Project Special Committee to Review the GER,

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## Overview— Caring for the curriculum

# We Care for the Curriculum

Throughout most of this report, we focus primarily on general education and graduation requirements, but there are implications for the curriculum as a whole. Everyone has a reason to care about general education.

*“The care of the future is mine.” These words call to mind service and responsibility (taking care) as well as passion (caring about something).*

*Today we might take up Ovid’s theme of metamorphosis—change—as one of our guiding motifs in looking toward how we will care for the future in the 21st century.*

## Caring

Ovid’s Ulysses in *Metamorphoses* speaks the words that are the Hunter motto—“mihi cura futuri.” Informal community discussion of this occurred in 2003, which Sociology Professor Manfred Kuechler summarizes along with helpful context on his Web page.<sup>1</sup> Faculty and students in the Classics department and others throughout the College generated a consensus translation—“the care of the future is mine” (more literally: “to me, the care of the future”). These words call to mind service and responsibility—*taking care*—as well as *passion*—*caring about* something. In the section from which the motto is drawn, Ulysses and Ajax are fighting over entitlement to the armor of Achilles. Coarsely put, Ulysses claims that Ajax cares only for brawn and might while Ulysses takes on the care of the future and in doing so applies his intelligence.

It is interesting that Ovid would be chosen as the source for Hunter’s motto at the inception of the College. Regarded as a decadent in the nineteenth century, Ovid was associated with sexual libertinism. Thus the motto’s choice might have been a snub to all who thought women have no place in the classroom or that they should not be educated at the public’s expense. Regardless, today we might take up Ovid’s theme of metamorphosis—*change*—as one of our guiding motifs in looking toward how we will care for the future in the 21st century. Fixing our sights on the process of change from one form to another resonates with the notion that the educational project is one of

transformation; effecting a change that is empowering when one comes to see oneself as a creator of knowledge rather than its consumer or subject. In our meetings and interviews with faculty, we heard many profess that this is the *raison d'être* of the College and one of our greatest services to the public.

*At Hunter faculty care deeply about the students, and they regard Hunter as a place where the students are extraordinary.*

Other felicitous resonances between Ovid and Hunter's opening on Valentine's Day in 1870 bear mention. Ovid was known for his love poetry, and regardless of whether one agrees with the mission of transformation, it is undeniable that there is a current of deep passion that runs through the work of the College. Ask any faculty member "What is the best thing about Hunter?" The single most likely answer given, and without a moment's hesitation, is "the students." At Hunter *faculty care deeply about the students, and they regard Hunter as a place where the students are extraordinary.* Time and again surveys of student experiences and measures of their satisfaction show that this sentiment is reciprocated, but for various reasons students do not always have opportunities to make significant connections with faculty. Increasing the likelihood of such relations has recently become a priority in the College. We can ask ourselves what role the curriculum plays in cultivating enlivening interactions between faculty and students and whether, unintentionally, we have erected certain barriers that inhibit this connection.

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This report outlines how our work has led us to see that our current general education requirements—whose satisfaction directs nearly 40% of all teaching efforts—now often serves as an impediment to student-faculty interaction rather than a conduit for student engagement and success. In the pages that follow we shall tell the story of how the curriculum has grown to be regarded as a series of roadblocks, obstacles, and booby-traps; how we make it difficult for students to make connections among their areas of study; and how we are missing opportunities to use the curriculum to seed a vibrant intellectual culture that allows students to connect with each other as well as draw connections between the world of ideas in the classroom and the broader cares students have for their lives after Hunter. At the end of the story we suggest pathways to mend these rifts and seize opportunities for collective exploration and action.



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## We

Who is this “we” at the heart of our story? In this report, the steering committee as collective author often invokes the term “we” and invites its interrogation. The pronoun “we” in the title of our report at once designates the common voice of the body of seven who have been deliberating these ideas for the past eight months and initiates an evocative action: a major goal of the document is to offer a basis for discussion aimed at achieving a common vision and a shared sense of responsibility for the Hunter College curriculum. In this respect, the referents of “we” are the permanent faculty as well as the legions of dedicated part-time faculty who teach general education courses. But, it should be clear that responsibility extends beyond those with the prerogative to attend to the curriculum. What is entailed in *taking care of the curriculum* is spelled out in some detail here, and we hope it becomes clear that such caretaking is a responsibility that befalls both faculty and administrators. Everyone who enters our doors—faculty, staff, and students alike—should care about the curriculum. It is for each and every one of them that our motto applies.

We, the steering committee, do not presume that a community that might call itself “we” at Hunter would have to have universal agreement. We understand that some who care very much for Hunter will disagree with aspects of our story. So, we are mindful of the “we” in Emerson’s quotation engraved in giant letters on the wall of the North Building: “We are of different opinions at different hours but we always may be said to be at heart on the side of the truth.” We might not all agree, but we *do all care*. Because we see caring for learning as the absolute core of the College’s mission, and because we see the curriculum as that which facilitates what is learned, we see all parties playing a role in this essential project. Ultimately, it should be clear, our objective here is to open a discussion that enables Hunter College to functionally unite to take action that exhibits care for our curriculum.

*What is entailed in taking care of the curriculum is spelled out in some detail here, and we hope it becomes clear that such caretaking is a responsibility that befalls both faculty and administrators.*

*We might not all agree, but we do all care.*



*Choices we make for general education also have vast implications throughout the College, impacting the curricula for majors programs.*



## The Curriculum

What is the scope of the Mellon Project and this report? We issue this report as the Senate committee charged with reviewing the history of general education at Hunter and the existing requirements. We focus specifically on the requirements and the curriculum available to satisfy them. But the Mellon Foundation grant that supports this inquiry and that guided the initial investigations of the subcommittees has a broader scope of improving undergraduate education generally. The curriculum that supports the GER coincides with approximately 40% of the overall undergraduate curriculum. Demands for courses that fulfill general education requirements drive and direct resources for full-time and part-time staff in departments. Courses fulfilling general education requirements are supposed to prepare students for advanced work, and they are the courses where students are supposed to acquire the competencies that satisfy the measures of proficiency mandated by CUNY.

Choices we make for general education also have vast implications throughout the College, impacting the curricula for majors programs. There are certain basic capabilities that the entire College looks to general education to cultivate, including writing, understanding of scientific method, a sense of historical development, and familiarity with and proficiency in quantitative reasoning. It is supposed that the student who has completed her general education has a breadth of experiences that will allow her to connect her specialized studies with many other areas of thought. Moreover, our decision to build a general education curriculum around what are, by and large, introductory courses to majors allows departments to introduce themselves to potential majors, and thus build their major programs. But the purposes of becoming generally acquainted with a discipline and becoming qualified for more advanced work do not always match. Prior Senate select committees reviewing general education have noted this mismatch. We raise it as a concern once more.

The potential incompatibility between the aims of cultivating a major and provisioning general education is more intense for courses that are beyond the 100-level. When the current GER was created, there was great concern that students were completing their degrees

through coursework that was not sufficiently advanced. Thus, an advanced tier (“Focused Exposure”) was created to lead students to take more advanced courses. We have found this made little difference in the percentage of coursework completed at the 100-level.

The effects of this on the curricula for majors can be quite significant. Prior Senate select committees have worried, and some recent departmental reviews have identified it as a concern, that when upper-level courses do double duty for majors and general education, the level of instruction is suppressed and might not meet the needs of the majors. Yet, were it not for their participation in general education, some departments and programs would not exist, and so their abilities to offer courses exclusively for general education as well as build their major programs are limited. We should acknowledge this as we contemplate change.

These basic findings represent the backbone of our work and serve as important touchstones as we care for the future of general education at Hunter.

## Key findings

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 FINDING #1**

**We need to care more for general education.**

Prior reviews have repeatedly raised three major concerns that have yet to be sufficiently addressed:

.....  
*the need for a caretaking 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.**

**KEY FINDING #2**

**We need to increase faculty participation in general education.**

There is a need for the full-time faculty to assume greater responsibility for the general education curriculum, including:

.....  
*designing, evaluating, and maintaining general education,*

.....  
*teaching general education courses,*

.....  
*integrating research opportunities in general education courses, and*

.....  
*engaging in pre-major academic advising.*

**Nationally, these have become focal issues in programmatic designs for general education.**

**KEY FINDING #3**

**Our general education needs to better reflect learning and achieving in the 21st century.**

As Hunter looks toward defining itself in the 21st century, it should consider whether the curriculum reflects the current state of knowledge and the changing demands of accessing, producing, and sharing knowledge with others, including these goals:

.....  
*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;*  
.....

.....  
*using instructional technologies to vary modes of instruction;*  
.....

.....  
*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.*  
.....

**KEY FINDING #4**

**Our general education needs to pay focused attention to student engagement and provide for assessment of student learning.**

.....  
*General education courses need to share some common learning objectives in the various divisions and categories, and this will facilitate programmatic assessment.*  
.....

.....  
*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, internships, and study abroad might be key experiences that could be incorporated into a general education program.*  
.....

**KEY FINDING #5**

**We should adopt a clear, overarching model for our 21st-century general education.**

We identify four plausible approaches to meeting the needs above. Each has distinctive advantages and challenges. Deliberation during the spring 2008 semester should clarify concerns and narrow options. These alternatives are outlined below.

.....  
*1. Improve the GER, primarily through streamlining, defining common learning objectives to facilitate assessment, and recertifying courses accordingly.*  
.....

.....  
*2. Implement a thoroughly streamlined, comprehensive distribution system.*  
.....

.....  
*3. Create a blended program with distinctive features—such as signature seminars, collaborative projects, and capstone experiences—and a reorientation toward cultivating critical capabilities.*  
.....

.....  
*4. Tailor general education to individual student needs and interests through a vigorous faculty advising and mentoring program.*  
.....

## Call to action

The findings in this report represent the platform and framework for continuing the project. The next phase of work is to move into active deliberation of these findings. This deliberative period in turn prepares the College for enacting careful, reasoned, principled change in general education at Hunter. Thus, in the coming months, we call our fellows to care for the curriculum and achieve the following goals:

- Deliberate and articulate how we care and what we value.
- Define the ends and means of priorities and aspirations.
- Communicate these priorities and aspirations to students and the supporting administrative structures.

Our history of caring runs deep, and our colleagues have had these discussions before. The Senate archives and the institutional memories of our most dedicated faculty reflect this concern. Our peers at many other institutions have participated in such reflection, attempted similar changes, implemented novel experiments, and found ways to do things better than they did before. We should draw from this collective wisdom, build upon it, and devise a curriculum that animates our classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, and advising offices.

# Approach and Process

## Approach and Process

The work of the Mellon Project Special Committee has proceeded with the same care that we encourage in our educating. The project has clear goals and direction, but we do not aim to prejudge the final outcome. Rather, our path has been, and will be, a careful and inclusive exploration and an accumulation of thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and observations from others and ourselves. Our approach is to consider and understand, then document and organize. We seek to provide a foundation from which to deliberate and enact future changes.

### GER review—why now?

Our current general education requirements (GER) are new—we are only now graduating our first classes of students who began their Hunter careers under the those requirements. Why should we consider revising them so quickly? The following are two practical reasons:

- 1. There are acute, day-to-day problems with implementing the GER.** In our study, we have encountered well known and widely shared concerns about facets of Hunter’s General Education and Graduation Requirements. We owed it to ourselves to sort fact from fiction, and indeed we found that not all general concerns are real. Yet, it is undisputed that the presentation of the requirements is inadequate and unnecessarily complex. Secondly, there is general agreement that the implementation was awkward and burdensome and that it produced unintended and undesirable consequences. While the Senate worked diligently to make necessary adjustments to the requirements in light of what was learned from the GER implementation, *confidence* in the requirements themselves, vital for the maintenance and sustenance of any plan, was compromised. Thus, progress has ceased. Moreover, there is general agreement on a third problem with the current requirements: they are difficult to articulate for transfer students, who make up nearly half of incoming students each year. This creates burdens for admissions, registration, and the professional advising offices. And these burdens create financial costs that diminish the availability of resources for support services for all students. They even diminish academic advising opportunities for non-transfer or “native” students.
- 2. Students perceive the GER as a burden.** Surveys of student satisfaction with their experience at Hunter indicate they are dissatisfied with facets of college life, and there is concern this has a bearing on student retention and graduation. Since requirements, when construed as burdens, can be sources of frustration, it is reasonable to imagine that the GER (or any requirements) might be linked with student dissatisfaction. It is certain that students have this perception. Yet, evidence that the GER as implemented in 2001 has had a negative effect on retention and graduation at Hunter is wanting. So, our entire community should be concerned about this problem, but we should not necessarily expect it to have a remedy in curriculum reform.<sup>2</sup>

The problems raised above are practical, and so their remedies do not necessarily require a thorough review of the curriculum itself. Yet, curricular decisions must be driven by academic merit and integrity. So, the committee has identified several additional reasons for serious review:

- 1. How knowledge is produced, shared, and conveyed has changed considerably since the model of general education as a map of the disciplines was devised.** The demands of global citizenship require and value at least some different competencies and experiences that we might incorporate in our curriculum. While it might be argued that little has changed in the world



that might impact the curriculum during the seven years that have elapsed since the GER became effective, the current GER reflects only a modest revision of the Distribution Requirement (DR), which took effect in 1975.<sup>3</sup> In other words, our current model is essentially more than 30 years old. This fact alone does not mean that the GER must be revised, but it does suggest that a thorough review is in order. Some might even argue that the world *has* changed quite considerably since 2001, at least in terms of the demands of participation in matters of global citizenship and the need to make arguably more complex decisions about matters pertaining to health care, global climate change, and the opportunities and significance of developments in, and applications of, technology. The faculty should consider whether, to what degree, and how our graduates should be offered a general education that prepares them for these present and future challenges.

**2. As an institution, we have changed since the conclusion of our most recent deliberations about general education.** Since 2001, more than 155 new faculty have joined our ranks.

Their specializations and areas of competency range from animal behavior and conservation to contemporary French cinema, from bioinformatics to the art history of photography, from the sociology of Chinese immigrant women in New York to the history of Germany under the Nazi regime. As with any curriculum, ours reflects the negotiations of the individuals who did the difficult work of preparing recommendations and deliberating them, drawing on the kinds of inquiries and values that the various disciplines advance. There are many facets of our existing curriculum that are traditional and common throughout most U.S. institutions of higher education; in fact, these are generally perpetuated even in more ambitious revisions of general education. This comes as no surprise, since a general academic mission embraces not only creating new knowledge but also conveying the wisdom of the past that defines our culture. General education *should* be conservative and slow to change, but it should be mindful of the needs of modern life and representative of the preparation and expertise of the faculty who teach it. And the faculty who teach it need to participate in articulating its goals to reinforce what Gaff calls “the social compact that explicitly defines the expectations for student learning and provides a rationale for the curriculum” (2004: 4).

**3. There are large institutional changes underway, and general education should be aligned with, or at the leading edge of, such change.** Hunter is at an interesting crossroads in its development. As an institution we will soon grant doctoral degrees. We have announced aspirations to alter and expand our facilities in significant ways. We have announced our intent to create a new professional school. The importance of research is championed, our junior colleagues expect it to be supported, and the New York State Commission on Higher Education has pinned the hopes of the state economy on it (2007). We continue to be the largest public, urban university in the country. We have a student body that arrives increasingly better prepared academically (as measured by standardized tests), increasingly younger than in the recent past, and increasingly from households of moderate income with parents who received a higher education.<sup>4</sup> Our honors programs are growing. CUNY’s “Decade of Science” has brought new investments in Hunter’s science programs. The CUNY “Compact” and other, successful efforts to develop philanthropy have resulted in greater fiscal health and opportunity. Amidst these changes and challenges, Hunter retains its sense of itself as a high-quality liberal arts institution with a commitment to public service (which is variously interpreted as educating students so that *they* may serve the public or as serving the public by virtue of extending and expanding educational opportunities for individuals who comprise the citizenry). The College is now and has been engaging in massive reviews of its programs and services, including the Middle States Decanal Reaccreditation Review (in progress) and The President’s Task Force on the Hunter Libraries (2007). These studies include reviews and reexaminations of Hunter’s mission,

of the institution's identity, and of its aspirations. The Mellon committee advises that this review of general education leads us to continue that inquiry so as to align a mission of general education with the overall mission of the College and so as to assert the value of general education as essential to the College's mission.

Not only is the College undergoing change, this process of review and reorientation for the 21st century is guiding CUNY initiatives and programs. The CUNY Campaign for Success plays a role in defining our funding priorities and institutional assessments. How well we are communicating our general education requirements, how well students appear to be learning (as evident in grades for gateway courses), and how ready they are for advanced study (as evident in scores for the CUNY Proficiency Exam) are reflected in the "Performance Goals and Targets" that drive administrative decision-making. Finally, the CUNY General Education Project, now in its second phase, places significant emphasis on caretaking and on the need to develop an infrastructure of caring for general education to ensure its ongoing development, coordination, coherence, and assessment.<sup>5</sup> Whether we embrace them or not, we will need to be responsive to these larger institutional developments.

4. Studies show that **regardless of the nature and extent of change in general education review, institutions report positive results from reexamination of general education.** This is true not just for the general education curriculum itself but for nearly all major functions of the institution (Gaff and Wasescha 2001).<sup>6</sup>
5. Perhaps most importantly, **review of the general education curriculum involves discussions of core values. These discussions enhance community and provide opportunities for growth.** In this respect, the Mellon Project presents an *extraordinary* gift to Hunter College. Our curriculum embodies and conveys values that defined the mission of Hunter at its inception: commitment to the higher education of women, the inclusion of modern foreign languages in a program of requirements, and the belief that the purpose of education should be to create opportunities for leadership and lifelong learning rather than merely qualification for work in traditional professions.

In 2004, when Harvard began the process of revising its "Red Book," which had defined its general education for decades, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, William C. Kirby, invited faculty to submit essays on the values and purposes of general education. Students also participated in this exercise, and the resulting work is available in a pamphlet titled "Essays on General Education in Harvard College."<sup>7</sup> Peter J. Gomes, in his "Modesty, Ambition, and Imagination: An Essay on Curricular Reform in Harvard College," writes:

The reform of the curriculum is never easily undertaken, but each academic generation is required to review what it thinks it is doing in light of both the needs of the age and the ancient mandate 'to advance learning and to perpetuate it to posterity.' [...] There is no perfect curriculum, only one that works as well as it can for its particular moment in time. Each generation building upon the experience of its predecessors must make that old work new for itself, noting gains and losses along the way (Gomes 2004: 1, 2).

