

# **REIMAGINING GENERAL EDUCATION AT SSU**



**General Education Revision Subcommittee (GERS)**  
**Last updated: October 17, 2018**

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# ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This report integrates the individual recommendations of the General Education Revision Subcommittee (GERS) and also provides additional context and elaboration. To see the current versions of the individual policies, please visit

**<https://ge.sonoma.edu/resources>**

Each of the individual policies has been formally adopted via a GERS committee vote. However, the context and elaborations in this document have not been explicitly voted upon by the committee.

The recommendations in this document should be regarded as version 0.1 of a new GE program. We are circulating them for feedback to as many campus stakeholders as possible, and we expect revisions to be adopted by our committee, the Educational Policies Committee (EPC), and/or the Academic Senate before version 1.0 is unleashed upon the campus in 2019-20.

# WHY CHANGE?

## IMPETUS AND CONSTRAINTS

Two major developments – one highly time-sensitive – precipitated the proposed changes to the GE program:

- *Issuance of CSU Executive Orders 1100 and 1110 in August 2017. EO 1110 pertains to English (B2) and Math (B4) courses only, while EO 1100 covers the entire GE pattern.*
- *Recommendations from the GE Program Review, which began in 2016-17 and which was finalized in 2017-18.*

EO 1100 was issued in August 2017, with an implementation date of Fall 2018. SSU asked for, and was granted, a one-year extension on most of its provisions, so the deadline is now Fall 2019.

In their publication for the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), *Revising General Education - And Avoiding the*

*Potholes: A Guide for Curricular Change*, Jerry Gaff and Paul L. Gaston explicitly identify allotting months rather than years for GE revision as one of their fifty listed pitfalls. As/of the submission of this report, the GE Revision Subcommittee (GERS) will have existed for approximately six months, three of which were summer months when it is difficult to gather faculty and student feedback. GERS has tried to be mindful that the timing of EO 1100 is not ideal and to identify opportunities to ease the pain of the roll-out process wherever possible.

This section is an overview of the requirements of EO 1100 and the findings of the GE program review -- which to some extent are in tension with each other -- as well as the principles behind GERS's approach to GE revision.

## **CSU EXECUTIVE ORDER 1100-REVISED**

This section will only summarize the provisions of EO 1100 that will be most disruptive to the SSU GE curriculum. For the full text of the Executive Order and of EO 1110, please see

- [EO 1100, Revised August 23, 2017](#)
- [FAQ on EO 1100 revisions](#)
- [EO 1110, Revised August 2, 2017](#)
- [FAQ on EO 1110 revisions](#)

## **Units of GE Courses**

At SSU, many GE courses are 4 units, and some areas are explicitly designed around 4-unit courses. EO 1100 specifies that campuses must offer enough 3-unit GE courses that students have the ability to complete GE in 48 units, regardless of their majors. The practical effect of this specification is that:

- GE courses whose units double-count toward a major or minor may be however many units the program requires.

- GE courses that do not satisfy other campus requirements must be 3 or fewer units.
- There must be enough 3-unit offerings in each GE area to accommodate students who do not have major or minor requirements in that area. The bodies overseeing GE will have to monitor the capacity of our offerings and solicit additional course proposals or revisions in areas with insufficient 3-unit offerings.

The revision of 4-unit courses to 3-unit courses is likely the EO 1100 provision that will affect the greatest number of faculty. We strongly recommend that, in the initial 3-unit offerings of these courses, the administration continue to compensate faculty for a fourth unit in recognition of the course revisions and professional development they will need to undertake.

### **Units in Area D (Social Sciences)**

Currently, SSU requires 15 units in Area D: 3 in each of 5 campus-specific subareas. Two of those areas, D3 and D4, also count for the statutorily mandated American Institutions requirement. EO 1100 mandates that Area D be twelve units: 9 lower-division and 3 upper-division, with no specific subareas.

The 3-unit cut, for most students, will come from their lower-division breadth in Area D. If students continue to complete 6 units of American Institutions courses in this area, that leaves only 3 units – or one course – for additional exploration in the social sciences.