**For these reasons, as well as the practical concerns mentioned above, we believe it is time for a comprehensive review of general education at Hunter.**

## Project timeline

“The Mellon Project,” as it is known, began as a funded initiative to examine the Hunter College undergraduate curriculum. Following a series of exploratory discussions between President Jennifer Raab and the leadership at the Mellon Foundation, then Acting Dean of Arts and Sciences Judith Friedlander submitted the successful proposal. The award from the Mellon Foundation was granted in 2005, specifically under the category of improving education at liberal arts institutions. The initiative arose as an administrative response to two major concerns. First, Hunter’s retention and graduation rates had not increased significantly despite a variety of efforts to improve them (as of 2003-2004 when the grant was written). Second, there were widely recognized problems with the implementation of the General Education Requirements (GER), which became effective in 2001.

In the spring of 2007, Provost Vita Rabinowitz, the Project Director, formed a steering committee of faculty, administrators, and students, charging them with reviewing the GER while considering, as necessary, various other aspects of the curriculum, including standard course credit hours, the minor, and the graduation requirements, which predate, and are separate from, the GER. A consultant served as the project facilitator from March through November of 2007. In the spring of 2007, she piloted two qualitative surveys to measure student experience and satisfaction, including one administered at the “Senior Salute” and another across six courses that fulfill the GER. Four faculty subcommittees were created during the summer of 2007: Mission and Planning, Writing, Pluralism and Diversity, and Math and Sciences. The subcommittee chairs and membership were selected by the consultant and Provost in consultation with faculty. A faculty chairperson was appointed in June 2007. A Web site and a BlackBoard site were created to inform and educate project participants, communicate with the broader community, facilitate the work of subcommittees, and provide opportunities for feedback.

Twenty-five faculty members met intensively over the summer of 2007 to focus on curricular issues and identify key questions, study core issues, review relevant models, and draft broad recommendations. Additionally, the consultant and committees sought the advice and input of other faculty, including present and past leaders in the Senate. They also consulted various administrative officers and members of administrative supporting units. In addition, some committees planned meetings and events to expand the discussion, creating opportunities for deliberation once classes resumed. At this time, the consultant arranged three public events to stimulate discussion of general education as a whole and of writing in a general education curriculum. (Podcasts of these events are available.)

While public events were underway, significant efforts were made in October and November 2007 to communicate the Project’s activities and invite participation. These efforts included letters to the community from the Provost and faculty chairperson as well as a call for proposals for others to direct the agenda and plan their own symposia. Coordination with Middle States groups was a priority. The faculty chairperson established connections with faculty, student, and administrative leaders at Hunter; at other CUNY colleges; and in the Chancellor’s offices. Throughout the fall, the steering committee worked with the Senate leadership to chart a course for a formal relationship, culminating in a resolution from the Senate Administrative Committee on November 28. This resolution adopted the Mellon Project steering committee to serve as The Mellon Project Special Committee to Review the GER.

This report now satisfies the committee’s charge to review the past requirements and to assess, to the extent possible, the existing requirements. The report also proposes specific action and recommends a course for intensive deliberation. The committee expects to report back to the Senate in May 2008.

## Method: How we did our work

Our initial inquiry was broad and had no predetermined course. Subcommittees began by learning about the nature of our requirements, their evolution and intent, and what it is exactly that we are asking of students. The groups focused on certain areas of concern selected by the Provost (initially writing, pluralism and diversity, and the curriculum for math and science). We examined trends in higher education as evident in the requirements at other campuses.<sup>8</sup> We read reports on general education from other colleges, universities, and university systems.<sup>9</sup> We reviewed reports on current issues in higher education,<sup>10</sup> including the Preliminary Report of the New York State Commission on Higher Education. We attended and hosted lectures and meetings. We interviewed and talked with hundreds of faculty, administrators, and students, including some who were once at Hunter but have since moved elsewhere. We gave campus presentations to the Faculty Delegate Assembly, the Arts & Sciences Advisory Council, and the Full Budget and Personnel Committee. We scoured hundreds of pages of documents in the Hunter Senate archives to better understand the history of the development of general education at Hunter, longstanding issues of concern specifically at Hunter, the intent of the most recent developments in Hunter's general education, and the processes of review and revision at Hunter. We interviewed campus leaders, presidents, provosts, and deans at other institutions. We participated in the CUNY General Education Project,<sup>11</sup> the CASTL program, and the CUE initiative. During this participation, we learned what other CUNY campuses were doing, gathered support for our enterprise, and learned more about CUNY priorities and goals.

In addition to this review, we explored ideal possibilities and imagined a general education curriculum built from the ground up for a student body as large and diverse as Hunter's. We envisioned how to improve upon the existing requirements mindful of our assessment of how well they fulfilled their intent. We considered the goals of general education, we imagined the best ways to meet them.

All in all, we discovered our existing program has much to offer but that there might be missed opportunities and better ways to accomplish our goals. We also discovered that there are concerns raised in prior reviews that either have not been addressed at all (e.g., administrative oversight and faculty development) or have not been addressed sufficiently (e.g., the multiple layers of requirements and the special problems these create, especially for transfer students). We do not suppose we have managed to solve all of these problems, but we do have suggestions for routes to finding solutions, and we call on our colleagues to have the strength and resolve to tackle these issues.

## Learning and Achieving in the 21st Century— Goals, Challenges, and Opportunities

Part of this undertaking is clearly identifying our challenges and goals. In so doing, we reveal and establish our most basic concerns for general education. We recognize that there are many different perspectives and areas of interest in a community as diverse as Hunter. At the same time, we believe that certain goals and concerns unite all of us. The most basic of these is that general education ought to be an area of major concern.

Indeed, Hunter College has a long tradition of caring for the general education of its graduates. The College was founded on the principle that the purpose of higher education is to provide students with a liberal education beyond specialized training in the traditional professions. Hunter has vigorously pursued that mission since its founding in 1870, and it remains the only College in the City University of New York system to offer such an extensive curriculum in the liberal arts and sciences, supported by programs that are the hallmarks of excellence nationally and internationally.

The Mellon Committee accepts the general concern that we need to modernize the curriculum, especially in light of the fact of concern for being relevant to the needs of the 21st century. In particular, some faculty are keen to see interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, and cross-divisional courses available, possibly as requirements for all students. Some strongly voice the need for common, shared experiences that draw on multiple disciplines in the form of common seminars or a core set of courses. Some favor applied approaches to contemporary problems and significant issues. Some have advocated learning communities and first-year seminars. Yet, even those who are intrigued by these ideas have concerns about whether these “new” ideas could be implemented at all.

In the following section, we seek to discuss and clarify the goals, challenges, and opportunities for general education at Hunter. We have drawn on essential concerns as well as on Hunter’s particular needs and character.

### Why general education matters—making connections

Making connections is one of the most important and, in systems as vast and complex as CUNY, one of the most challenging experiences to facilitate. And one of the most important, basic, and foundational connections is that between professor and student. Research shows that when students connect with faculty they are more likely to persist and succeed (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith 1990). Likewise, professors know that when they can connect students with their research, the flame that fires a passion for learning ignites (Boyer 1998, Karukstis and Elgren 2007).

In addition, students find their studies more enriching and satisfying when they are able to see connections among the various and different subjects they explore. For the good of the whole, the world of ideas that our higher institutions of learning cultivate must be connected with, and applied to, our common concerns for the future. So, facilitating connections is a very important task for the academic mission (Maier 2007). General education plays a significant role in this.

In addition to this general value, we believe the following:

1. General education is the foundation of all learning and the conductor that makes possible the connection between specialized learning and real-world problems.

2. General education makes up the greatest preponderance of the undergraduate curriculum and is responsible for the greatest percentage of undergraduate teaching. Thus, it is the training ground for graduate students preparing to teach. It is, in some respects, the laboratory for graduate training for the future professoriate.
3. As the core of the undergraduate curriculum and the primary site of connection between the undergraduate and graduate curricula, general education is of immense importance. All major cross-curricular initiatives of the colleges connect at this point. Thus, general education might be viewed as the most effective point for institutional change.
4. General education is the place where one learns *how to make explicit connections* beyond the limits of specialized disciplinary boundaries. If such facility is vital for creativity and innovation in the 21st century, then general education is much more important for amassing “idea wealth”<sup>12</sup> than is currently recognized. Articulating this is our task.

So, we believe that an effective general education allows students to make connections in many ways. This multi-faceted concern for facilitating connections is at the core of our care for general education. In the following, we detail some of our findings and offer areas for additional deliberation.

## Information literacy and technology

The 1984 report of the Arts & Humanities Division to the Senate Select Committee to Review the Distribution Requirement affirmed a broad conception of the liberal arts that includes the sciences. We reaffirm their view. Furthermore, we insist that the ultimate goals and critical capabilities the committee identified as the core of the liberal arts are precisely what is called “information literacy” today.<sup>13</sup> But in 1984 that group explicitly recoiled from the idea that the educational mission is one of “information management”. Rather, they claimed, the aim of a liberal education is “to proceed, in short from information to conceptualization and testing of hypotheses.”

*The aim of a liberal education is “to develop independent minded critical thinking, the ability to entertain and evaluate hypotheses, to select evidence, to discriminate between sound and unsound generalizations, to proceed, in short from, information to conceptualization and testing of hypotheses.”*

Librarians, including the Council of Chief Librarians within CUNY, have participated in defining modern information literacy standards (LILAC, Appendix A). Information literacy, particularly as it relates to technology, is also a key area of focus for our accreditation body Middle States. Thus, some explicit and clear statement of *what* information literacy entails and *how* we will ensure that students meet those goals and outcomes is important, and it should be clearly addressed in a general education plan.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, it should be clear that the Library faculty should not and cannot have sole care for information literacy. Their work and contributions must be integrated into the curriculum as a whole (see the 2007 “Report of the President’s Task Force on the Libraries”). To this end, some institutions are experimenting with models of “embedding” library faculty in courses. Others have considered developing teams of librarians and educational technologists to support information literacy broadly conceived to include the following skills:

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& HUMANITIES DIVISION

- *searching* for information and *assessing* sources;
- using the variety of forms of media relevant for *accessing* such data;

- *critically evaluating* when information is needed (DeMars, Cameron, and Erwin 2003);
- *combining* acquired research informed by the standards of academic integrity;
- *assessing* the assertions and arguments of the sources in the context of *creating* a new argument or set of hypotheses;
- *communicating* these new ideas and *sharing* them, utilizing many and various forms of electronic media and presentation and communication tools.

The President's Task Force on the Libraries recommended better integrating the Libraries in the College as a whole, and into the curriculum particularly, through what is commonly called an "Information Commons" (IC). Essentially agreeing with the earlier statement of the 1984 Arts & Humanities division report, the Library Task Force technology subcommittee suggested that Hunter's IC should be called an "Idea Center," whose ultimate mission would be to help students interpret and translate their course assignments into research action and communication plans (see Appendix B). IC faculty and staff would also be available to work with faculty to develop assignments that actively engage students in the research processes they can support. We have engaged in significant discussion with relevant units, and our library faculty and Instructional Computing and Information Technology staff are ready to support such a mission. At a meeting in the fall of 2007, the Senate adopted the recommendations of the Library Task Force report. As the Mellon Committee facilitates the development of courses and other initiatives to support general education, it will give priority to projects compatible with these goals.

*While integral to information literacy, the relevance of technology to the goals of liberal and general education is not limited to that function. Technology is relevant to all skills, curricular content, and pedagogy in the 21st century.*

While integral to information literacy, the relevance of technology to the goals of liberal and general education is not limited to that function. Technology is relevant to all skills, curricular content, and pedagogy in the 21st century.<sup>15</sup> Other institutions are exploring what might be called "technology across the curriculum."<sup>16</sup> This approach conceives technology as integral to the fundamental communication skills that should be encountered, developed, and enhanced throughout the curriculum (much like writing skills). Such cross-curricular initiatives also integrate content issues and subject areas to encourage students to think critically about technologies in their social, cultural, ethical, and political

lives. In addition, intelligent and creative uses of new media enable faculty and students to make visible the cognitive processes and capabilities that we are trying to help students cultivate (and which we as educators, researchers, and critical inquirers want to understand better ourselves). Finally, there are initiatives to integrate technological training into the curriculum and the graduation requirements, including practical training in the use of software and equipment.<sup>17</sup> There are a multiple committees currently engaged in reflection on these matters, including the Senate Technology Committee and the Middle States working group that is documenting and assessing Hunter's efforts at integrating technology into the classroom (and success in supporting students academically). A focus on technology across the curriculum for the purposes of general education might coordinate these efforts and lead to greater and more efficient, comprehensive planning.

## New opportunities for learning

In addition to technology, other content areas that have focused national attention and development in general education programs include the following topics.<sup>18</sup>

**Reading, writing, and communication**—The writing subcommittee that met during the summer of 2007 prepared a list of basic skills, goals for argumentation and research, and objectives for advanced writing and presentation skills. In many respects they articulate and developmentally stage the core capabilities associated with information literacy (described above). The subcommittee created a model writing requirement of a “basic writing course (English 120),” a “significant writing course” (much like our current writing courses); and two writing courses in the major (“cornerstone course” at the 200- or 300-level and a “capstone course”). Because of the depth of study and the anticipated additional investment for students and faculty, the writing committee advises that these courses all be 4-credit courses, including the courses in the major.<sup>19</sup> The subcommittee emphasized the need to have clearly articulated goals and pathways that allow students to gradually and progressively improve and refine their writing skills, as well as plan for ongoing development and oversight. The full text of the committee’s report is available on the “Mellon General Education” BlackBoard site (as are all of the other summer subcommittee reports). For further analysis of the challenges and opportunities for reading and writing instruction, see the recent report of the National Endowment for the Arts 2007, and Gee 2004.

**Science**—Members of the science subcommittee (formerly math & science) expressed some dissatisfaction with the implementation of the existing requirement insofar as most of the courses fulfilling it are those intended to introduce students to science majors. The committee advised curriculum development to address this concern. Additionally, the committee defined goals for science courses as well as skills and capabilities that should be attained. Because it emphasized skills in its articulation of the goals, the committee advised that a science requirement be moved to Stage 1 of the current GER. They advised an interdisciplinary upper-level course and an “inquiry experience”, such as a lab or field exercise. The major point of emphasis in their report was the need for curriculum development. Concerns about the vital need for interdisciplinarity and the integration of research in general education and in required courses are reinforced in countless studies of the development and advancement of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) courses.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, interdisciplinarity relating to science topics need not be limited to the participation of science departments. Consider the examples of the interdisciplinary seminar offered sixty years ago at Hunter (described below) and of the concept described in Wilson 2005.

**Pluralism & diversity**—The P&D subcommittee emphasized a need to change P&D curriculum in response to several forces:

- the current state of scholarship in the areas of pluralism and diversity
- the desirability of comparative approaches that might not satisfy any of the existing definitions for P&D course eligibility
- the need to expand the conception of pluralism and diversity to include differences in religious views and economic conditions.

The committee concluded that the requirements are excessive and out of line with those of peer institutions.<sup>21</sup> Thus, they advised reducing the requirements to six credits that are to be completed in two newly defined categories. Other relevant considerations appear in Olson, Evans, and Shoenberg 2007 and Greenblatt 2004.

**Quantitative reasoning**—The scope of this area might include the following topics:

- defining curricular objectives for quantitative reasoning in general education (what do our students need to know, what must we help them be able to do regardless of their majors?)
- examining how quantitative reasoning might be approached in an integrated way at various levels of instruction (entry, milestone, capstone)



- considering the needs for quantitative reasoning across academic disciplines to explore how those needs can be met most effectively and efficiently (are there common skills or competencies needed for a variety of majors that could be met through more advanced general education courses?).

In addition to math and statistics, it could be desirable to draw on the expertise and perspectives of disciplines not ordinarily charged with fulfilling this area, including economics, political science, psychology, physics, computer science, and other relevant areas, particularly in the social sciences.<sup>22</sup>

**Civic understanding**—What do students need to know, how do they need to think, and what experiences do they need to have in order to become responsible and effective citizens in the 21st century? These questions might be addressed in the context of deliberating how general education contributes to civic understanding, its scope, and its purposes. Included in such inquiry might be exploration of the variety of forces and developments that fall under a large umbrella term of “globalism.” What is this? To what extent should our curriculum reflect it? How should we talk about what it is and why it matters? Who can contribute to the relevant inquiries? How? It seems that “globalism” can refer to many possible ideas, including any of the following:

- developments in technology and communication that make it possible to connect and draw near places that are geographically far apart
- economic power relations that supersede and transcend national borders and political reach
- the emergence of transnational political and economic entities (such as the European Union and the World Bank)
- the homogenization of culture and values
- the need to situate certain problems (such as scarcity of resources or climate change) in global rather than regional contexts
- the desire to achieve deeper understanding of the diversity of cultures and belief systems around the world.

Because of this complexity in meaning, contributors to this area of inquiry might include nearly any department in the college. See also Olson, Evans, and Shoenberg 2007 and Thomas 2004.

## Making connections outside the classroom

One of the goals of general education is to create a community of learning that helps students to identify themselves as participants in and creators of academic culture and to accept the responsibilities that come with such participation, including academic integrity, shared leadership, and other intellectual virtues. The College offers extracurricular and co-curricular activities that facilitate these ends, including public lectures, visiting scholars, other special programs, pre-professional workshops, wellness activities, study skills workshops, and meeting spaces for student groups. Additionally, the College offers entrance programs that are intended to orient students and encourage them to connect with this culture early in their academic careers. These programs also seek to facilitate the development of certain basic skills and habits as well as to provide relevant local information that will serve them as students. (Presently, such orienting and community-building programs are being piloted for transfer students.)

The Mellon committee recommends that we formally investigate the relation between these supporting structures and programs and consider how they contribute to the goals of general education. At Hunter, the ORSEM/First-Year Initiative and the Block Program play significant roles in educating students about

general education and, through scheduling, making early progress toward completing general education. More coordinated planning, as well as critical evaluation and assessment focused squarely on the contributions of these programs to general education, could be helpful for students and constitute a form of early intervention.

Nationally, institutions are devising programs and general education structures that aim to connect experiences in the classroom with other activities of the College and the community. Harvard University, for example, devotes attention to the matter in their recent review and new plan, recommending establishing a committee to explore greater incorporation of what they call “activity-based learning” (Harvard University 2007: 19-20). We encourage similar exploration and welcome public comment on the variety of facets we might consider, including the following:

**Study abroad**—The opportunity to study abroad has numerous advantages, including invaluable experiences learning the relationships between language and the organization of human cultures. The benefits of studying abroad include acquiring knowledge, skills, and experiences that serve students in all of their studies, leading to greater confidence, motivation, and investment in completing their degrees. Moreover, there is a trend in higher education to increase the availability of such programs accompanied by the belief that such experiences render students more competitive in professional life. Many of our faculty have had such experiences and treasure them. While it is impractical to expect that all of our students will have the resources or flexibility in their personal and professional lives to permit extended studies abroad, we might decide that we can encourage and support students in such endeavors by recognizing the experience itself as having academic value (rather than crediting students solely for study abroad) and by investing resources to create opportunities for students to complete study abroad in alternative programs (e.g., shorter courses of study). Such recognition would reflect our legacy of commitment to foreign language study and lifelong learning. We might discuss the degree to which studying abroad could be integrated as a meaningful *option* among a range of practical and applied experiences that we wish students to acquire in the course of completing a Hunter degree. One of the models at the end of this report explicitly addresses this possibility.

**Service learning**—Our present mission statement makes reference to community service. How should this be interpreted? Is it that Hunter provides community service by educating the city’s future leaders and citizenry or that (as some other institutions require) we provide and participate in other community service in addition to the activities associated with instruction? Should we have a community service requirement, or should we include it as a means of satisfying a requirement to integrate study with some practical experience? For historical discussion, see the October 25, 1983 report by Hans Spiegel and Carol Smolenski, “Service Learning and Distribution Requirements: Some Considerations.”

**Research assistantships**—Involving students in active research is a proven way to help students connect what they learn in the classroom with a practical experience. A research assistantship might be one way that a student could fulfill a requirement for practical application. Some of the models that follow suggest this.

**Celebrations of learning and achievement**—Best practices in general education design and implementation include cultivating student responsibility, engagement, and self-assessment. During our meetings with faculty and students, we frequently heard that it is desirable to give students a sense of progress by recognizing accomplishments and significant achievements. In addition to integrating such celebrations in our customary practices, we could explore tying this to specific synthetic experiences required of all students, such as milestone and capstone experiences (see below).

**Milestone and capstone experiences**—Increasingly, colleges and universities are considering formalizing requirements for students to complete projects that allow them to synthesize and apply what they learn. This can be done at various levels of instruction and need not be tied strictly or exclusively to the majors.

**Other extra- and co-curricular activities**—Various other activities throughout the College serve as catalysts for student engagement and support student learning, including the great variety of services offered through Student Affairs. Examples include two particularly effective programs:

- the Student Leadership Colloquium, which introduces students to new and diverse concepts and theories of leadership and which offers them opportunities to develop their personal leadership styles with clear connections to their educational experience in college
- programs created through The Office of Career Development Services, which help students make connections among their major, their minor course selections, and their various career options. This office also supports the development of internship opportunities facilitated through strong relationships with academic departments.

Through both initiatives, students develop the ability to connect their passions, wishes, and interests. In so doing, they frequently discover previously unforeseen interests in academic fields and professions. Students who take advantage of these programs are often better equipped to make connections and selections among the wide array of academic programs offered at the College. These, too, might be considered as viable options for a practical application experience requirement.

## Assessing achievement in general education

Regardless of whether and how we change the content or structure of our general education requirement, we need to be able to readily assess whether its intents and purposes are accomplished as well as what it contributes to student learning. We must also know what the requirement contributes to overall student learning. Our current requirement does not have assessment built into its design. While the Committee has been able to determine whether certain goals were met (for example, whether it succeeded in raising the level of instruction by decreasing the number of 100-level courses students take in completing their degrees), and it has been able to determine certain things that facilitate deliberation of the value and efficacy of the workings of general education at Hunter (such as the numbers of courses approved to satisfy the requirement and the participation of full time faculty in teaching general education), it has not been able to ascertain what is contributing to student learning, how student learning is achieved, and how regularly this occurs, because we lack any way to reasonably measure this.

*The Committee recommends that learning objectives be created for each area of general education and that all courses within the area show how they intend to meet those objectives.*

If we are going to take greater responsibility and care for the general education curriculum, we need to be able to assess how well it is working. To do this, we will need to define some common learning objectives for various stages of course work and areas of study. These common objectives can also provide useful guidance for course approval processes and should enhance the coherence and integrity of whatever requirements we have. Thus, the Committee recommends that regardless of what requirements there are for general education learning objectives be created for each area and all courses within the

area should show how they intend to meet those objectives. New and current courses should go through a Senate-led (re)certification process, regardless of the ultimate conclusion of our deliberations about the models and approaches to designing and delivering general education. Moreover, ongoing periodic review of courses that are included in general education should be instituted to ensure that courses *as taught* continue to align with the common goals of the area.

## What We Found in Our Study of Hunter's GER

In our work investigating general education at Hunter, we gathered a great deal of information. In this section we want to clearly outline the results of this study. We examined this topic from two perspectives: contemporary and historical. We studied the current state of general education. In addition, we examined how general education has changed and evolved.

### What should a Hunter graduate know (or be able to do)?

Reflection on this matter should be linked with the goals of general education, since presumably the goals of general education should foster the capabilities we think all Hunter students should possess. Some of our spring meetings will be devoted to further exploration of this question. But we need not draw these ideas from thin air. Our colleagues have articulated many of them before.

During the protracted review and attempt at revision of the Distribution Requirement in the 1980s, the Arts & Humanities Division submitted a "Report to the Senate Select Committee on the Distribution Requirement" (1984). This document begins with a philosophical discussion of the nature of the liberation facilitated by the liberal arts, and it emphasizes a positive rather than negative sense of freedom. The committee claims that the study of the liberal arts frees one *to act, to choose, and to think* (this is rather different from the notion of freedom cast in terms of freedom *from* constraint). This belief in the inherent value of liberal education might also be imparted through a general education mission statement, a version of which we recommend the Senate develop and adopt.

Moreover, the Arts and Humanities divisional report offers a definition of the liberal arts that places scientific thinking at its core. Interestingly, it casts the goals of general education as offering survival skills. Necessary for survival (and presumably part of general education) are the following capabilities:

understanding of physical laws that govern our universe, our world, and its consumption of energy; knowledge of social organization and its problems; linguistic and psychological skills of language and communication, reading, listening, writing, and speaking; knowledge of a second language, a skill that leads to deepened cultural understanding and potentially to productive social exchange; knowledge of the breadth of human self expression created with and without the written word, through literature, painting, sculpture, dance, music, theatre, and film. (p. 4).

Furthermore, the report underscores the idea that "the General Education Program [is] the centerpiece of the college curriculum"; for it "to work, it must be everybody's business" (p. 6). In addition, it links general education with engaging students: "aimed finally to develop independent minded critical thinking, the

*"the General Education Program [is] the centerpiece of the college curriculum"; for it "to work, it must be everybody's business"*

ability to entertain and evaluate hypotheses, to select evidence, to discriminate between sound and unsound generalizations, to proceed, in short from, information to conceptualization and testing of hypotheses, alone, without the support of teacher and classes" (p. 9). We call on the community to take up these matters with candor and zeal and to consider whether and how our current requirements reflect, express, and convey these values.

Some related questions include the following:

1. What are the areas or bases of knowledge that are necessary for students to become personally, professionally, and civically capable in the 21st century?
2. Is there a common body of knowledge that all students should possess?<sup>23</sup>
3. Are there signature experiences that higher education can provide that are especially vital to student success? Which among these are specifically related to the goals of general education, and which are primarily achieved through pursuit of the major? Among these, which require a specific curricular prescription (i.e., a dedicated course to achieve skill “x” or knowledge of “y”), and which must be acquired and practiced in the context of general learning?
4. What can we learn about these questions from the experiences of other institutions?
5. Is general education more or less disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, non-disciplinary, or interdisciplinary?<sup>24</sup>
6. What is the relation between general education curricula and disciplinary programs and majors? Should they be kept distinct?
7. Is introducing students to a discipline the same as acquainting them with the methods, processes, basic concepts, and experiences that are crucial for general education?

In the following, we will explore the past and present discussions at Hunter that surround these questions.

## History of general education at Hunter

### Basic prescription—pre-1975

According to Samuel Patterson, in his book of reminiscences at Hunter during the 1940s and 1950s, the first thoroughgoing review of Hunter’s curriculum occurred during 1933-1938 at the direction of President Colligan and under the leadership of a special faculty committee headed by Professor Phillip R. V. Curoe. An outgrowth of this work was a “curriculum research committee,” which was still in effect when Patterson’s book was published in 1955. Their mission was to identify an “underlying philosophy in a college such as Hunter” (Patterson 1955: 141). No such philosophy is spelled out until the standing “statement of purpose” is offered at the end of the book, but some features of the earlier view might be ascertained in the developments that Patterson chronicles. In the 1930s there was concern that students were choosing their majors too early and without appropriate guidance, so they created a faculty advising program and encouraged students to delay declaring a major.

The traditional divisions as we have known them were officially delineated by the College in 1943: music & art, science, languages, and social sciences. At this time students selected a major or field of study *in their freshman year* (quite a change from the prior decade), and majors were of two types: liberal arts and what we would today call “pre-professional” (including business). As alternatives to majors, students could take “integrated groups of courses offered jointly by three or more departments” (Patterson 1955: 167). Three of these remained standing in the 1950s, including Humanities, American Civilization, and International Affairs. Prescribed courses could typically be completed in two years.

The 1930s saw a proliferation of extracurricular and co-curricular activities as well as enhanced advising and support services, including a first-year seminar. By the 1940s, the College offered what they called “area programs,” which were concentrations across disciplines (e.g., “Great Literature”). These are described as “adaptations to modern life” (Patterson 1955: 206), suggesting recognition that the traditional

departmental boundaries did not coincide with student interests (and perhaps needs in the post-war economic boom). There were multi-disciplinary courses with revolving themes. There was emphasis on the integration of professional studies with the liberal arts (unsurprisingly, this was particularly true of the School of Education, for what it could contribute to the “science of teaching,” but that was not all). Hunter played a significant role in public health education, even providing public health services for the city at this time (for example, it maintained its own blood bank and provided “physical and posture tests, chest and other examinations” [Patterson 1955: 209]).

When Patterson was writing in the 1950s, most departments offered “workshops” for practical applications of the disciplinary tools to real world problems. There were intercollegiate courses, for example, in philosophy (Patterson 1955: 224). There were interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and cross-divisional courses and programs. There were initiatives that sound like they were early forms of what today we would call “learning communities”—activities where students from multiple departments would address common public problems. As an example of these dynamic curricular innovations, Patterson highlights the science curriculum, which included a course “Explorations in the Sciences” resembling Columbia’s “Frontiers of Science,” which briefly infatuated the Mellon summer subcommittees. “Explorations in the Sciences” was “a study of science and scientific methods achieved by a thorough analysis of selected problems in the physical and life sciences, with emphasis upon the interrelations among the natural sciences and their relations to other branches of knowledge.” Participating departments included “biological sciences, chemistry, home economics, physiology, health and hygiene, mathematics, geology and geography, physics and astronomy, and sociology and anthropology” (Patterson

*So, it remains a question as to how these “old” ideas that we now take as new and cutting edge disappeared? The question before us now is not whether these ‘new’ ideas can possibly be implemented but rather why aren’t we doing these things any longer.*

1955: 224). Faculty development took the form of a seminar where participants met regularly to discuss pedagogy and the latest research in studies of learning and knowledge. It also involved a faculty exchange program with other institutions, apparently not limited to city colleges.

So, it remains a question as to how these “old” ideas that we now take as new and cutting edge disappeared? The question before us now is not whether these ‘new’ ideas can possibly be implemented but rather why aren’t we doing these things any longer.

### **Distribution requirement—1975-2001**

Until 1975, this broad-spectrum, liberal education was fully prescribed for all students, offering few electives and just enough flexibility to develop a specialized major focus. In that year, a tide of student dissatisfaction with “The Basic Prescription” breached the sea walls of the administration and the faculty senate. Both students and the faculty rallied around polar positions of “Prescriptivists” and “Abolitionists.” Something of a compromise emerged, and a curriculum of “Distribution Requirements” was created. It resembled curricula that were taking shape across the country as the “general education” component of higher education. It consisted of a relatively limited menu of courses from the traditional disciplines focused largely on writing; math and science; literature; major areas of the so-called “social sciences”; and philosophy, classics, and the arts. This set of requirements is remembered fondly by faculty who were at Hunter in those days, but there was significant dissatisfaction with it when it was assessed by the Senate during the years 1983-1986.

During the first review of the Distribution Requirement, faculty realized that the cafeteria approach had serious flaws: students could and often did avoid significant areas of inquiry that faculty believed were

vital for grounding advanced and interdisciplinary study and for supporting the development of skills and knowledge necessary for informed decision-making on matters of personal and civic import. Particularly worrisome was the fact that students could avoid entirely the subjects of history, economics, and political science. Moreover, there was significant concern that the menu approach was too flat in that it was largely comprised of courses whose primary purpose was to introduce students to the major rather than contribute to general education. The double-duty of these courses was perceived as failing the students who would not go on to major in the subject area, since such classes almost never focused on broad application. Further, it was believed that the requirement unnecessarily and unfairly burdened those students who arrived prepared for more advanced work. The Senate committee charged with reviewing the curriculum sought three basic changes:

1. An administrative structure to oversee and develop general education on a continual basis, since general education has no departmental academic home and (at Hunter) no specific or regular administrative oversight.
2. Curriculum development for courses specifically for general education, working through the “divisions” of “math and science,” “social sciences,” and “arts and humanities”
3. Reorganization of the architecture of general education so that crucial gaps could be filled and student progress could be facilitated.

The outcome of this massive and exhausting effort was disappointing, even in retrospect. There was no effect on the administrative structure or the reorganization of the architecture of the requirement. Curriculum development occurred only later, resulting in a 2-semester science course titled “Foundations of Science,” and promised social sciences courses never materialized.

Between this difficult period and the implementation of the GER in 2001, two new requirements were devised: the pluralism and diversity requirement (hereafter P&D) (1993) and a writing requirement (devised in 1989, but not adopted until 2001). The writing requirement was an outgrowth of the “Writing Across the Curriculum” movement and specified that students should complete a number of courses that were “writing intensive.” The P&D requirement emerged in the context of significant social, economic, and political changes and challenges in the greater society that played out on campus as well. These requirements are elaborated below, since they remain but now have a somewhat different status as separate graduation requirements.

### **General education requirement—since 2001**

In 1997-1999, the Distribution Requirement as a whole was reviewed once more by a select committee of the Hunter College Senate. The problems of the past remained and in some cases had intensified. Added to this, the review committee expressed great concern about whether and how the requirements were appropriate for transfer students who were being admitted in increasing numbers. Fatigue with the expanding options on the cafeteria menu and consternation over efforts to standardize course offerings across the broader university sparked debate that led people to rally around either a “core curriculum” (the likes of which Brooklyn created) or the “distribution” model to preserve “free choice.” Public events and hearings were convened to encourage broad deliberation and generate consensus. Was there a body of knowledge that all students should have in common? Was freedom of choice most important so that students could follow (and find) their passion? What is most important in general education—learning a fixed body of “content” or “learning to learn,” or is that a false dilemma? These were the questions faculty considered.<sup>25</sup> Once more a compromise emerged that had the distinctive features already noted:

1. A limited core was established (“Stage 1”), including English composition, college-level mathematics, and U.S. history.<sup>26</sup>



2. A limited distribution model, further tiered, creating a lower tier (“Stage 2”) of largely introductory courses in five major disciplinary groupings (including natural science; English literature; humanities; visual and performing arts; and the social sciences) and an upper tier (“Stage 3”) of more advanced courses to be drawn from the major, traditional divisions.

The writing, foreign language, and P&D requirements were distinguished as graduation requirements.

**HUNTER “CORE” & GR REQUIREMENTS**  
12 courses + language proficiency

<b>Focused Exposure</b> <small>Courses must be outside major field.</small>				
Humanities OR Visual & Performing Arts  <b>PICK 1</b>		Social Science OR Natural Science OR Math  <b>PICK 1</b>		
<b>Broad Exposure</b> <small>Courses must come from different departments.</small>				
Performing & Visual Arts  <b>PICK 1</b>	Cultures & Ideas  <b>PICK 1</b>	Survey of Literature Written in English  <b>PICK 1</b>	Natural Science <small><sup>1</sup> lab</small>  <b>PICK 2</b>	Peoples & Their Societies  <b>PICK 2</b>
<b>Academic Foundations</b> <small>Exemptions possible.</small>				
English Composition  <b>ENGL 120</b> <small>or proficiency</small>	U.S. History  <b>PICK 1</b> <small>or proficiency</small>		Quantitative Reasoning  <b>PICK 1</b> <small>or proficiency</small>	
<b>Graduation Requirements:</b> <small>(not necessarily additional credits)</small> <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign language proficiency: 4th semester or equivalent. <input type="checkbox"/> Put P&D (1 from each group) in any four boxes above or in major, minor, or electives. <input type="checkbox"/> Put “W” in any two boxes above or in major, minor, or electives (third “W” = U.S. History) <input type="checkbox"/> Major _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Minor _____				

The second tier of courses was intended to ensure breadth, and it largely corresponded to various categories and subcategories of the Distribution Requirement. The third tier was intended to add depth, encourage students to pursue more advanced study outside of their major areas, and create coherent connections among courses in the general education curriculum, as students would plan their own, related pathways.