We have limited ability to mitigate this loss, but our treatment of the American Institutions requirement (see the “Seawolf Studies” section) may allow some students additional flexibility in Area D.

### **Upper-Division GE**

CSU policy requires that student take 9 units of upper-division GE (at the 300 level or above). For many transfer students, these are the



only GE courses they take at SSU, since community college are not permitted to offer upper-division courses.

In the current SSU program, the only restriction on these 9 units is that they come from courses in at least two different letter areas (e.g. C and D). Areas B, C, D, and E all offer upper-division courses.

EO 1100 requires that the 9 units consist of 3 units in B, 3 units in C, and 3 units in D. This means that existing upper-division Area E courses will need to change areas to stay in the GE program. It also means that Area B, which has not historically offered as much upper-division GE capacity, needs to expand its upper-division GE offerings quickly.

### **Area A1: Oral Communication**

Until the 2018-19 academic year, SSU did not offer explicitly A1 courses; rather, those outcomes were fulfilled by the combination of A2, A3, and C3. That is no longer possible under EO 1100; area A1 must be fulfilled by a standalone course.

This is one of the few EO 1100 provisions that SSU was required to implement in 2018-19, so we are already offering standalone A1 courses to this year's freshman class, and we need to continue to build capacity in this area.

### **Area B3: The Area that Wasn't**

In the current GE pattern, Area B3 has the dubious distinction of being the only non-required GE subarea. It offered a variety of courses that didn't fit neatly into B1, B2, or B4, that were available to students who needed additional courses to have 12 units in Area B after completing the required subareas. Enrollments in B3 courses have plummeted in the last few years, coinciding with the introduction of new student-facing advising tools with different search functionality.

EO 1100 prescribes exactly 9 units in the lower division (B1, B2, and B4) and 3 in the upper division, so students will earn 12 units in B without having to take extra courses. In the new pattern, EO 1100 requires that B3 be reserved for standalone 1-unit labs that satisfy the GE lab requirement. This means that the current GE B3 courses will need to change areas or drop from the GE program.

## **Re-envisioning Area E**

At SSU, Area E is currently “The Integrated Person,” with learning outcomes that are well matched to the academic maturity of an upper-division student. In the EO 1100 program, Area E is “Lifelong Learning and Self-Development” with a strong skills component, and student success and information literacy have been added as example topics. This vision is very different from the existing SSU interpretation, and we will have to build lower-division capacity in Area E.

## **GE PROGRAM REVIEW**

The full external reviewer report for the most recent round of GE Program Review is here:

[https://web.sonoma.edu/aa/ap/prs/ssu\\_ge\\_program\\_external\\_review.pdf](https://web.sonoma.edu/aa/ap/prs/ssu_ge_program_external_review.pdf)

The program review process, including this external review, elicited several concerns about the current GE pattern:

1. Confusion about 3- vs. 4-unit GE courses, and difficulty of planning a schedule. However, even if GE courses are all offered for 3 units, majors’ courses may still be any number of units.
2. Confusing academic pathways. Students and advisors alike find the profusion of first-year cohorts and communities difficult to navigate, and students would like these communities to better relate to their majors.

3. Lack of coordination; the GE program comes across as a collection of distinct courses rather than a cohesive whole.
4. Difficulty for students to find GE courses they could actually take
  - many listed courses are not regularly offered, restricted to majors, or inaccessible due to specific prerequisites.

These concerns include many important logistical concerns, which are addressed to the extent possible in GERS's proposals.

## **SUMMARY**

On the one hand, SSU has a distinctive identity as a liberal-arts campus. On the other hand, it must follow a tightly specified GE model of courses as discrete, transferrable, interchangeable packages, which limits the amount of integration and cohesion that the GE program can combine. Furthermore, as a CSU whose students pursue diverse paths through higher education rather than moving in a lockstep four-year model, SSU cannot avail itself of many of the cohort-based practices associated with liberal arts colleges.