There are a variety of historical and practical reasons for the curious and complicated arrangement that has the core requirements as distinct from the graduation requirements. Historically, the language requirement and the pluralism and diversity requirement precede the GER; each of these earlier requirements was added at different times. The requirement to acquire competency in a modern language stretches back to the founding of the institution and is intimately linked with the

identity of the College both within and without the university. The pluralism and diversity requirement was implemented in 1993. As conceived, it did not intend to add extra credits to the then existing Distribution Requirement; rather, *it created a rule that governs choices students make in selecting their courses from the menu of options that they are presented.* This feature is preserved in our current General Education Requirement. The Writing Requirement that was drafted in 1989 emerged from long-standing discussion of the importance of writing across the curriculum and from the concern that virtually every higher institution in this country faces, viz. the disappointing fact that time and again we encounter graduating students who simply do not possess the kind of writing and communication skills that are suitable for the professions, for personal achievement, or for effective democratic participation. The recognition that writing, reading, and thinking are a cluster of skills that are mutually reinforcing makes this problem even more pressing. The report of the Writing Committee puts this very concern at the center of their reflections and proposals for further consideration.

While these deliberations were occurring, a new CUNY chancellor came to office. He pledged to make CUNY an “integrated university.” Part of this effort included facilitating “seamless transfer” from the community colleges to the “senior colleges.” Two major, related initiatives affected general education:

- 1) intensified efforts to fulfill articulation agreements and determine equivalencies between community college courses and senior college courses, and
- 2) automatically exempting from general education students earning associates degrees from CUNY community colleges. Because the community colleges

often did not offer courses equivalent to the writing intensive courses and could not sufficiently support foreign language proficiency or programmatic study of issues pertaining to pluralism and diversity, these requirements were separated from the “core” general education requirements, specifically so that transfer students would have to complete them. This new curriculum was given the title “General Education Requirement” (GER), and it was implemented in 2001.

Some issues that arose on implementation are noteworthy. In its original design, the GER was supposed to draw significant connections in the curriculum by staging writing incrementally through the tier structure. Since writing is a co-requisite and not a stand-alone requirement, it was believed that students could easily fulfill the writing requirement by taking writing-intensive courses at each stage of the tier. At the time of implementation, entering students were required to follow the new GER, and current students were given the option of completing the GER or the Distribution Requirement under which they entered. Many students opted for the GER. A crisis quickly emerged: the writing intensive courses were not available, and some students could not graduate. Urgent appeals were made for departments to submit courses for approval. (Departments had been consulted earlier, and they had indicated that they had the courses to deliver.) Eighteen months passed before any significant number of courses had been approved for satisfying the writing requirement, and they were all in the political science department. The Senate had to quickly make adjustments to disaggregate the writing requirements from any specific stages of the tier, and a number of students had to be given waivers to allow them to graduate. This resulted in a crisis of confidence from which the new general education curriculum as a whole never recovered.

Additionally, the organization and visual presentation of the requirements made them appear more complex than necessary. Moreover, there was little work done to prepare departmental advisors, to develop faculty understanding and support, or to facilitate relationships between faculty advisors and professional staff in student services. This further diminished support for the general education curriculum, and it became viewed simply a set of hurdles students reluctantly jumped on their way toward graduation.

The major change that occurred in the process of shifting from the Distribution Requirement to the General Education Requirement is that the requirements were staged or tiered to facilitate more in-depth study and to allow students to develop cumulative skills, more complex integration of concepts, and more advanced understanding of significant processes. Institutions that are currently revising their requirements or have done so recently are striving to create these very same opportunities for their students, and so in some ways our current GER, at its inception, was at the cutting edge. Theoretically, this change enhanced the depth of study for our students, but practically we found only a slight decrease in the number of 100-level courses that student use to complete their degrees (around 60% on average). As for the breadth of study, students appear to have taken courses from fewer departments under the GER (whereas 22.4 percent took courses in 12 or fewer departments under the DR, 29.4 percent completed all course work for their degrees by taking courses from 12 or fewer departments under the GER; for transfer students there is even greater concern for breadth—88.1 percent took courses from fewer than 12 departments under the DR and that figure rose to 91.6 under the GER).

Contrary to popular opinion, the GER appears to have *greater simplicity and flexibility* for students. DR divisions had groupings within them to preserve certain disciplinary boundaries. These are eliminated in the GER, and thus students have greater access to a variety of courses (they may also avoid certain areas). Our initial transcript analysis reveals other changes in course-taking patterns: students fulfilled more requirements with women’s studies and religion courses and fewer with philosophy, economics, sociology, and urban affairs.<sup>27</sup>

Another significant shift in the transition from the DR to the GER occurred in a slight move away from the use of disciplinary titles for distinguishing relevant areas of requirements. Two traditional disciplinary groupings (“Arts & Humanities” and “Social Sciences”) reorganized themselves in interesting ways:

1. Certain courses in the arts (very few) were distinguished as a separate category. This grouping identically coincides with divisional area V, group 1, in the old DR.
2. The remaining “Arts & Humanities” took a new secondary name: “Cultures and Ideas.” The designation of a thematic content area rather than strict disciplinary distinction created opportunities for other departments to contribute to general education in ways they had not been able to do previously. This is easily discerned by reviewing the relevant catalogues.
3. The “Social Sciences” grouping of the DR took the secondary name “Peoples and Their Societies.” The result was that departments and programs outside of the traditional disciplines found a greater number of opportunities to contribute to general education. This is particularly true of certain programs offering courses that fulfill Pluralism & Diversity requirements. The effect of this on the curriculum was twofold: more courses could fulfill the requirement, and the overall load of the requirements for students was potentially *reduced*. Since P&D requirements are *co-requisites* rather than separate additional requirements, the addition of P&D courses in the GER means that students have greater flexibility, ease of scheduling, and increased opportunities to satisfy requirements simultaneously. Thus, *theoretically* the total number of credits required to satisfy both general education and graduation requirements should have dropped measurably. Transcript analysis alone does not allow us to measure *why* students make the choices they do. Nonetheless, this might merit further investigation in focus groups.

*It does not appear that students are taking any longer to graduate under the GER than they did under the DR. And students are largely doing what we encourage them to do in the catalogue, namely, fulfilling most of their requirements by the time they complete 60 credits.*

What transcript analysis did tell us is that, again contrary to some popular opinion, it does not appear that students are taking any longer to graduate under the GER than they did under the DR. In fact, while many students do take credits beyond the required 120 to graduate, the number of credits beyond the requirement is relatively small. And students are largely doing what we encourage them to do in the catalogue, namely, fulfilling most of their requirements by the time they complete 60 credits.

In reviewing prior complaints about our former distribution requirements, we discovered that some of the previously identified flaws in our earlier general education programs remain with us:

1. Students may graduate with major gaps in breadth.
2. Requirements can be fulfilled in the first three semesters and need not span the whole of a student’s career.
3. Students who are confused (or poorly advised) about requirements might take courses that do not interest them, merely to satisfy requirements in their final semester.
4. For transfer students, matching up prior coursework with courses satisfying Hunter’s GER (so as to assign GER credit properly) is laborious, since the process is necessarily ad hoc (because of the tremendous variability of prior records from different institutions) and since decisions are often made inconsistently.

5. Courses that satisfy general education are typically designed as introductions to a major rather than providing general acquaintance to a broader audience. When this occurs on a broad scale in departments, “including ‘upper division’ courses, the level of the latter is depressed.”<sup>28</sup>

An earlier Senate Select Committee reviewing general education (then the DR) focused specifically on the matter of *when* students were required to complete general education courses and on the limitations of forcing or permitting such work to occur (only) early in the students’ academic careers:

This is a ‘failure’ in design, in that it emphasizes education when the student is at her most intellectually immature. The appreciation of relationships that we want to be one of the ends of our education process cannot be achieved before the referents of these relationships are mastered. By making all of our requirements essentially introductions we are leaving students on their own (except for their major) when it comes to thinking about the world as it really is.<sup>29</sup>

In changing from the DR to GER, the most significant change was intended to address this problem in that it specifically required two upper-level courses. However, it would seem that students, on average, are not completing significantly more upper-level course work in pursuit of their degrees. One explanation for this might be that students may not have sufficient access to upper-level courses because departments might be offering so many 100-level courses for the GER.

Points of consensus, and overlapping concern with prior reviews, are the interests in interdisciplinary courses in presenting the divisional disciplines in an integrated way and in capstone experiences. The Mellon committee aims to spotlight this consensus and facilitate deliberation concerning possibilities for integrating modern approaches and concerns.

We recommend that the College develop a mission statement for general education at Hunter and that the College conceive ways that we can create a culture that perpetually expresses it. At present, formal presentation of the GER to students lacks a positive statement of purpose. General education is at the core of our mission as a liberal arts institution that also prepares students in a variety of professions. The germ of a mission statement for general education is found in the eloquent section of the College’s mission statement, which reads, “the educational experience at Hunter is intended to inspire a zest for continued learning as well as to bring the recognition that learning is pleasurable and knowledge is useful.” Every member of our community who is responsible for implementing, administering, coordinating, teaching, and advising students about general education should be able to articulate with confidence the value of the program that Hunter requires (see Appendix C).

## Our GER distilled

The structure of Hunter’s GER is fairly standard, and certain features resemble the changes that other institutions are only now implementing.<sup>30</sup> Fundamentally, Hunter’s current requirements are a blend of several basic types of requirements: core, distribution, proficiency, and co-requisites. It can be represented in a rather simple graphic (below).

We require a core comprising of the following:

- Three “foundational” courses (which may be satisfied by demonstrations of proficiency at the discretion of the Senate).
- Five courses in various disciplinary areas, including literature, performing and visual arts, arts and humanities (“cultures and ideas”), natural sciences, and social sciences (“peoples and their societies”).

**HUNTER “CORE” & GR REQUIREMENTS**  
12 courses + language proficiency

<b>Focused Exposure</b> <small>Courses must be outside major field.</small>				
Humanities OR Visual & Performing Arts  <b>PICK 1</b>		Social Science OR Natural Science OR Math  <b>PICK 1</b>		
<b>Broad Exposure</b> <small>Courses must come from different departments.</small>				
Performing & Visual Arts  <b>PICK 1</b>	Cultures & Ideas  <b>PICK 1</b>	Survey of Literature Written in English  <b>PICK 1</b>	Natural Science 1 lab  <b>PICK 2</b>	Peoples & Their Societies  <b>PICK 2</b>
<b>Academic Foundations</b> <small>Exemptions possible.</small>				
English Composition  <b>ENGL 120</b> or proficiency	U.S. History  <b>PICK 1</b> or proficiency		Quantitative Reasoning  <b>PICK 1</b> or proficiency	
<b>Graduation Requirements:</b> <small>(not necessarily additional credits)</small> <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign language proficiency: 4th semester or equivalent. <input type="checkbox"/> Put P&D (1 from each group) in any four boxes above or in major, minor, or electives. <input type="checkbox"/> Put “W” in any two boxes above or in major, minor, or electives (third “W” = U.S. History) <input type="checkbox"/> Major _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Minor _____				

- Two courses beyond the introductory level in each of two broad divisional categories.

Some courses for the major and for the minor may come from GER courses.

Additionally, the GER includes graduation requirements:

- Foreign language proficiency of 4th semester
- Writing intensive co-requisites (overlapping; may be in major, minor, or elective)
- Pluralism & diversity co-requisites (overlapping; may be in major, minor, or elective)

In name, we call the “core” the three-staged tier of requirements. Using the more standard definitions of commonly recognized terms to describe general education, we have:

- a fairly strict **core** of English 120, English 220, U.S. history, and math;
- a **distribution** menu for 6 areas, including advanced coursework;
- a language **proficiency requirement**; and
- **co-requisites** that direct student choices in the distribution menu.

However, the Committee finds that we do not do a very good job of helping students appreciate the differences among the various kinds of requirements we have. For example, we do not clearly articulate the fact that the P&D requirements are co-requisites. We do not explicitly guide students to seek exemption from Stage 1 if they are qualified (and departments do not facilitate this).

**Minimally, students could fulfill our GER and Graduation Requirements completing 31 credits (10 classes).**<sup>31</sup> At least some of those courses might also be able to satisfy the major, thereby reducing the absolute minimum of courses exclusive to general education.<sup>32</sup> In terms of quantity, this might be compared with Brooklyn’s 13 courses (39 credits, none of which can count toward the major, and which excludes separate additional requirements for “basic skills” of math, reading, English composition, and for speech, the writing requirement, and the foreign language requirement) and contrasted with Baruch’s 50 credits.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it is the Committee’s view that any arguments for change in our general education requirements should not necessarily be driven simply or primarily by efforts to reduce the number of requirements. Certain options (building in capstone requirements, adjusting the credit hours for certain courses to reflect more intensive study, and so on) might actually result in an increase.

These considerations are relevant to any discussions the College might have that would consider whether our students should take fewer courses with greater intensity, namely whether the standard course credit-value system itself should be modified. Some of the models at the end of the report lend themselves to a 4 credit model.

## Our GER in practice—three major concerns

Our care for general education at Hunter requires gathering accurate, comprehensive information. Our responsibility also includes the need to understand and order that information. And, in the end, it is our duty to offer carefully considered conclusions about our GER. In honestly approaching reality, we can lay the foundation for future, positive change. The topics outlined below are the three most significant concerns we encountered.

### 1. Absence of a caretaker for general education

At Hunter, the curriculum originates with the faculty working through and among departments to generate courses. The Arts and Sciences divisional curriculum committee reviews course proposals, determines their merits, and approves or denies requests that the proposed courses should count toward general education credits. Once approved at the Arts and Sciences level, proposals are forwarded to the Senate's Undergraduate Course of Study Committee, whose final approval is necessary before a course is moved to the menu of general education courses. Thereafter, courses are removed from the menu only when the sponsoring department makes such an appeal. There is no formal process in place to review courses or to assess their ongoing and actual contributions to the general education program. Such review and oversight has historically occurred only during major reviews of the requirements themselves, on average once every decade; and even then, the scale of the general education curriculum is so vast that courses that are considered to “fit” into the new system are simply translated into the new set of requirements.

**Presently, there is no administrative body or office responsible for the maintenance, oversight, and assessment of general education.** There is no office responsible for planning that would seek to ensure that students have sufficient access to required courses. Data that might be necessary and useful for such planning—for example, an overview of all sections of general education offered in any given semester—is not collected or shared with relevant decision-makers, particularly the Dean of Arts & Sciences and department chairpersons. It does not even seem that such information is readily available for anyone who might seek it. The current state of affairs hinders efforts to create comprehensive advising programs that would integrate the work of the professional advising staff with the advising structures in departments. There is virtually no coordinated faculty pre-major academic advising. Communication between and among the sources of information for our students is, at best, haphazard and sporadic.

While departments have measures to monitor the quality of all of the courses in their departments (e.g., peer teaching observations, student evaluations, and in most cases departmental assessment plans), there is no coordinated effort to regularly review general education as such. This would include assessment not only of the quality of instruction in individual courses but also of whether courses fulfill their intended role in the general education curriculum and whether the program as a whole is achieving its goals and objectives. The Senate presently conducts a great deal of business that is relevant to such a process, but understandably it cannot do this on a semestral or annual basis, which is what is needed for the structure to be sufficiently flexible and responsive to the needs of students, faculty, and administrative support services.<sup>34</sup>

### 2. Lack of curricular balance

The distilled curriculum is clean, reasonable, and basically unobjectionable, yet students, faculty, and student services complain of complexity. An analysis of the curriculum *as experienced by students* might be characterized in terms of “pulling,” “pooling,” “flooding,” and “greasing.” Moreover, because of lack of oversight and lack of ongoing and deliberate engagement of the faculty, general education runs on “battling” and “out-sourcing”. This analysis is meant to help the college think clearly and critically about what could be different and better with each of the new models we set present below.

In our interviews and discussions with students, we discovered that many seem to be funneled through channels that do not necessarily match the intentional design of the curriculum or that might not make the most sense. And the effects of this on the overall curriculum and on the overall teaching resources of the college can be quite significant. This we call “**pulling**”. Hunter’s current approach to satisfying the needs for an entry-level writing requirement and the U.S. history requirement both might be examples of this. Another example might be the fact that we have what is basically a group of proficiency requirements at “Stage 1,” but by and large we do not tell students that they are such, nor do we give them any way to actually offer evidence of proficiency other than taking our course (even if it is redundant).

How we load up the curriculum in terms of what counts, double counts, and triple counts, steers students to make choices that are not necessarily best for their educational goals. Moreover, this adds to their frustrations when such choices cannot be met. This we call “**pooling**”.

There are incentives all around to “flood” the curriculum with courses that might not necessarily be the most suitable for the requirement. Smaller (and even some larger) departments see this as a way to boost enrollments. Similarly, the administration needs course availability and encourages more ways to satisfy requirements. This leads to no discernible rationale for why some courses count and others don’t. (We make the situation even worse by not offering any positive rationale in writing.) When student services is asked for advice about this, and when our pre-professional advisors are asked to counsel, they have little to go on to offer guidance to students. Certainly, articulating such a rationale will go a long way, but until there is some overall management and coordination, “**flooding**” is the only way to have a hope of having enough courses available.

Moreover, there is a lot of “**greasing**” going on. That is, there are a goodly number of exceptions to and qualifications for what are basically simple rules attaching to our basically simple architecture. In our view, this is the heart of the perception of complexity in the GER. For essentially good reasons, the faculty, mainly through departments and somewhat through the overall design, have created a large number of ways to “help” students make their way through the curriculum by acknowledging exceptional circumstances. In other words, there is a sincere interest in recognizing the students as individuals even in a vast system that is supposed to uphold a uniform standard. This is very difficult for student services to apply in any standardized way, and that is why it is seen, *overall*, as a very complicated system, one for which it is difficult to train advisors and, unsurprisingly, nearly impossible to program in automated systems. Moreover, because of understandable sensitivity to these exceptions and *also* out of a sincere interest in helping students, student services is keenly aware of the exceptions and presents them as part of the intended design. This is quite an unfortunate system all around, and those who have it the worst are probably the students. Certainly, no one benefits, no one collaborates or cooperates, no one thinks

much of what the other does to help, and everyone blames everyone else for “not caring.” This confusion is at the root of the complexity. This does not happen because there is a flaw in the basic design of the GER. Rather, it happens because there is most certainly a terrible flaw in our implementation.

Finally, partially as a result of “**turf battling**”, and partially because we are somewhat inflexible in our curricular structures, there is a great degree of “**out-sourcing**” of general education. Turf battling is obvious and not at all unique to Hunter. That does not mean we cannot or should not name it and do whatever we can to address it. When a department succeeds in decisively winning the turf, however,

*We have to look at who is taking responsibility for teaching the courses we’re requiring, and to ask ourselves whether what we require forces us to make certain other decisions that are not necessarily the most sound pedagogically or best for the college overall.*

they tend to abandon it to adjuncts. This alone should cause us to rethink the victory. We have to look at who is taking responsibility for teaching the courses we're requiring and to ask ourselves *whether what we require forces us to make certain other decisions that are not necessarily the most sound pedagogically or best for the college overall*. There can be no doubt that a certain amount of outsourcing is inevitable, given the volume of courses required. But if we spread the responsibility where we can and have better coordination and planning, we could do a better job of making sure that not all of our general education courses (and not all major joints of the curriculum) are left to adjuncts. Students need significant, early contact with full-time faculty. Does general education stand as a barrier to that? If so, this is an unintended consequence we should try to correct.

### **3. Difficulty in accommodating transfer students**

Every time that the Senate has reviewed the general education requirements, they have sought to find a better way to accommodate transfer students. In earlier years, this problem was shared primarily by urban, public institutions, but increasingly this concern affects all of U.S. higher education. It is estimated that the *norm* is for students to attend at least three colleges prior to graduation. Our concerns regarding transfer students are serious and will not diminish for the foreseeable future (even if we "solve" our retention issues). Thus, we should give this matter even greater attention. We should do our best to streamline our requirements while preserving the academic integrity and distinction that a Hunter degree conveys. This will take cooperation and collaboration with academic support services, ICIT, departmental faculty advisors, and students. The review of the Distribution Requirement in 1997 does a particularly good job of characterizing these problems.<sup>35</sup> Arguably, we have not made much progress in addressing them. Since this is a problem that is now widely shared by other institutions (similar and dissimilar to ours), we should aggressively seek to learn from the experiences and experiments of others. Of special interest to the Steering Committee is the practice of offering "transfer packages" in the admissions process, which apply general criteria for a variety of sets of established exemptions. This addresses the problem of needing to consider exemptions on an individual basis and for a great number of individual courses. Transfer packages relieve the student of significant portions of the general education requirements (assuming certain criteria are met) and to varying degrees.<sup>36</sup> Student services has indicated some interest in this idea along with a concern that qualified transfer students should have the opportunity to make a preliminary declaration of the major upon admission. The Mellon committee endorses further serious deliberation of these ideas.

Hunter might seek direction and guidance from Brooklyn College, which also faces large numbers of transfer students within the CUNY system (although, unlike Brooklyn, a significant number of our transfer students are seeking to gain admission to the nursing program, approximately 22%). Moreover, Brooklyn has the challenge of determining how to translate courses in the context of a thoroughgoing core requirement. As discussed above, the summer exploratory committees were inclined to consider further development of core requirements. In the past, Hunter's select committees to review general education have expressed great interest in core models and elements but have ultimately rejected them on the basis of their being too difficult to accommodate in the transfer translation. That this is done successfully elsewhere, even within CUNY, should embolden and motivate us to search for a better way to accomplish successful transfer evaluations and advising programs. One of the models below endeavors to strike this balance between offering a set number of courses that provide a common experience and that do not overly burden transfer students.

The Mellon committee will create a special group to study these issues pertaining to implementation and articulation, in order to include a broader investigation of the problem of transfer evaluations and its possible solutions. We strongly urge the community to give this the serious attention it deserves.



Repeatedly, it has been agreed that this is a major issue of concern, and there has been general agreement that the layering of our requirements compounds the problems shared by our peer institutions. Yet, we perpetuate a structure that we agree is an impediment to the effective administration of our program. All members of our community, and not just the professional support and advising officers, must apply their resources to aggressively addressing this problem.

TABLE TWO: TYPE OF SENDING INSTITUTION

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
N=	1,700 %	1,280 %	1,425 %	1,414 %	1,460 %	1,588 %	1,521 %
<b>CUNY cc</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>29.3</b>	<b>28.0</b>	<b>29.2</b>
CUNY cc with Degree	13.1	12.7	12.6	15.9	11.8	10.1	11.4
CUNY cc without Degree	15.1	16.8	14.5	15.6	17.5	17.9	17.8
<b>CUNY cc Feeder Schools</b>							
BMCC	10.5	15.1	11.8	12.7	12.6	9.1	10.6
Bronx	1.3	2.1	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.4
Hostos	1	1	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.5	1.2
Kingsborough	4.4	3.3	3.3	4.4	4	3.8	4.2
Queensborough	3.5	2.9	2.1	2.2	2.9	1.9	2.8
Laguardia	4.5	5	4.7	5.4	5.1	6.7	7
City Tech	0.1	0.6	0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
<b>SUNY cc</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>6.6</b>
SUNY cc with Degree	1.6	1.5	2.8	3.7	3.2	3.4	4.5
SUNY cc without Degree	3.6	2.4	3.0	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.1
<b>Out-State cc</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>5.8</b>
With Degree	2.0	2.1	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.2
No Degree	5.3	5.9	5.5	5.4	5.1	5.5	4.6
<b>TOTAL cc</b>	<b>40.7</b>	<b>41.4</b>	<b>39.7</b>	<b>44.4</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>41.6</b>
With Degree	16.7	16.3	16.7	21.2	16.8	15.2	17.1
No Degree	24.0	25.1	23.0	23.2	24.7	25.4	24.5
<b>Senior</b>	<b>41.8</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>39.4</b>	<b>43.0</b>	<b>43.0</b>	<b>43.5</b>
CUNY Senior	11.6	11.6	13.1	15.3	14.5	16.8	15.7
SUNY Senior	5.1	3.2	4.1	4.0	5.3	4.5	6.1
NYS Priv Senior	11.3	10.8	8.8	10.7	11.3	10.9	10.3
Out of State Publics	7.9	8.5	7.9	5.4	7.7	5.2	6.1
Out of State Priv	5.9	6.3	6.2	4.0	4.2	5.6	5.3
<b>Other/Unknown</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>14.6</b>
<b>Prior BA</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>13.3</b>

## What We Recommend Now

The Mellon Project Special Committee to Review the GER identifies the problems above as the most significant concerns in our current requirements and those most urgently needing immediate remedy. Further discussion of other challenges can be found in the detailed reports on BlackBoard. At this time, we would like to turn to consideration of what changes can be implemented to improve general education at Hunter.

### 1. Develop a general education caretaking structure to foster cross-curricular coordination and development

It is the view of the Committee that, *regardless of the nature and structure of the general education requirements*, an effective administrative structure will be vital to its successful development, implementation, and sustenance. The definition of such a structure is complex and merits consideration of the Senate as a whole as well as consultation and collaboration with the principal administrative parties most affected, namely, the Provost and the Dean of Arts & Sciences.

*So, what kind of academic leadership is needed to develop, sustain, and enhance our general education program?* This question has been asked repeatedly by the Senate in its periodic reviews of general education. In each case, committees have clearly articulated the need for the following characteristics:

- **Leadership**, including oversight of implementation, creating processes that allow for the on-going evolution of the program and articulating its goals and ideals, placing general education at the core of the College's activities, coordinating supporting hiring activities and priorities, and recognizing faculty advising and general education teaching in the promotion and tenure processes and in consideration of faculty workload credit
- **Responsibility and accountability**, including planning, assessing, and having access to appropriate resources to adequately fund the program
- **Centralized services** that connect curricular functions of the college with the administrative support services (this arrangement facilitates direct assistance to students attempting to complete the requirements, which potentially eases and accelerates progress toward the degree; this responsibility includes oversight of information services that help students learn about course availability and appeals processes)
- **Faculty development**, including supporting "across the curriculum" initiatives such as writing, technology, and interdisciplinary inquiry; and increasing opportunities to enhance pedagogy<sup>37</sup>
- **Platform for cross-curricular planning** so that faculty have an outlet for planning curricular initiatives that reach beyond departmental and divisional boundaries
- **Academic advising**, particularly pre-major advising, and academic advising for students seeking to change or alter their programs of study
- **Regular review of the efficacy of support services** and increasing opportunities for professional and faculty advisors to raise and solve problems together

Hunter has the opportunity to distinguish itself for clear articulation, resourceful implementation, programmatic organization, and creative leadership. It could create a reward structure that fosters a culture of interdisciplinary dialogue, debate, and cooperation of the sort that could sustain and perpetually renew a general education curriculum. A budgeting process that prioritizes general education is crucial for securing the resources and coordination necessary to develop a state-of-the-art general education curriculum.

Responsibility for general education spans the entire College and is not limited to the governance and supervision of the School of Arts & Sciences. However, it most directly *impacts* the School of Arts & Sciences. The governance of general education needs to have sufficient authority and reach to negotiate this administrative structure, to plan and maintain (with sufficient budget), and to access data (from a variety of support service offices). The Provost's office is structurally positioned to accomplish these responsibilities, but the unique position of the School of Arts & Sciences needs recognition and accommodation in any arrangement for supervising general education. There are two different general approaches to oversight of general education:

1. shared responsibility
2. centralized administration (through single professional administrator)

### **Option 1 – shared responsibility**

Our colleagues have proposed this approach in the past.<sup>38</sup> A General Education Council could have shared oversight responsibility.<sup>39</sup> The council might include relevant stakeholders:

- Provost (as Chair)
- College Deans (with a special role given to Arts & Sciences)
- Faculty representatives from major areas of the curriculum
- Students taking courses in major areas of the curriculum
- The Chair of the Senate Undergraduate Course of Study Committee
- Representatives from the professional schools involved in undergraduate education
- Other faculty at the Provost's discretion

The reason to have the committee chaired by, and ultimately responsible to, the Provost is that general education affects all students at the College and needs to have resources at its discretion so that it can properly fund the program. This reflects the collective nature of the process, appropriate responsibility, and the essence of general education. A disadvantage of this arrangement is that it could potentially diffuse and weaken the important functions of leading faculty, collecting data, and assessing performance. (These components could potentially be delegated within the Provost's office.)

### **Option 2 – centralized administration**

Centralized administration would involve the appointment of a single administrator whose primary responsibility would be to lead the general education program. It addresses the concern about the diffusion of responsibility and leadership in the shared model above. Its disadvantage is that it does not involve the parties directly involved in developing, delivering, and revising the curriculum.

Two CUNY models are of special interest to us: the "Senior Faculty Special Assistant to the Provost" at City College and the elected "Faculty Council Chair for the Core" at Brooklyn College. In both cases, the position is held by a senior member of the faculty with deep experience with the institution and the curriculum she oversees. One ultimately reports to the Provost, while the other collaborates with the Dean for Undergraduate Education.

At this time, we recommend hiring someone immediately to develop the position. The person fulfilling the developmental role shall be charged with identifying and coordinating the facets of undergraduate education that are vital to effective administration of a general education program and with doing this in partnership with the faculty as a whole, the Dean of Arts & Sciences, and the Provost. We propose that

the developmental period have a time limit and that it terminate with an assessment and recommendation for the President and Senate to review.

Regardless of the course taken, the Committee recommends that the body or office leading general education should have, generally and minimally, the following responsibilities:

1. Advocate the value of general education, and lead faculty to ensure participation.
2. Ensure sufficient budgetary resources are available for the program.
3. Create opportunities for faculty development and curricular revision and renewal.
4. Collect, organize, and disseminate relevant data for planning and assessment.
5. Encourage faculty to engage in responsible and responsive programmatic assessment.
6. Plan and manage implementation, and collaborate with Senate leaders to ensure needed curricular changes can be made swiftly and efficiently.
7. Coordinate relevant administrative functions necessary for oversight (including transfer credit evaluation, scheduling, and appeals).
8. Monitor student progress to create opportunities for “early intervention.”
9. Consult regularly with affected stakeholders in an advisory council, including faculty, students, relevant administrators, and Senate committee members.

## 2. Evaluate special needs for budgeting

General education needs significant resources (to offer courses, to support faculty development, and to accommodate and compensate for necessary coordination among faculty in different departments), but this needs to be balanced with other departmental and school priorities. Decisions about funding and supporting general education impact departments insofar as they potentially affect scheduling, hiring, and course offerings as well as their abilities to build and deliver major programs. Department chairs and other faculty need to be directly involved and able to participate in decision-making and planning. Confidence in this process requires transparency. Budgeting considerations for general education need to be a high priority and include (among other things) the following considerations:

1. Staffing established sections
2. Adding extra sections as warranted (typically, by student demand)
3. Creating new courses
4. Providing faculty-development training to insure quality instruction is available
5. Initiating inter-departmental and inter-disciplinary course development
6. Executing a robust and thorough assessment process

The budget for general education should be independent of the departmental teaching budgets.

## 3. Identify requirements for assessment

The Committee also recognizes that meaningful assessment and instructive feedback requires academic leadership. This goal recognizes that both faculty and students are learning and that we learn better when we have opportunities to measure our progress and use that as guidance for future action. We discussed

different ways this might be accomplished. Broad, common learning objectives can be translated and embedded in specific courses. This provides faculty with direct means to assess the achievement of those goals in their classes and provides a basis for meaningful comparison across a spectrum of courses. A sample overview of how this works at Brooklyn is provided in Appendix D. Appropriate assessment measures can be helpful gauges that keep the curriculum elastic and responsive to the changing state of knowledge, the expertise of the faculty, and the shifting social problems and civic demands that a Hunter education is intended to prepare students to confront. Proper assessment is not simply about reporting and accounting. Rather, it helps to identify significant accomplishments and can lead to enhanced problem-solving. The Committee endorses this approach to assessment and underscores the importance of academic leadership for coordinating it.

Oversight for General Education has already become a CUNY priority. In her chapter “The Project: Common/Uncommon Ground,” University Dean Judith Summerfield writes, “Paradoxically, the largest common enterprise, shared by the entire university, is General Education, that set of courses, requirements, and activities that falls outside the major. Even so, general education slips between the cracks of both the administrative and the academic realm: ‘It’ remains elusive as a project, is characteristically overseen by no one, and exists nowhere. It is not a department or a program. It does not have an office. It is an amalgam of the liberal arts and science departments, yet is neither owned nor governed by anyone. No one takes responsibility for it. No one roots for it or tries to bolster its staff, promote its faculty for tenure and promotion. No one seeks grants for it. It is by far the ‘largest major’ at most institutions—but without a department or chair or governance structure—or a coherent administrative organization. It fails typically at both ends—the administrative and the academic” (Summerfield and Benedicks 2007: 19).<sup>40</sup> The CUNY General Education Project has now entered its second phase. In the list of priorities it sets for the coming three years, effective administrative leadership for general education is prominent. By addressing this issue now, we can identify our own structure in light of our own needs and opportunities.

#### 4. Simplify and clarify the content and structure of general education at Hunter

In our investigations, we discovered a variety of presentation formats for the GER at Hunter. By and large, articulation is unnecessarily complex, lacks a rationale that expresses the value of the enterprise, fails to provide sufficient guidance for completing the requirements, and does not provide students with tools for planning and monitoring their own progress. At a minimum, our existing general education program can be improved by ameliorating these articulation and communication difficulties (see Appendix E).

A revised articulation of our existing requirements could take into account the nature of the wording used to describe requirements to students. The current description makes frequent use of imperatives and lacks a rationale that 1) explains to students how the requirements are part of a coherent educational program and 2) encourages them to utilize the curriculum to reach their personal and professional goals. Our current catalogue copy suggests an impersonal and passive role for students—the goals are expressed in terms such as “Academic Foundations” and various levels of “Exposure” instead of communicating why students need general education, what they can expect to achieve, and how it will serve them in the future. In this respect, it is easy to see how students might regard the requirements as obstacles and barriers to their progress rather than as opportunities to develop in ways that will facilitate their future success. Our current approach runs counter to the educational goal of encouraging student activity and responsibility for learning (White and Cohen 2004).

Our limited review of the curriculum, particularly general education, reveals that there are a number of things we might do better, as pointed out in the discussion above. We have also identified key areas for planning, coordinating, renewing, assessing, and further developing a coherent, effective, and dynamic general education program. The Mellon Project committees strongly encourage our colleagues, students, and administrators to join us in further deliberation of these important matters.

In the models that follow, we discuss a variety of alternative approaches, including the possibility of developing a limited set of core courses. Core courses can provide greater opportunities for faculty to collaborate and engage in discussions not only of the course content and difficulties in student learning but also of best practices for teaching and engaging students. An assessment of a new core course structure at St. Louis University can be found in Weissman and Boning 2003. The new structure was devised simultaneously with the institution's participation in NSSE. The five features of successful core programs they identify are "creating community through collaborative learning, fostering student ownership of learning, connecting academic ideas with other disciplines and with the real world, evaluating student learning through active experiences, and sharing the experience of the discipline." The Committee recognizes that there are some challenging issues associated with core course development and delivery (e.g., reluctance of faculty and departments to participate, inability of the institution to properly fund the initiative, inadequate faculty reward and workload credit structures, and the overdependence on graduate labor). A potential, undesirable outcome of such an arrangement would be the redirection of resources away from smaller lower-level courses that currently run because they fulfill general education. These courses also support majors, so this impact should be taken seriously and studied with care. There is also concern that core courses might have the effect of watering down the curriculum, particularly if they replace certain courses that play more traditional and steady roles in general education while also serving the majors. Nonetheless, the Committee thinks it is worthwhile to at least consider how *some* core courses might be developed at different stages in a general education plan that could include both core and distributive elements.