# GE REVISION PROCESS

In Fall 2017, prompted by persistent problems with Sonoma State University's current General Education (GE) program and by the issuance of CSU Executive Orders 1100 and 1110, SSU's Academic Senate Executive Committee initiated a campuswide process of revising GE at SSU. GE revision was the focus of the January 2018 Faculty Retreat. In March 2018, the Academic Senate Executive Committee created the GE Revision Subcommittee (GERS), under the Educational Policies Committee (EPC), to undertake the process of revising SSU's GE program.

## **GERS COMMITTEE CHARGE**

The Provost's Office and Educational Policies Committee formed the GE Revision Subcommittee in Spring 2018 and gave it the following charge:

*The goal for this subcommittee will be to envision a possible model for a campus-wide GE program that builds upon the ideas and information gathered from the Spring 2018 faculty retreat, the recent GE Program Review, and relevant higher education resources. It is essential*

*that subcommittee members be able to separate themselves from what they may consider personal/departmental/school-based stakes in GE, in order to think creatively about how best to re-imagine our campus GE program while preserving our best practices. The subcommittee will meet at least biweekly during the Spring term and will be financially supported to meet longer and more frequently during Summer 2018. Subcommittee members will be expected to consult with all University stakeholders (via interviews, surveys, focus groups, and/or other means), and regularly report to EPC as its official subcommittee. The subcommittee is expected to communicate with the broader academic community during the development process for iterative feedback as GE belongs to the greater campus community. As the subcommittee develops model curricula, it should regularly consult with key advising staff and administrators in order to identify potential pitfalls in advising plans, strategic alignment of budgeting and GE, and compliance with State and CSU requirements. The subcommittee should seek out official liaisons to serve in these capacities. Once the subcommittee's task for revising SSU's GE program is complete, it should be disbanded, and all primary oversight of managing the GE program returned to the existing GE Subcommittee.*

## **GERS MEMBERSHIP**

GERS members were appointed by Structure & Functions. All members are at-large, representing the entire campus community rather than their Schools or departments.

GERS convened in March 2018 and rotated the Chair position among its members until August, when they chose a permanent Chair to shepherd the recommendations through faculty governance.

Because of the time sensitivity of this committee's work, Structure & Functions designated two alternates to attend meetings and be ready to step in if necessary. These alternates were full contributors to our proposed GE program but could not cast votes.

Committee members are:

Suzanne Rivoire, Computer Science	Voting member, March-August 2018; Chair, Fall 2018
Chiara Bacigalupa, Education	Voting member
Michael Balasek, Advising	Alternate March-August 2018, voting member starting September 2018
Jeff Baldwin, Geography, Environment, and Planning	Voting member
Michelle Jolly, History	Voting member
Hope Emry Ortiz, International Programs	Voting member March-August 2018
Christine Renaudin, Modern Languages & Literature	Alternate
Timothy Wandling, English	Voting member

Karen Moranski (AVP of Academic Programs), Jenn Lillig (EPC Chair), Carmen Works (Academic Senate Chair 2017-18) and Laura Watt (Academic Senate Chair 2018-19) also attended GERS meetings and provided input on these recommendations.

## **TIMELINE**

### ***January 2018***

Faculty retreat focused on meaning of GE, challenges faced by departments and students, and pros/cons of GE models used on other campuses

### ***Spring 2018***

- GE Revision Subcommittee created (subcommittee of EPC)
- GERS developed statement of purpose for GE, learning goals, and learning outcomes
- GERS sought input from campus stakeholders about these statements and goals through meetings with faculty, staff, and students; consultations with EPC and the GE Subcommittee, and the circulation of a campus-wide survey
- GERS sent learning outcomes to ASPIRE for review
- GERS reviewed GE Models and developed directions for SSU GE Revision
- GERS developed a communication plan and timeline for summer work

### ***Summer 2018***

- Incorporated feedback from campus community into revision of goals, learning outcomes, and statement of purpose
- Developed a model for GE based on goals/outcomes, campus feedback, parameters established by the executive orders and constraints of existing SSU programs
- Made recommendations for implementation

### ***Fall 2018***

- GE model available for comment by campus stakeholders
- GE model proposal moves through faculty governance process



***Spring 2019***

- Campus, school, and department bodies develop implementation plans
- Implementation plans approved

***Fall 2019***

- New GE program implemented for new first-year and transfer students
- Bridge programs in place for continuing students

# **HIGH-LEVEL VISION: THE SEAWOLF EXPERIENCE**

Before determining learning goals and outcomes for the GE program, we found it useful to step back and consider the role of GE in a student's broader college education and development, inside and outside of the classroom. This led us to develop "The Seawolf Experience" as a bird's-eye view of a lower- and upper-division college education at SSU, addressed to the incoming student.

As we drafted our recommendations, we revisited this document and determined how they fit into this broader picture. That means that this document will reference GERS recommendations that have not been discussed yet, if you're reading this document sequentially, but are described in subsequent sections.

## **SEAWOLF EXPERIENCE: NARRATIVE**

Whether you come to Sonoma State as a freshman or a transfer student, the Seawolf Experience makes you part of the SSU community – people who are passionate about academic excellence, community and civic engagement, sustainability, and lifelong learning.

### **Foundation and Exploration**

During your first two years of college, you will lay the foundation for college success and begin to explore areas of interest:

- Participate in a freshman learning community (FLC)
- Complete the Golden Four (Foundations Courses: critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, written & oral communication)
- Develop a sound understanding of American history & political institutions.
- Explore SSU values of sustainability, ethnic studies, and global awareness.
- Learn how to be successful in college, including learning about campus resources, skills, and dispositions you need to succeed.
- Explore Natural Sciences, Arts, Humanities, and Human Societies, through a Sealane or independent courses.
- Lay a foundation for a major through introductory courses.
- Choose and/or affirm your choice of major
- Set goals and identify academic and co-curricular activities that can help you move toward your professional and life goals (including language study, study abroad, internships, student research, service learning, certificate programs, clubs, student leadership, and more).

## Integration and Reflection

During your last two years of college, you will build on your lower-division foundation, reflect on what you have learned and where you are going, and integrate your knowledge and experiences as you begin to move toward professional and civic engagement.

- Transfer Transitions offer connections, communities, and guidance for transfers to SSU
- Take Deeper Dives into Natural Sciences, Arts, Humanities, and Human Societies through upper-division GE, developing your foundational skills.
- Continue to follow a Sealane, if you choose – a program in which your GE courses are integrated around a particular theme.
- Complete your Seawolf Studies explorations of ethnic studies, sustainability, global awareness, and American institutions.
- Complete a Writing Intensive Course to strengthen your ability to write for audiences both inside and outside your field of study.
- Integrate your classroom learning with life experience by participating in high-impact practices such as study abroad, an internship, student leadership, service learning, student research, language study, etc.
- Study a particular field in depth through your major.
- Complete a major capstone course with a culminating project and/or guidance in transitioning from your major to professional opportunities.
- Reflect on how your GE, high-impact practices, and work in your major intersect and how they have helped you move toward your personal and professional goals.