*Our limited review of the curriculum, particularly general education, reveals that there are a number of things we might do better... We have also identified key areas for planning, coordinating, renewing, assessing, and further developing a coherent, effective, and dynamic general education program. The Mellon Project committees strongly encourage our colleagues, students, and fellow administrators to join us in further deliberation of these important matters.*

## 5. Maintain best practices for review, revision, and piloting

A lack of readiness to implement the 2001 GER resulted in multiple, subsequent changes to accommodate students and facilitate their progress. This created significant confusion. Changes to the GER effectively create new sets of requirements for entering students. Thus, it is desirable to accomplish the following:

- Minimize the number of times changes are made.
- Avoid passing changes piecemeal.
- Pilot and assess prospective changes that would have significant impact.
- Establish a regular calendar for implementation to improve advising capabilities.

The Mellon committee will apply these best practices of curriculum review and development in any recommendations it brings to the Senate floor, and it is already taking action on several pilot initiatives, including the following:

**Pre-major faculty advising for transfers**—Connecting new transfer students to specially prepared faculty advisors may promote student understanding of general education as a meaningful experience and prove vital to student success. Five hundred students will be selected for a Mellon Project-funded pilot study. From this unit, 250 students will be allocated at random to the “faculty mentoring” group, and the 250 other students will receive advising per usual practice (the control group). In addition to receiving individual advising, students in the target group will meet with peers and other advisors at a large welcoming event for all participants. Two following events will be hosted by faculty for their individual groups of advisees. Faculty will also contact advisees regularly by phone and/or email. Advising Services staff will partner with faculty to assist in this process. Various methods will be used to compare the “mentoring” target group with the control group.

**Assessment of writing intensive courses**—Do writing intensive courses actually contribute to the improvement of student writing? How can this be assessed across a variety of disciplines? *Can* it be assessed given the current definition of what counts as a writing intensive course? Is it feasible to develop a tiered requirement when it is often the case that students may take courses in any order they choose and when the Senate’s guidelines for course numbering (as relevant to the level of instruction) are not uniformly applied? The Mellon Project will fund a multi-disciplinary project to develop an assessment of this crucial area of the curriculum and report its findings to the Committee.

**Development of general education-specific courses**—The Mellon Project will fund the development of new courses, or the revision of existing courses, that are specifically oriented toward general education. Priority will be given to courses relevant to multiple disciplines, and which are writing intensive and technology-rich as described above in the section on Information Literacy and Technology.

Other smaller programs and projects will be funded as previously announced in the Mellon Call for Proposals. Contact the Mellon Project for more information on how to participate in a pilot ([mellonrsvp@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:mellonrsvp@hunter.cuny.edu)).

# Modeling General Education for the 21st Century— Four Alternative Approaches

The first step in caring for general education is recognizing its importance and taking it seriously. The next step is deliberating and identifying a model. Here, we outline four possible models for general education at Hunter. Each model has been tailored to Hunter's needs, challenges, and opportunities as identified in the previous pages. What ultimately results of our deliberations might be some combination of approaches.

Each of the models shares the following assumptions:

- The model would have a caretaker.
- Faculty development and course development opportunities would be available.
- Cross-curricular planning structures would emerge.
- A set of clear and transparent communications materials would be created to support students and advisors.
- Faculty pre-major advising would increase.
- All courses in general education would undergo (re)certification for meeting a defined set of objectives in order to enhance coherence and facilitate assessment.

With these ideas in mind, we call on the faculty to review these models and weigh their merits. This discussion we expect to take place during the first half of 2008.

## Evaluating the models

The steering committee shall hold public hearings on the viability of the proposed models. At each such meeting, we shall invite discussion of criteria for evaluating the models. At a minimum, such criteria might include:

1. How well the model reflects the goals of general education (our first hearing will be devoted exclusively to the topic of the goals of general education)
2. How well the model reflects the aims and purposes of Hunter College (the degree to which the model upholds our mission)
3. How well the model addresses the main concerns that need to be addressed (clear and easy to communicate, reasonable for multiple-points of entry, enabling students to make connections, true to the hallmarks of the highest quality education, enabling faculty and students to assess learning)



## Model #1 — Revised GER (General Education Program)

### Description

This model preserves the existing GER architecture, improving it through adding a supporting coordination structure and specifying common learning outcomes for each area.

### Rationale

The basic structure of our current General Education Requirements is sound. It provides:

- Basic skills, such as writing and quantitative reasoning;
- Essential foundations, such as historical understanding and literature written in English;
- A breadth of disciplinary introductions, including specific approaches to scientific reasoning, approaches to the humanities, approaches to performing arts, and approaches to social sciences; and
- Depth experiences in at least two areas outside of the major concentration.

Moreover, the existing model, when considering graduation requirements and “core” requirements as a whole, provides students opportunities to focus on writing skills and develop reading and writing skills in another language, and it offers students a wide range of diverse perspectives that are taken up with considerable depth. Other institutions currently revising their general education programs are instituting curricular architecture that is similar to ours. There are several ways the existing program might be improved that would allow for clearer guidance for students and enhanced opportunities for faculty and staff to collaborate to promote student learning and success.

### Main features and highlights

- 1. A new name**—The overall curriculum would have a compelling rationale that conveys to students the value of the program and how to use it to accomplish their goals. The name of the requirement might change to “General Education Program”. This would convey to students that the general education curriculum is an academic program intended to support their advanced studies rather than a requirement that is limiting or merely taxing (on the importance of names for general education programs, see Bowen 2004; White and Cohen 2004).
- 2. Simplification**—The rules governing the ‘core’ requirements would be simplified and reduced. No course would be approved by the curriculum committees as satisfying more than one stage.
- 3. Coherence**—Each area of the curriculum would have defined goals and outcomes. This would add a measure of coherency, consistency, and integrity to the course of study.
- 4. Transfer packages** would be created to streamline transfer credit evaluation. The existing TIPPS program could be expanded to include non-CUNY frequent sending institutions (e.g., SUNY, NY regional institutions, LIU, etc.).
- 5. Curricular developments**—In keeping with this model, departments, working through approval processes established by the Senate, determine the actual *content* of courses in the curriculum. Thus, the following would be merely strong recommendations rather than additional stipulations or requirements:
  - a. Math and science:** The science subcommittee found that many if not all of the courses offered for general education were not particularly geared toward this purpose and instead were intended specifically as an introduction to more advanced work. The committee strongly

encourages the science faculty to consider curricular developments to address this concern, and it urges the administration to provide funding for curricular development and innovation. We would recommend similar developments in quantitative reasoning.

- b. **P&D:** The model does not alter the existing graduation requirements and streamlines in ways stipulated above. With regard to the pluralism and diversity requirement, the Committee endorses the view that said requirements might be reconsidered by the whole: 1) in light of the current status of scholarship and pedagogy; 2) in tandem with the foreign language requirement, which could be modified to include greater depth of cultural study in the context of language acquisition (a recommendation in the 1983-1986 Senate review); 3) in conjunction with the history requirement, which could be modified to include relevant history of the recent past or other facets of world history; 4) examining the impact of the P&D requirement on comparative study; and 5) exploring whether the spirit of the requirement might be fulfilled through cross-curricular initiatives and change. Once again, the Committee believes these are largely *curricular content* issues that must be discussed with an eye toward consensus rather than mandated through general education reform, although any modification of the P&D requirement itself would require Senate approval. Thorough and thoughtful deliberation of these matters would take time and resources, and we think the administration should provide both.
- c. **Writing:** Concerning writing, the Committee notes that the original plan for the GER was to link writing courses through the tiers. This proved unmanageable from an implementation standpoint and impractical from a student perspective. The summer subcommittee on writing devised a proposal that would link writing to courses in the major. Further campus-wide discussion of the practicalities of such a proposal and its pedagogical advantages and disadvantages is warranted if the current GER is preserved. Other models might suggest or require other remedies.

### Major benefits

- **Improved transfer student options** through simplification, transfer packages, and expanded articulation agreements.
- **Enhanced coordination** through administrative and oversight structures.
- **Clearer communication** for improved advising and guidance services.

### Challenges

- **Constant care.** The improved General Education Program would require the constant care and attention of the faculty and academic affairs officers. This must be figured into organizational structures and workload considerations.
- **Recertification.** In light of the common goals, all courses would have to go through a process of re-certification for suitability for inclusion in the GER. It would take considerable time to do this, and a reasonable implementation period should be planned.
- **Needs support and development.** Faculty and staff development to promote clear and helpful guidance for gaining the most from the General Education Program would need to be a priority for administrative officers in academic affairs and student affairs. Faculty development to address common pedagogical issues would need to become a regular budget item in institutional planning processes. This could be used to facilitate discussion of the common goals and outcomes and to enhance writing and quantitative reasoning instruction.

## Model #2—Comprehensive distribution model

### Description

This is a simple distribution model in which each of Hunter's courses would belong to one distributional category. Students satisfy the requirement by taking one or two courses in each category.

### Rationale

At a strong liberal arts college such as Hunter, each and every course should serve towards a student's general education. The only need of a general education requirement is to ensure that students partake in a course of study that consists of reasonable breadth that also provides opportunities to gain familiarity with areas that the faculty believes are crucial for a sound education in the post-graduation world that students will enter. A comprehensive distribution requirement meets this need.

### Main features and highlights

1. One example of a possible distribution requirement might be:

Writing	2 courses
Language	0-4 courses based on initial placement
Visual and Performing Arts	1 course
Quantitative Reasoning	1 course
Pluralism and Diversity	2 courses
Literature and Humanities	2 courses
Science and Technology	2 courses (one with lab)
Social, Cognitive and Historical Analysis	2 courses

Areas that require 2 courses might require one course taken at the 100-level or higher and one course at the 200-level or higher.

With the exception of Writing, courses may satisfy only one category. Courses that are designated as Writing courses may satisfy the writing requirement and one other area.

2. **Simplicity**—Since courses (except for Writing) may satisfy only one category, and the categories are implicitly (rather than explicitly) tiered, the distribution model is simple and transparent.
3. **Flexibility**—Students would have a great deal of latitude in deciding how to meet the requirement since there would be no specification of a small subset of Hunter courses as GER courses.
4. **Coherence**—The distributional categories would need to have defined goals and outcomes, and all courses would be required to indicate how these goals and outcomes are to be met.
5. **Curriculum development**—This model takes seriously Hunter's liberal arts orientation. All courses would need to be reviewed with this in mind, particularly the 100-level entrance courses to a major, which would need to serve students' general education needs as well as provide whatever technical material is required for more advanced courses in a particular area.
6. **Transfer students**—Students would not be permitted exemption from any of the distribution requirements (of course, students who earn an associate's degree from another CUNY college

would be exempt entirely). However since the number (and presumably breadth) of courses is quite large in each category it would prove relatively easy for faculty advisors to assign Hunter equivalencies. Note that this would require departmental advising of students outside of the major.

### Major benefits

- **Transparency** by allowing only minimal double counting and restrictions.
- **More student choice** through an increase in the number courses that count towards the requirement, and a decrease of restrictions.
  - Giving students the freedom to pursue specific interests makes the requirement much more attractive than a tightly structured requirement.
  - More student choice would also help alleviate existing course availability issues.
- **Hunter's strength** as a liberal arts college is fully embraced and would potentially increase.
- **Transfer students** are more easily placed in the requirement given a broader spectrum of comparable general education courses.

### Challenges

- **More student choice.** Students may meander among their distribution courses without receiving any targeted academic foundation outside of their majors. Also, since the current use of 100-, 200-, etc. level course numbering varies widely across departments, there is no guarantee of a student receiving an academically sound "focused" experience at the second-tier.
- **Recertification.** In light of the common goals, all courses must go through a process of re-certification for suitability for inclusion in a particular category. It would take considerable time to do this, and a reasonable implementation period should be planned.
- No multi/cross-disciplinary experience is required as part of a student's general education. Although a distribution requirement in and of itself doesn't preclude any college-wide initiatives or incentives for creating innovative courses, these would be few, presumably, and, to require one of a few multi/cross-disciplinary courses defeats the overarching goals of this distribution model.

## Model #3—Blended model

### Description

This model blends a set of common courses, core competencies, distinctive experiences, and a distribution system.

### Rationale

No single approach to general education provides all desirable learning opportunities. This model blends several approaches to provide students with a breadth and depth of experiences, capabilities, and bases of knowledge. The competencies require students to demonstrate fundamental learning and communication capabilities vital to success and which provide a baseline for expectations in other courses. Common experiences create a distinctive intellectual community. Distributed areas linked to topical content allow students to explore various approaches to current research, and a variety of “rising” experiences and practical applications give students opportunities for learning through self-assessment and by making connections among courses and extra-curricular activities.

### Main features and highlights

This model consists of four components:

- **Core competencies**—Students may offer evidence of competency in key areas by sitting for an exam at any time, or by passing a relevant course with a grade of B or higher. These are graduation requirements.
- **The Hunter Seminar**—Four common courses organized around critical capabilities and geared toward students at various levels of study (i.e., “first year,” “second year,” or by relevant credit thresholds, 0-30 credits, 30-60, etc.). At least 75% of seminars would be led by full-time faculty and might take various forms, according to the instructors’ expertise (large lecture or small seminar). All seminars would be writing intensive, tech-rich, and include a quantitative component and a comparative element (diverse disciplinary approaches, multicultural bases).
- **Distributed areas based on content**—Distribution areas would not necessarily map to the departments. To meet the goal of breadth in general education, five or six topical content areas, reflecting the current state of knowledge would be defined.
- **Integrated extracurricular experiences and applications**—Staged milestone experiences: a first year collaborative community project (0-30 credits); choice of internship, study abroad, or organized reading during a January term in the second and third years (30-90 credits); and a culminating project and presentation in the final year (90-120 credits).

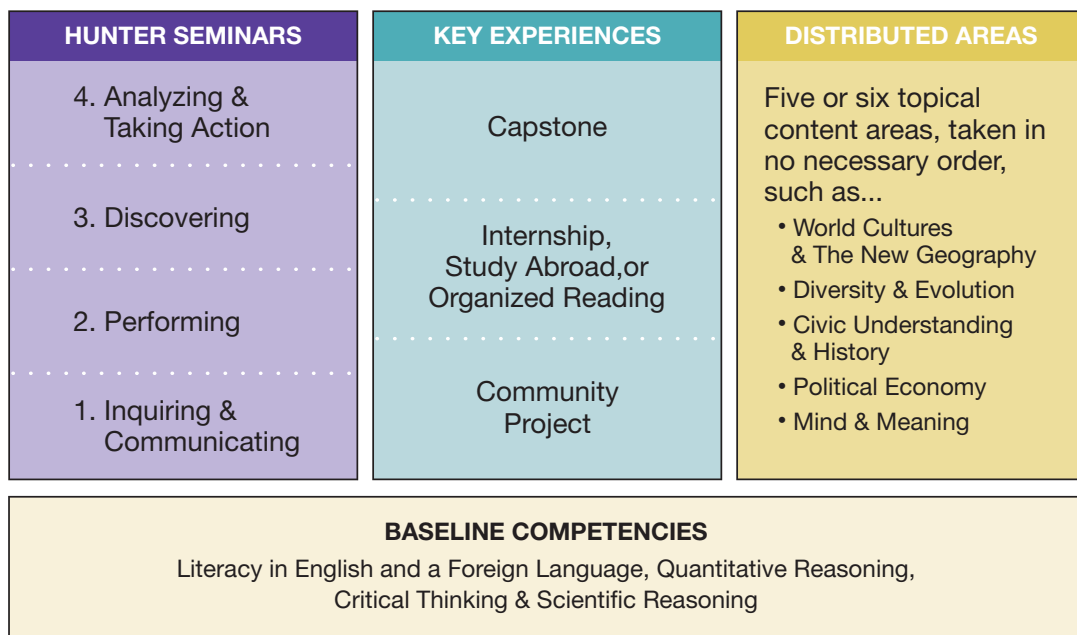
### Major benefits

- Simplifies the requirements by eliminating “co-requisites,” integrating them in the common courses.
- Provides greater coherency and facilitates interdisciplinary awareness by organizing the distributed areas according to topical content rather than departmental structures.
- Fosters greater understanding of the value of general education through emphasis on capabilities.
- Simplifies the articulation for transfer students by delineating clear “entry points”. For example, students entering with 30 credits would complete the remaining  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the tiered grid, students entering with 60 would complete  $\frac{1}{2}$ . The distribution areas would be fulfilled by departmental courses and therefore would follow existing articulation agreements.

- Develops enhanced communication skills through “rising” experiences (e.g., second year “academic festival”; senior capstone project).
- Integrates extra-curricular learning and practical applications.
- Creates signature experiences.

### Challenges

- The new general education program would require the constant care and attention of the faculty and academic affairs officers. This must be figured into organizational structures and workload considerations.
- Seminars might carry additional credits (standard to equal 4-6) so as to allow greater development and intensive focus on the capabilities sought. This would affect student credit-load and faculty workload.
- The mandate for the percentage of seminars taught by full-time faculty would require careful course management and college-wide planning. It would be difficult to reconfigure incentive and reward structures for departmental participation.



## Model #4—Tailored general education without specific requirements

### Description

This plan would eliminate any structure for delivering general education. In place of a required structure, each student's general education would be tailored to his or her background, learning needs, and plans through intensive advising by faculty.

### Rationale

- What higher education delivers is a general education: good higher education is an introduction to multiple ways of knowing. Most bachelors' degree programs do not impart a specific set of skills, but rather teach students to think about the world—both in a specialized way, through the major system, and generally.
- Beyond the intensely discipline-bound major system, colleges expect all students, no matter how specialized, to understand how specialized “major” skills fit into larger frames of looking at the world.
- A sound higher education offers the student a chance to exceed the instinctive (and coursework-directed) view that comes with learning within any discipline and it frees the student from obeisance to any one set of gods—any one authority, any one epistemic path.