## SEAWOLF EXPERIENCE: VISUAL SUMMARY

	GE	Major	Transitions	Seawolf Studies
<b>Foundation and Exploration (lower-division)</b>  During your first two years of college, you will lay the foundation for college success and begin to explore areas of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in an FLC</li> <li>Complete the Golden 4 (Foundations) Courses</li> <li>Develop a sound understanding of American History &amp; political institutions</li> <li>Explore Natural Sciences, Arts, Humanities, and Human Societies through GE courses</li> </ul>	May lay a foundation for a major through introductory courses.	<b>First Year:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn the difference between high school &amp; college and how to be successful in college, including learning about campus resources, skills, and dispositions you need to succeed.</li> </ul> <b>Second Year:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose and/or affirm your choice of major</li> <li>Set goals and identify academic and co-curricular activities that can help you move toward your professional and life goals (including language study, study abroad, internships, student research, service learning, certificate programs, clubs, student leadership, and more).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>American Diversities and Social Justice (Ethnic Studies).</b> May occur in FLCs; SYE; LDGE; Major</li> <li><b>Sustainability and Environmental Inquiry.</b> May occur in FLCs; SYE; LDGE; Major</li> <li><b>Global Awareness.</b> May occur in FLCs; SYE; LDGE; Major</li> <li><b>American Institutions/Civic Learning.</b> May occur in FLCs; SYE; LDGE; Major</li> </ul>
<b>Reflection &amp; Integration (upper-division)</b>  During your last two years of college, you will build on your lower-division foundation, reflect on what you have learned and where you are going, and integrate your knowledge and experiences as you begin to move toward professional and civic engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take Deeper Dives into Natural Sciences, Arts, Humanities, and Human Societies through upper-division GE, developing your foundational skills.</li> <li>Choose to follow a “sealane” – a program in which your upper-division GE courses are integrated around a particular theme</li> <li>Complete a Writing Intensive Course to strengthen your ability to write for audiences both inside and outside your field of study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study a particular field in depth through your major.</li> <li>You may (depending on your major) complete a major capstone course with a culminating project and/or guidance in transitioning from your major to professional opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transfer Transitions offer connections, communities, and guidance for transfers to SSU</li> <li>Integrate your classroom learning with life experience by participating in high-impact practices such as study abroad, an internship, student leadership, service learning, student research, language study, etc.</li> <li>Reflect on how your GE, high-impact practices, and work in your major intersect and how they have helped you move toward your personal and professional goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>American Diversities and Social Justice (Ethnic Studies).</b> May occur in UDGE; Major</li> <li><b>Sustainability and Environmental Inquiry.</b> May occur in UDGE; Major</li> <li><b>Global Awareness.</b> May occur in UDGE; Major</li> </ul>

# GE LEARNING GOALS AND OUTCOMES

This section provides two GERS proposals:

1. Statement of Purpose and Goals (May 18, 2018)
2. Learning Outcomes (May 4, 2018; minor revisions Oct. 12)

We expect to revise these outcomes in light of campus feedback from our spring “listening tour” and subsequent conversations, but we did not want that to delay the release of this report. For example, one obvious lacuna in the current version of the learning outcomes is information literacy, which is the only one of the WASC core competencies not explicitly mentioned in this document.

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The Sonoma State General Education (GE) Program provides students an intentional, coherent, inclusive undergraduate experience across multiple disciplinary perspectives, fostering broad transferable skills and integrated, engaged learning that position students to create and participate meaningfully and ethically in our interconnected and interdependent world.

## **GOALS**

- I. Broad transferable skills
  - A. Teaches academic skills, including
    - 1) Written communication
    - 2) Oral communication
    - 3) Critical thinking and questioning
    - 4) Quantitative reasoning
    - 5) Information literacy
    - 6) Cultural competency
  - B. Teaches life skills, including
    - 1) Practicing collaboration
    - 2) Engaging in problem-solving
    - 3) Reading critically and digesting materials
    - 4) Planning, organizing, and carrying through complex projects in a timely fashion
    - 5) Cultivating an understanding and appreciation of social power and difference
  - C. Cultivates lifelong learning dispositions, including
    - 1) Creativity
    - 2) Curiosity
    - 3) Flexibility
    - 4) Reflection
    - 5) Challenge-seeking

- 6) Persistence
- 7) Inclusiveness

II. Disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives

- A. Introduces *students to disciplinary and interdisciplinary* ways of knowing.
  - 1) Supporting students in exploring, choosing, and affirming majors and areas of focus
  - 2) Developing breadth of knowledge
- B. Affords students the opportunity to practice knowledge-making
- C. Expects understanding and appreciation of human diversity and multicultural perspectives

III. Integrated learning

- A. Builds bridges between disciplines and schools
  - 1) Synthesizing across general and specialized studies
  - 2) Bringing multiple disciplinary perspectives to the students' programs of study
- B. Teaches students to apply knowledge, skills, and multiple perspectives to new situations and problem-solving.
- C. Encourages students to embrace ambiguity and appreciate/value difference

IV. Engaged and real-world learning

- A. Provides opportunities and encourages students to engage in hands-on learning and applications in and beyond the classroom.
- B. Fosters social responsibility of individuals within diverse communities.



## LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. **Communication:** Communicate clearly in written, oral, and/or performative forms in a variety of genres and disciplines.
2. **Literacy:** Actively analyze *texts* in a variety of forms, genres, and disciplines.
3. **Argument:** Advance, support, and analyze arguments in a variety of genres with rigor and critical inquiry while developing abilities to locate, evaluate, synthesize, and present information logically and ethically.
4. **Quantitative Reasoning:** Interpret, evaluate, and employ quantitative analysis and arguments.
5. **Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Knowledge:** Identify, interpret, and apply methods, intellectual approaches, and fundamental concepts from the social sciences, natural and physical sciences, arts, and humanities.
6. **Diverse Cultural Competencies:** Attain and apply knowledge of social power and difference in relations between self, other people, and social structures locally and nationally while honoring contributions of people of different identities.
7. **Civic Engagement:** Develop knowledge and skills that promote active citizenship with the capacity to deliberate, act, and lead in a democratic society.
8. **Sustainable Development:** Explore relationships among humans and between societies and environments and create new ways to cultivate a more secure and resilient future for all of our planet.
9. **Creative Problem-Solving:** Apply knowledge, skills, and multiple perspectives in new situations to analyze and formulate solutions to complex problems with confidence and creativity.

10. **Creative Expression:** Produce new work through performance, design, construction, art, or creative writing that is characterized by innovation, divergent thinking, and intellectual risk taking.
11. **Global Awareness:** Develop knowledge of past and present political, economic, and cultural relations operating at international to global scale.

# WHAT MAKES A COURSE “GE”?

This section provides an annotated version of the “What Constitutes a GE Course” recommendation, adopted by GERS on August 8, 2018 with minor revisions on October 12. Annotations and elaborations are boxed and italicized, as shown:

*This comment is not an official part of the GERS recommendations and has not been voted on. It’s here to provide additional context or elaboration, and possibly to guide future revisions.*

Text outside of these boxes has been adopted by GERS via formal vote.

## WHAT CONSTITUTES A GE COURSE?

### Rationale

GERS had the following goals for revising the definition and operation of lower-division and upper-division GE courses:

- Creating a meaningful program of general education with clear differences between lower- and upper-division GE.
- Improve student access to courses, removing roadblocks to getting into GE courses.

*Many GE courses are de facto inaccessible to the average student due to seats being reserved for specific programs or to specialized prerequisites. One of the goals of this policy is to reduce the student frustration that comes from going down the list of GE offerings and finding that course after course is not open to the general student population.*

- Distinguish between GE and major courses.

*Some "double-counting" is perfectly appropriate. There are two main situations, however, in which it poses a problem:*

- 1. A course with specialized prerequisites (a majors' course) is included in the GE pattern purely to reduce the number of units in the major, and is not designed to be taken by the general population.*
- 2. In order to ensure sufficient enrollment, the prerequisites of a majors' course are minimized and*

*its learning outcomes adjusted so that it can double-count as a GE course.*

- Build in assessment of GE learning outcomes (see separate document on GELOs)

*This refers to the "GE Learning Goals and Outcomes" recommendations, which are in a separate section of this document. Over the last few years, both the WASC re-accreditation process and the GE program review identified assessment as a clear deficiency that needs to be remediated.*

- Support faculty learning communities around general education themes, pedagogies, and assessment without creating an undue burden on faculty.

*If assessment is to become more standardized and rigorous, faculty will need professional development in this area. We urge the administration to ensure that this training and/or professional development is properly compensated.*

#### I. All GE courses must

- A. Meet at least three **program-level** SSU GE Learning Outcomes.

*These are the outcomes in the "GE Learning Goals and Outcomes" document. Note that each goal is quite complex and lists a group of related proficiencies for the student to develop. A particular course does not have to address every single sub-*

*part of a GE Learning Outcome! We are working with the GE Subcommittee to provide clearer guidance on the threshold for "meeting" a GE Learning Outcome.*

- B. Meet the Learning Outcomes and Course Approval Criteria for the relevant GE Area.

*Developing the area outcomes will fall to the standing GE Subcommittee.*

- C. Include a signature assignment that can be mapped to the identified program-level SSU GE Learning Outcomes and which will be assessed using GELO rubrics and must be made available to the GE Assessment committee along with student artifacts.

*In the words of CSULB's assessment office (link below), "Signature assignments are those assignments (typically given in courses) that have been adopted by **program faculty** to [assess] **program-level learning outcomes**" (emphasis in original). In this case, the program being assessed is the GE program.*

*Signature assignments are not a new concept in the world of assessment, but they are likely unfamiliar to many faculty at SSU. The following resources provide more context:*

- UMKC's assessment office has [a beginner-friendly description of signature assignments](#).*
- The American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) has [a more ambitious](#)*

[description of signature assignments and links to further resources.](#)

- CSULB's assessment office gives [specifics on their campus's instantiation of signature assignments.](#)

*In the past, the GE program has not imposed specific requirements on individual courses and instructors, so this requirement may set off academic freedom alarm bells for some faculty. However, these requirements are conditions of participating in the GE program, which is overseen by faculty governance. The department or program offering a course will likely have its own program-level goals and outcomes for the course, and that is outside the purview of GERS and the GE Subcommittee.*

D. GE courses, including assessment data and faculty/department participation, are subject to review as part of the GE Program Review process.

II. In addition to these general requirements, all lower-division GE courses must:

- A. Be introductory in nature (numbered 100-299), promote exploration, and be suitable for both majors and non-majors alike.
- B. Explicitly describe to students the ways in which this course is disciplinary/reflects its discipline.
- C. Require no special prerequisites, unless the course is part of a specific course sequence approved by the GE subcommittee. Completion of high school pattern requirements, language courses, and/or one or more of the G4 may be required.

*We recognize that this outcome is confusing and may need to be revised for clarity. Some clarifications:*

*- "G4" refers to the so-called "Golden 4" GE areas: A1 (Oral Communication), A2 (Written Communication), A3 (Critical Thinking), and B4 (Quantitative Reasoning). New CSU requirements mandate that students complete the Golden 4 during their first year.*

*- This provision is largely meant for language courses. Students who enter the CSU as freshmen are required to take a language in high school, so it is reasonable to include 200-level language courses in the GE pattern. Note that not all high school graduates are required to take a language, which means that a student who comes to SSU via a two-year university may not have taken a language in high school at all.*

- D. Departments may reserve seats in lower division courses for specific programs, but no more than 50% of seats may be restricted. Departments should consult with Academic Programs and EPC to determine when an exception is required or appropriate and how to communicate those exceptions clearly.

*This provision is likely to get revised as well. It is meant to address the problem of courses that are listed as GEs but are inaccessible for the general student body. There are two types of these courses:*

- 1. A course that is and should be restricted to majors, but is in the GE pattern to balance the*



*department's GE and non-GE ratio or to take advantage of extra resources for GE courses.*

*Our position is that such courses should not be in the GE program at all, and that the administration should work to remove the incentives that would cause a department to put such a course in GE.*

*2. The more difficult case: A course that meets the GE criteria of being accessible to the general student and meeting GE learning outcomes, but which does not have enough seats to meet demand and is thus restricted to the student populations who need it most. For this type of course, the problem is fundamentally one of resources – given infinite sections and infinite instructors, the department would be happy to let any qualified student into the course.*

*As an example, consider a Department of Winemaking that offers two GE courses: a nonmajors' survey called Introduction to Wine (W100), and the introductory course for the major, Making Your First Wine (W110). Both of these courses meet the GE criteria: they have minimal prerequisites, and they meaningfully contribute to the GE program outcomes. However, there are never enough seats in W110 to meet demand, so the department restricts the seats to majors until the end of the first week of registration, since they absolutely need the course to advance in their program.*

*We have multiple goals in conflict here:*

1. A course isn't meaningfully a GE course if the general student can't actually take it. We want to reduce student frustration from encountering a GE pattern full of this type of course. This argues for excluding W110 from the GE pattern if the department insists on reserving seats.