### Main features

- **Faculty consensus.** Faculty would agree that a Hunter College graduate should have had coursework or other learning experiences in a range of areas and would seek consensus on what those areas might include: the laboratory, performance art, natural sciences, mathematics, literature & philosophy, history, and/or, say, international living or community service.
- **Minimal universally required coursework.** Hunter could continue to have graduation requirements, such as language competency or an American-history course. We might institute some skills requirement, for instance in writing, to be satisfied by coursework or an exam. But apart from some bare-bones requirements, we would not mandate coursework in any disciplines—instead allowing the student to choose how far to broaden his education and in what ways.
- **Advising.** Key to implementing this plan would be earnest and intensive advising, through teamwork amongst faculty and student-support staff. Each student would be assigned a faculty advisor upon entering Hunter, and would be able to keep that advisor throughout her career at Hunter. Student-support staff would train faculty advisors, and serve as backup for access to specialized functions (e.g., counseling, disabilities programs).
- **Structure.** Student services would provide continual training of faculty advisors. Senior faculty would supervise advising by their junior colleagues, and supervising faculty would work with Student Affairs to make sure that advising is done thoroughly, reviewing student transcripts with each faculty advisor and discussing the rationale for choices made. These supervising faculty advisors would also mediate disputes between student and advisor, and recommend transfers if the student and advisor are not working well together.
- **Letting people off the hook.** Once the faculty has decided which areas of learning are desirable and how many areas a student should visit, there would be no further oversight. The advisor would help push the student toward new awareness, rather than corral the student into a single set of requirements.

## Major advantages

- **Connection**—If, as seems true, students are encouraged to remain at an institution because of the close relationships they form there, it should greatly improve student retention at Hunter to create student-advisor bonds early on and provide continuing support for these bonds.
- **Transformation**—If education is meant to be (or inherently is) transformative, as many of us believe, then the key aspect of general education is not the variety of departments reflected on a student's transcript, but the decisions about which experiences to undertake so as to maximize the chance for new awareness.
- **Agency**—The plan also returns agency to the student, making her aware of and responsible for her own choices about her own education—but with the guiding hand of a faculty member, and with a safety net of oversight, assessment, and supervision by experienced faculty.
- An additional advantage is that it does not preclude including some set of graduation requirements, like foreign-language competency, or some communal experience that would be a “trademark” of a Hunter education, like a core course or a capstone project.

## Challenges

- **Some students could be left out**—An advisor who isn't earnest, or who isn't diligent, might leave the lethargic student to choose his own course work without much direction, or might side-track the very-focused student who truly does want to study Art History and then become a physician. The more general concern—although not necessarily disadvantage—is that it would require that we give up on articulating a single GER that, we think, must serve all Hunter students.



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## Appendix A: Information Literacy Articulation: Learning Goals and Objectives (Council of Chief Librarians within CUNY)

The Library Information Literacy Advisory Council proposes a set of information literacy learning goals and objectives for CUNY students to achieve by the time they have completed 60 credits. The purpose is to ensure that our efforts at information literacy fully articulate within CUNY. These learning objectives have been approved and endorsed by the CUNY University Librarian and the CUNY Council of Chief Librarians, who agree to work with campus leaders, faculty and administrators to ensure that the learning objectives are met.

### Learning Goals Summary

The Learning Goals for every CUNY student with 60 credits includes:

1. How information in various formats is organized and how to locate it;
2. How to define and refine a topic and how to search for information related to that topic;
3. How to evaluate information and its sources;
4. How to use information responsibly.

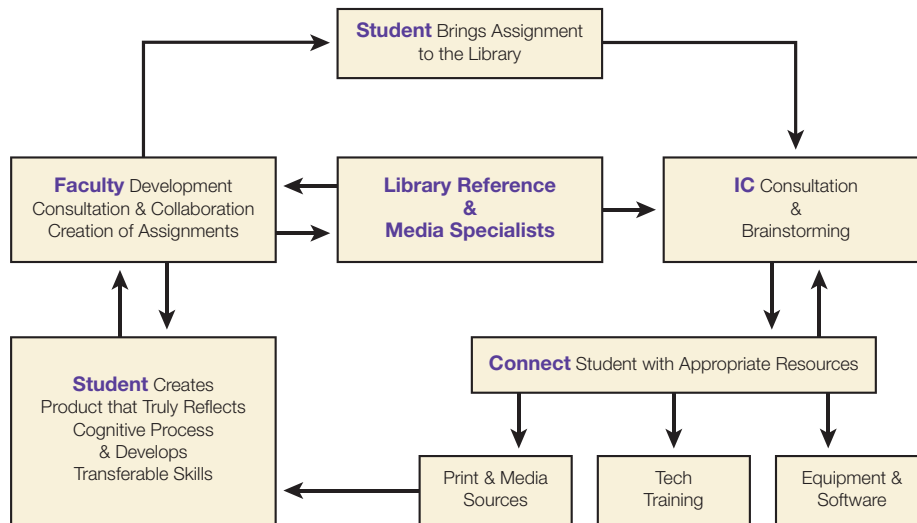
### Learning Objectives Detail

The specific objectives/outcomes relating to each of these broad learning goals are described below.

1. How information in various formats is organized and how to locate it.
  - a. Students will be able select and search the appropriate database or information source based on their specific information need.
  - b. Students will use their understanding of where and how information originates.  
( i.e., information sources—government, news media, social networking sources, and the scholarly communication cycle) during the research process to guide their selection of relevant and appropriate sources.
  - c. Students will find and navigate appropriate resources in print and online. (Including the free Web, online library catalogs and subscription databases).
  - d. Students will differentiate between scholarly, popular and trade publications and use the various types of literature appropriately.
2. How to define and refine a topic and how to search for information related to that topic.
  - a. Students will translate research questions into search statements by identifying key vocabulary terms, concepts and synonyms.
  - b. Students will determine whether a research topic is too broad or too narrow, given the guidelines for the assignment, and be proactive searchers by responding to results and revising or refining their searches.

- c. Students will formulate effective search statements using tools such as keywords, subject headings and Boolean operators.
3. How to evaluate information and its sources.
- a. Students will distinguish between types of information sources and demonstrate through their choices that not all information sources are appropriate for all purposes.
  - b. Students will apply basic evaluation criteria to Web sites and demonstrate an understanding of why information found on Web sites needs careful evaluation.
  - c. Students will critically evaluate information for usefulness, objectivity and bias, currency and authority and demonstrate the benefits of examining diverse opinions and points-of-view.
4. How to use information responsibly.
- a. Students will demonstrate their understanding of ethical, legal and social issues surrounding plagiarism, copyright and intellectual property and apply principles of academic integrity in their use of information.
  - b. Students will identify the elements that go into a citation and create a correct citation using an online or print style manual for guidance.
  - c. Students will quote, paraphrase and attribute ideas correctly.

## Appendix B: An “Idea Center” (IC) Would Integrate the Libraries in the Learning Loop



## Appendix C: Purposes of a General Education Program— A Starting Point

1. Introduce students to academic culture by conveying general expectations, responsibilities, and opportunities.
2. Establish a common learning community through shared experiences.
3. Provide a coherent curriculum for students.
4. Help students appreciate the variety of different disciplinary approaches, organizing methods, and questions.
5. Gain basic competencies in major areas of inquiry, including quantitative and scientific inquiry.
6. Develop specific skills of problem-solving, critical thinking, assessing and evaluating sources, and writing concisely and coherently.
7. Acquire experience transferring the skills in #6 to various areas of inquiry.
8. Gain experience with multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge.
9. Through the above goals, help students discover their areas for major study.
10. Appreciate the creativity entailed in the discovery of knowledge. (Capture the “zest for learning” that is found in the College’s mission statement.)
11. Develop an appreciation for how skills and methods learned might be utilized to address key social problems and concerns.
12. Acquire the habits of mind that enable students to evaluate and acquire new knowledge throughout their lifetimes.

# Appendix D: Embedded Assessment of Broad General Education Goals—Brooklyn College

## From Program Goal to Embedded Assessment

This account of how to move from a program goal to embedded assessment incorporates two examples from courses taught at Brooklyn College. The first, a Medical Nutritional Therapy course, inserts content into the boxes of the flow chart that depicts the process in the abstract. The second, an Introductory Ethics course, takes its goal from one proposed on the general education survey distributed to faculty in Fall 2002, showing how the goal is translated onto a syllabus.

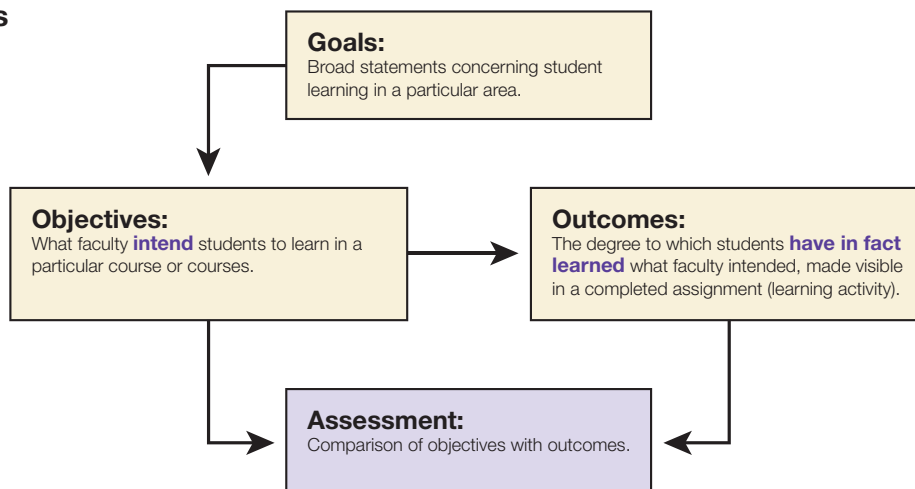
### I. Definitions/Process

*Goals* state in broad terms what we would like students to know and be able to do. The first “area of knowledge” goal on the faculty survey, and the one used in this example, is “An understanding of ethical theories and moral issues,” which could be restated as “Students will demonstrate that they understand ethical theories and moral issues.”

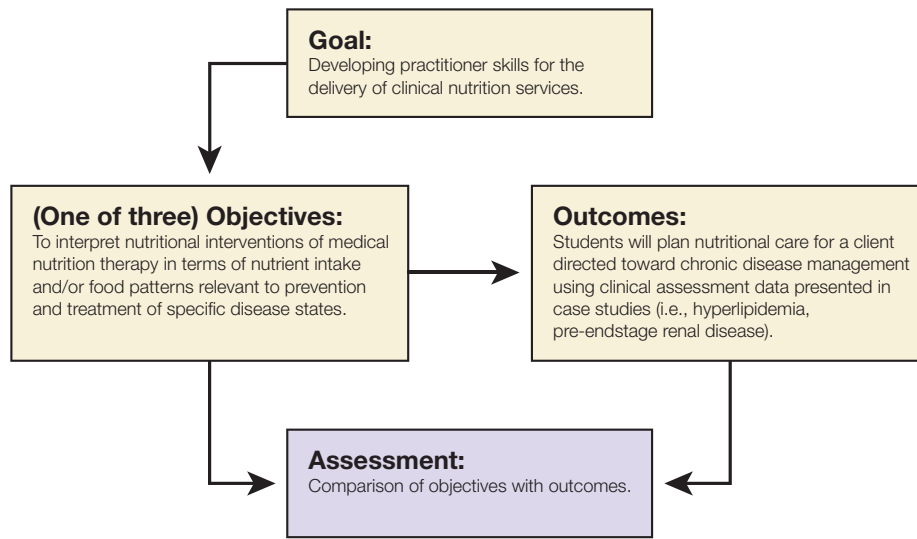
Objectives differ from goals: while goals are broad and general, objectives state specifically and concretely the particular knowledge and skills that we want students to develop in a course or courses. Generality in a goal is to be expected and welcomed, because there are many possible curricular and pedagogical paths to the development of an area of knowledge and/or a set of skills. Specificity and concreteness are to be expected in an “objective”: the word itself indicates that what is being stated is what the instructor or a group of instructors intend that students will know and be able to do because of a particular course.

Outcomes differ from objectives: as the word itself suggests, outcomes are the knowledge and skills that students have in fact gained through their experiences in a course or courses. When we design course assignments that link with objectives, we allow students to produce these outcomes within the class/classes they take. Assessment of outcomes is then simply a matter of measuring the student product against the objectives for the class/classes: we compare the actual learning with what we intended that students learn.

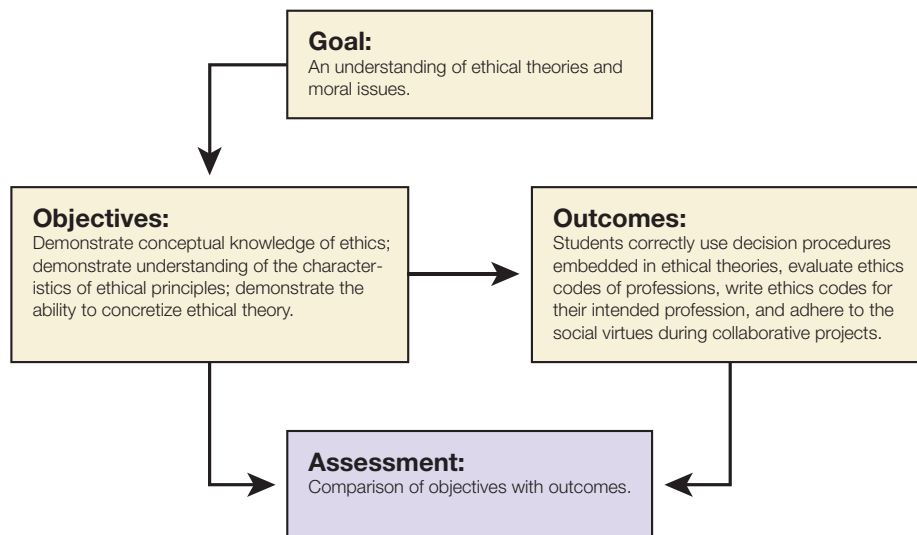
#### Process



## II. Example One: Medical Nutritional Therapy



## III. Example Two: Introductory Ethics



### Discussion

- A. The general education goal (from the survey) is “an understanding of ethical theories and moral issues.”
- B. Objectives: In the Introductory Ethics class, the goal is split this goal into three narrower, more concrete objectives:
- Students will be able to:
1. Demonstrate conceptual knowledge of ethics.
  2. Demonstrate understanding of the characteristics of ethical principles.
  3. Demonstrate the ability to concretize ethical theory.



- C. Outcomes: Each objective requires an activity or assignment—some “prompt” that leads students to produce something. The assignment leads to the product that is assessed in order to determine to what degree students have in fact learned what it was intended that they learn.
1. by **correctly using the decision procedures of Kant, Mill, and Pojman to generate recommendations for ethical action in response to problems/cases set by the instructor and by other students.**
  2. by **evaluating ethics codes of selected professional organizations.**
  3. by **(a) adhering to the social virtues when working in a team, and (b) writing an ethical credo, covering your personal, professional, and civic life, for yourself.**
- D. Joining the objectives to their respective assignments, and placing them on the syllabus, allows students to see what they will be learning in class, and what they will be doing in order to show how much they have learned. This is what appears on the syllabus:
1. Demonstrate conceptual knowledge of ethics, by correctly using the decision procedures of Kant, Mill, and Pojman to generate recommendations for ethical action in response to problems/cases set by the instructor and by other students.
  2. Demonstrate understanding of the characteristics of ethical principles, by evaluating ethics codes of selected professional organizations.
  3. Demonstrate the ability to concretize ethical theory, by (a) adhering to the social virtues when working in a team, and (b) writing an ethics code for your professional life.

#### IV. Assessment of an Outcome in Introductory Ethics

- A. The assignment for objective (2) is detailed on a one-page assignment sheet students receive about two weeks before their learning teams move to this new project. An extract from the assignment reads as follows:

“Your work group must: (1) locate ten corporate ethics codes on the Web and print them out. Be sure to use proper protocols for reporting the site address and access date. (2) Evaluate the ethics codes. Since each of you will, later in the semester, be writing a model code targeted to your intended work environment, this assignment—if you do it correctly—will help prepare you to do a good job writing your own code.

Here are the three values you must use to measure each code:

- a) Amount of *ethical* (as opposed to some other sort) of guidance provided.
- b) Balance and completeness: are the 10 principles in the “minimally basic set” all given *equivalent* coverage in the code? Or are one or two given far more attention, while others are omitted entirely? For the ones that are omitted: is this a problem, or not?
- c) Practicability (see Pojman for help on what this means, and note that the fact that there is room for discussion means you must state your criteria very clearly).”

- B) The assessment of this assignment focuses on two of the three “values” identified for the students: (a) amount of ethical guidance in the code, and (c) practicability of the code. I usually have four teams in a class. Each team evaluates ten codes. This gives a total of forty data points for ascertaining how well students understand the characteristics of ethical principles as distinct from other

action-guiding principles, and forty data points for their understanding of the requirement that ethical principles must be practicable.

1. To collect the assessment information, two small tables are used while grading, with a check mark placed in the right-hand column. The table for “value a” is included here:

Value A	Evaluations of Codes
<b>Better than good enough</b> = correctly assesses more than 80% of ethical content	
<b>Good enough</b> = correctly assesses 60%-80% of ethical content	
<b>Not good enough</b> = correctly assesses less than 60% of ethical content	

2. Closing the feedback loop: When grading of the assignment is completed, so is collection of assessment information. At this point there are at least two ways to make use of the information: in deciding whether and how to change this iteration of the course, and in deciding whether and how to change the next iteration of the course.

If the Philosophy department or program were conducting assessment of the goal “an understanding of ethical theories and moral issues,” it would collect the student learning objectives, including the brief descriptions of the assignment, and the assessment information. The information from Introductory Ethics, conjoined with that collected by colleagues who were also teaching courses the department had identified as serving the learning goal, would begin to constitute a basis for deciding whether to make changes in curriculum or pedagogy.

Patricia J O’Connor  
Philosophy

Janet Grommet  
Health and Nutrition Sciences

## Appendix E: Graphic Representation of Current GER

### HUNTER “CORE” & GR REQUIREMENTS

12 courses + language proficiency

<b>Focused Exposure</b> Courses must be outside major field.				
Humanities OR Visual & Performing Arts  <b>PICK 1</b>		Social Science OR Natural Science OR Math  <b>PICK 1</b>		
<b>Broad Exposure</b> Courses must come from different departments.				
Performing & Visual Arts  <b>PICK 1</b>	Cultures & Ideas  <b>PICK 1</b>	Survey of Literature Written in English  <b>PICK 1</b>	Natural Science 1 lab  <b>PICK 2</b>	Peoples & Their Societies  <b>PICK 2</b>
<b>Academic Foundations</b> Exemptions possible.				
English Composition  <b>ENGL 120                  or proficiency</b>	U.S. History  <b>PICK 1                  or proficiency</b>		Quantitative Reasoning  <b>PICK 1                  or proficiency</b>	
<b>Graduation Requirements:</b> (not necessarily additional credits) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Foreign language proficiency: 4th semester or equivalent.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Put P&amp;D (1 from each group) in any four boxes above or in major, minor, or electives.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Put “W” in any two boxes above or in major, minor, or electives (third “W” = U.S. History)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Major _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Minor _____</li> </ul>				

## Appendix F: The Evolution of General Education at Hunter<sup>41</sup>

Basic Prescription <i>effective until 1975</i>		Distribution Requirement <i>effective 1975-2001<sup>42</sup></i>		General Education Requirement <i>effective since fall 2001<sup>43</sup></i>	
Science & Math	10-12	Science & Math	10-12	Science	7-10 <sup>44</sup>
				Math	3-6
Arts & Humanities	9	Humanities	9	Arts & Humanities	9
Literature	9	Literature	6	Literature	3
English Comp	3	English Comp	3	English Comp	3
Social Sciences	12	Social Sciences	12	Social Sciences	6-9
				U.S. History	3
Physical Education	1	Physical Education	1	Physical Education	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>44-46</b>		<b>41-43</b>		<b>37</b>

**Language requirement**, now a “graduation proficiency requirement,” was virtually unchanged throughout except that students are able to earn exemptions based on prior experience and by qualifying examination. A 1999 review of transcripts revealed that students on average take 6 credits to fulfill the requirement. The Basic Prescription catalogue copy appears to assume this figure in the credits reflected.

**“Co-requisites” for Writing and Pluralism & Diversity.** These “overlapping requirements” are not necessarily additional credits, since students may fulfill them simultaneously to completing major, minor, and/or GER (e.g., history simultaneously fulfills W). These are now “Graduation Requirements.” Transfers with exemption from GER are not exempt from Graduation Requirements. This distinction is pervasive not only in CUNY but throughout the U.S., including public and private institutions.

## Appendix G: CUNY General Education Project Questions

CUNY General Education Project, “Ten Critical Questions for Phase II”

1. How are the parts of Gen Ed connected: are there “outliers,” such as freshman composition, math, or foreign languages, that are disconnected from the core, areas of distribution, or competencies?
2. Where is General Education? Where are General Education requirements visible for all to see?
3. Who is in charge? Does someone with authority and academic standing lead your Gen Ed Program?
4. How is revision undertaken? Who approves curriculum? Who leads faculty development?
5. Who teaches General Education?
6. How do you know Gen Ed is “working”? How do you know you’ve met your goals?
7. What do students say about General Education? How do you know?
8. How does General Education work for transfer students?
9. How are the administrative and academic dots connected? Would your college pass a “coherence test”?
10. What is the “imprint”—intended or unintended—left on students by General Education at your college?

## Appendix H: Hunter BA Major Requirements

MAJOR	CREDITS
Africana & Puerto Rican/Latino Studies	30 no pre-req.
Anthropology	25 + 3 credit pre-req.
Art/Studio - BFA - BA/Art History	24 or 42* 61* 24/42* + 9 credits pre-req.
Biology	37 + 33.5-36.5 math and science† 26 + 12 math and science
Chemistry	41 + 26 math and physics* 26 + 23 (includes minor) 24 + 30.5
Chinese	24 + 3 pre-req.
Classics	24 + 6 pre-req. (for Greek or Latin) 18 - 20 (for Greek and Latin) 24 - 26 (for Classical Studies)
Comparative Literature	30 + 3 credits pre-req
Computer Science	39 + 14 (includes a minor)
Dance	34+
Economics - B.S. Accounting	24 + 6 pre-req. 30 + 33
English ♦	30 + 3 credits pre-req.
Film & Media - Film - Media	27 + 6 credits pre-req. 24 + 6 credits pre-req.
Geography	30 - 33
Environmental Studies	39 - 41 (uncertain as to whether minor is additional)
German	24** + 6 credit pre-req.
Hebrew	24** + 3 credit pre-req.
History - Major with international affairs	30 18 + 18
Jewish Social Studies	36 - 39*
Latin American and Caribbean Studies	24 - 21
Mathematics and Statistics ♦ - Math - Statistics	30 + up to 6 credits pre-req. 32 + up to 6 credits pre-req.
Music ♦ - Professional and performance prep.	25 42 or 60*
Philosophy	30 + 3 credits pre-req.
Physics and Astronomy ♦	30 + 15-24 + 3 credits math pre-req.
Political Science	24

MAJOR	CREDITS
Psychology	26 + 6 credits pre-req.
Religion	24
Romance Languages	30**
Russian and Slavic Languages	24** + up to 6 credits pre-req.
Sociology †	
- BA Sociology	24 + 3 credits pre-req.
- BS Social Research	45*
Theatre	30
Thomas Hunter Honors	
Urban Affairs and Planning	24
Women's Studies	24
School of Education	
- QUEST	30
School of Health Professions	
Complete GER but exempt from foreign language	49 - 50
- Medical Lab Science	60.5
- Program in Urban Public Health	38
- Nutrition and Food Science	54
- Nursing	

\* No minor

\*\* For teaching qualification credit requirement is higher.

† Includes chemistry minor

‡ BA/MA or BA/MS programs available

Note: Some programs allow two courses from two other major programs to count as a minor.

Source: Hunter College Undergraduate Catalog 2004-2007

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> [http://urban.hunter.cuny.edu/~mkuechle/Hunter\\_Motto.html](http://urban.hunter.cuny.edu/~mkuechle/Hunter_Motto.html) (January 20, 2003), accessed January 19, 2008.
- <sup>2</sup> Research actually suggests that such efforts are misguided. See, for example, Astin 1997.
- <sup>3</sup> Consult Appendix F for an overview of the evolution of general education at Hunter College.
- <sup>4</sup> See the demographics data in the 2007 CUNY Student Experience Survey and the 2007 Hunter Fact Book.
- <sup>5</sup> University Dean Judith Summerfield, 2007. "The General Education Project: The Second Phase, August 2007-2010." The "first phase" resulted in a book publication (Summerfield and Benedicks 2007). In the book, Summerfield describes the project as one that is intended to create a space for collaboration (12), and this is what the Mellon committee has found; to enter a national conversation (12), and we have endeavored to do that in our process here at Hunter; to read the "texts" (catalogues, brochures, web sites, mission statements, CUE proposals) that serve as evidence of how colleges think about and practice general education (and we have engaged in the same for Hunter and in our review of other institutions); and to reflect on student experiences and student learning, including the degree to which general education provides students with opportunities to make connections, engage in self-assessment, and take responsibility for their own learning, which we have placed at the forefront of our models. See Appendix G for what Dean Summerfield outlines as the "Ten Critical Questions for Phase II" of the General Education Project.
- <sup>6</sup> And the larger the change, the more significant the improvement.
- <sup>7</sup> Previously available at: [http://www.fas.harvard.edu/curriculum-review/gened\\_essays.html](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/curriculum-review/gened_essays.html) (accessed July 7, 2007); the link is no longer active, although multiple essays are available on the "Mellon General Education" BlackBoard Community site.
- <sup>8</sup> Albany (P&D); Barnard (science); Baruch (P&D); Binghamton (P&D) Brooklyn College (all committees); Buffalo State (mission & planning; P&D); California State University San Diego (P&D); Case Western Reserve (science); City College (mission & planning; P&D); Columbia University (mission & planning, science); Duke (writing, science, mission & planning); Iowa State (P&D); Occidental College (P&D); Old Westbury (P&D); Oregon State (P&D); Queens College (all committees); Roosevelt University (P&D) Rutgers University (P&D, writing, mission & planning); San Jose State (P&D); Stanford (writing); Stony Brook University (P&D, mission & planning; science); SUNY system (P&D); Temple University (P&D, mission & planning); Towson State (P&D); University of Arizona (science); University of California Berkeley (P&D); University of California Los Angeles (P&D, writing); University of Colorado (science); University of Connecticut (P&D); University of Maryland, Baltimore County (all committees); University of Michigan (P&D); University of North Carolina Chapel Hill (all committees); University of Rhode Island (mission & planning); University of Texas-San Antonio (P&D); University of Washington (writing). A memo dated June 20, 2007 addressed to the consultant Wendy Katkin from Fay Rosenfeld offers a review of the P&D requirement and summarizes trends in CUNY, SUNY, and elsewhere, as compiled by Rosenfeld and Acting Dean for Diversity John Rose. It is posted on BlackBoard.
- <sup>9</sup> Of particular interest were: Queens College 2004; Harvard University 2007; Portland State University, described by White 1994; Center for Studies in Higher Education 2007.
- <sup>10</sup> For example, Olson, Evans, and Schoenberg 2007; Liberal Education 2007; Connor 1998.



- <sup>11</sup> The General Education Project: <http://www1.cuny.edu/academics/oaa/uei/gened.html>
- <sup>12</sup> New York State Commission on Higher Education, *A Preliminary Report of Findings and Recommendations*, December 2007. There is an interesting discussion of “mission creep” (and how to avoid it) in the context of the connection between a focus on research and the shift to “market-oriented” models of education in Harris 2006. See also Zemsky, Wegner, and Massy 2005 and Bok 2003. Carnevale and Strohl (2001) make the case that a general, liberal education is the best preparation for careers in a “knowledge economy.”
- <sup>13</sup> More than a decade later, the idea of information literacy as a liberal art was developed by Shapiro and Hughes (1996). This article is widely recognized as marking an important turning point in reflection on information literacy and its relevance to student learning and achievement. Shapiro and Hughes identify seven facets of information literacy: tool literacy, resource literacy, social-structural literacy, research literacy, publishing literacy, emerging technologies literacy (adaptability), critical literacy.
- <sup>14</sup> One approach others have taken is to create an information literacy graduation requirement. As an example, see the “Information-Seeking Skills Test” (ISST), a computer-administered test measuring the ability to find and evaluate information implemented at James Madison University (JMU). JMU is a state supported school with 15,000 students and over 700 faculty. See also their Center for Assessment and Research: <http://www.jmu.edu/assessment/resources/Overview.htm>
- <sup>15</sup> For a helpful overview of a variety of ways in which technology is relevant to education in the 21st century, see Oblinger and Oblinger 2005.
- <sup>16</sup> As an example of a “technology across the curriculum” initiative, see George Mason University: <http://tac.gmu.edu>. See also the course description for “New Century College course at George Mason University: NCLC 249.”
- <sup>17</sup> As an example, see Hunter’s School of Education’s new requirement, “Technology Assessment,” which passed the Senate as GS 754. Both undergraduates and graduates who enter our school of education from Fall ‘08 onwards must satisfy this assessment in order to graduate with a degree. A transcript notation will be added to their transcript when they have satisfied the requirement. There are no grades or courses involved.
- <sup>18</sup> See also the interesting discussion in Bauman 1987.
- <sup>19</sup> One way to avoid potentially interfering with the structure of the major in this case would be to make the additional credit in “writing” rather than the discipline.
- <sup>20</sup> For example, see the numerous publications of the National Research Council of the National Academies of Sciences ([www.nationalacademies.org/nrc](http://www.nationalacademies.org/nrc)).
- <sup>21</sup> A dissenting report that focuses on this claim as well as the first concerning the state of scholarship and its relation to pedagogy was also submitted. Both the subcommittee report and the dissent by Professor Anthony Browne are posted on the “Mellon General Education” BlackBoard site.
- <sup>22</sup> There is an interesting example at DePaul: [http://www.udel.edu/present/grant/qr\\_interdisciplinary.doc](http://www.udel.edu/present/grant/qr_interdisciplinary.doc)
- <sup>23</sup> In earlier reviews of our general education curriculum, there were significant discussions and debates concerning core courses, their extent, whether they should be incorporated in a model that includes distributed options, and the degree to which they should be disciplinary- or interdisciplinary-based. See especially “Appendix II: Approaches to College Requirements” of the February 1985 report from the Senate Select Committee on the Distribution Requirement, and the follow-up report by the Select Committee on the Distribution Requirement dated October 8, 1986.

<sup>24</sup> Interdisciplinary study appears to advance aims of coherence as well as providing a diversity of experiences and cultivating translatable skills and understanding of processes. Our GER is tied specifically to disciplines. There are few opportunities for students to have explicitly interdisciplinary experiences in the GER. Indeed, such are discouraged by virtue of the fact that rules governing the distribution of credits require distinct separation of divisions (at stage two) and prohibit the use of courses that are cross-listed as many interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary courses are. There is a history of extensive deliberation and dedicated work on the issue of the importance of interdisciplinary work in the College, including in the general education curriculum. Additionally, there has been extensive discussion of the wisdom and efficacy of using courses that are intended as introduction to more advanced work in the major for the purposes of general education. The perceived need for non-disciplinary general education courses has led some to adopt and develop core curricula that acquaint students with a variety of subjects in an integrated fashion.

<sup>25</sup> In addition to residing in institutional memory, the contours and character of these debates are preserved in documents produced for a symposium sponsored by Hunter's Phi Beta Kappa chapter. Key Issues: General Education and the Core Curriculum, A Symposium, edited by Charles Landesman (a publication of Nu Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at Hunter College, 2000). Contributors include Charles Landesman, Jerry L. Martin, Alan Hausman, Ezra Shahn, Sandi Cooper, and Paula Sutter Fichtner.

<sup>26</sup> There was concern that the CUNY Board of Trustees was going to mandate such a course, although this never actually came to pass in subsequent years.

<sup>27</sup> Students also took significant more history and political sciences courses, but this is unsurprising.

<sup>28</sup> The citation is drawn from the September 6, 1983, report to the Senate from the Select Committee on the Distribution Requirement, p. 11. It includes the complaint that "... the variety of courses makes it possible for a student to avoid major conceptual areas. It is possible, for example, to avoid all formal contact with historical approaches, or with more abstract considerations associated with political science or economics, or all three [areas within social sciences]" (p. 10). The committee's evidence extended beyond simple analysis of the curriculum itself, since they also reviewed a sample of approximately 200 transcripts, which revealed that the object of their complaint was not only possible but was actually occurring with some regularity. The same committee questions the value of having introductory courses in the disciplines serve double duty for general education: "By approving courses designed to be introductions to further study in a given discipline rather than specifically designed 'general education' courses, the current system dismisses a major function of the distribution requirement" (p. 10). This concern is echoed in the 1997 report of the Select Committee to Review the Distribution Requirement.

<sup>29</sup> September 6, 1983, report to the Senate from the Select Committee on the Distribution Requirement, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Compare University of North Carolina Chapel Hill: <http://www.unc.edu/curriculumrevision/>

<sup>31</sup> Middle States sets a *minimum* of 30.

<sup>32</sup> This assumes the P&D requirements overlap with either GER or courses for the major or minor and that W courses do the same.

<sup>33</sup> Baruch requires up to an additional 6 credits for foreign language.

<sup>34</sup> On the significance of the administrative difference (not in terms of financing but rather in terms of facilitating general education), see Steele 2006. Steele emphasizes points made in this report, including the fact that "in the absence of central responsibility for what is often ceded to departments, the

institution has no way of ensuring that the curriculum will be delivered” (171). She identifies the administrative components of successful curricular change, including: 1) the open and enthusiastic backing of the chief academic officer; 2) the involvement of a critical mass of faculty members; 3) the demonstration of feasibility; 4) skill in negotiation and bartering; 5) a little razzle-dazzle. The first provides the initial impetus or keeps the project on track, depending on when it comes into play. The combination of the second and the third creates a commitment to the new curriculum among at least a segment of the faculty, necessarily a large enough segment to quell the concern that the administration might be driving the curriculum. The fourth cements this commitment. The fifth thwarts the attempts to stop the momentum that the other four have created.” (171-2) Steele argues that “the success of an institution’s curriculum depends ultimately on the support and skill of its administrators. Institutions that ignore this fundamental fact are doomed to an eternity of curricular wars.” (185)

<sup>35</sup> “Report of the Select Committee on the Distribution Requirement,” September 10, 1997.

<sup>36</sup> A similar idea was broached in the 1997 report of the Distribution Requirement.

<sup>37</sup> On the importance of faculty development, the need to attend to it prior to implementing a new general education program, and the different ways to approach it, see a recounting of SUNY Buffalo’s experience in Meacham and Ludwig 1997.

<sup>38</sup> “Where do we go from here? A proposed framework for General Education at Hunter,” Report of the Senate Select Committee on the Distribution Requirement, October 1984, pp. 6-7.

<sup>39</sup> This is the approach that Harvard adopted with its new plan (Harvard University 2007: 21-23).

<sup>40</sup> Similar ideas are discussed in Janzow, F. T., Hinni, J.B., and Johnson, J.R. 1997.

<sup>41</sup> The Senate archives on general education contain at least two histories of general education at Hunter College: the introduction to the first report of the “Senate Select Committee to Review the Distribution Requirement” in 1983 and a memorandum of occasional observations prepared by Pamela Mills, Professor of Chemistry, undated.

<sup>42</sup> Reviewed by Senate Select Committee 1983-1986.

<sup>43</sup> The most significant change in the move from the DR to the GER is the creation of tiers or “levels” of requirements to help students make connections in the curriculum and add depth to their courses of study by requiring more advanced courses. This innovation is lost in the comparison presented here, since there are choices for advanced coursework in science, math, or social science and required advanced coursework in humanities. Since proficiency exemptions are possible in English, math, and technically, though not practically, in history, the absolute minimum number of credits to complete the GER is 31.

<sup>44</sup> Italicized numbers in the ranges here reflect advanced options in math, science, and social science at “Stage 3: Focused Exposure.” Thus, students may fulfill the GER with as many as 13 credits of math and science or as few as 10, as many as 9 credits or as few as 6 of “social sciences” plus U.S. history. Regardless, all must now complete advanced coursework in science, mathematics, or social sciences and in humanities in order to fulfill GER. Previously, this was not required, and students were actually prohibited from using advanced coursework to fulfill the requirements.



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