2. However, we don't want to create an incentive for rigorous but appropriate courses like W110 to be removed from the GE pattern. Not only would this further contribute to the stereotype of GE as non-rigorous, but it also would penalize the Winemaking majors, possibly forcing them to take W100 – a course that their own department has decided is superfluous for them -- just to pick up GE units. This argues for including W110 in the GE pattern and looking for ways to mitigate the confusion and frustration for the general student.

Ultimately, we were more persuaded by the second argument, and we trust Academic Programs and EPC to identify situations where a course is GE-appropriate but restricts seats solely due to resource constraints. The process of getting an exemption for this type of course will also mean that the lack of resources will be visible to Academic Programs and faculty governance.

Finally, we have received some feedback about the "50% of seats" as a ceiling. The feeling is that it's arbitrary – which it is – and that it will encourage programs that never dreamed of saving seats to start doing so, as long as they stay under the 50%. We are likely to revisit this part of the provision.

- E. Recommended: Every faculty member teaching in lower-division GE must participate in a designated GE professional development workshop or faculty learning community prior to the beginning of the first semester of the course.

*This is driven largely, but not exclusively, by the changes to assessment described above. However, GERS strongly believes this professional development should only be required if it is adequately compensated.*

*We already have one successful example of this type of faculty certification in the training process for the Writing-Intensive Courses that have been offered over the past few years as alternatives to the WEPT. This process would be an excellent place to start in determining the implementation of GE professional development.*

III. In addition to the general requirements, all UDGE courses must:

- A. Be numbered 300-499
- B. Include the “Integrative Learning” outcome among the GE Learning Outcomes addressed by the course

*One of the major concerns raised in the GE Program Review was about the program’s lack of integration: students take a course and never circle back to its subject matter. The result is that they rightly perceive GE as disjointed and don’t necessarily understand the big-picture goals and outcomes of the overall GE program.*

*On the other hand, EO 1100 and concerns about transferability limit the amount of integration we can do across courses: each course has to fit in a discrete package so that they can be combined among different CSUs and community colleges.*

*We thus decided that the best place to include some integration is in the upper-division GE, where transferability is less of an issue, students are academically mature enough to synthesize information, and more stringent prerequisites can be required (see below).*

- C. Have an explicitly integrative component. For example, this component may integrate multiple disciplinary perspectives; connect classroom and community/real-world learning; integrate theory and practice, etc.
- D. Include a reflection assignment that asks students to integrate knowledge gained in lower-division GE courses and reflect on the learning they have done across those GE courses. This assignment may be the same as or different from the signature assignment, and must be made available to the GE Assessment committee along with student artifacts.

*By "lower-division courses" here, we mean the student's lower-division courses in that specific area (B, C, or D).*

- E. Every faculty member teaching in upper-division GE must participate in a designated GE professional development workshop or faculty learning community prior to the beginning of the first semester of the course.

*See the notes for the similar provision for lower-division courses. Again, this professional development must be adequately compensated.*

#### IV. Upper-division GE courses

- A. Will be suitable to both majors and non-majors.
- B. Are open to students in all programs, except as specified in “Met-in-Major” GE below. Other than met-in-major courses, upper-division GE courses may not be restricted to specific programs.
- C. To take upper division courses, students must have completed the Golden 4; the Lower-Division GE in the same GE area as the course being taken; and at least 45 units. Departments should not impose additional prerequisites unless the course is part of a specific course sequence (e.g. language courses) as approved by the GE subcommittee.

*This provision includes two major changes to current practice:*

*1. Currently, students can take upper-division GE courses during the semester in which they meet the 60-unit requirement. This lends itself to the following hard-to-justify scenario:*

*Student X has 45 units completed and is taking 15 this semester, with the goal of reaching 60. Among those 15 units are Winemaking 300, an upper-division GE, and Notoriously Difficult Class. Student X gets an A in W300, but whether or not it counts toward the required upper-division GE units will*

*hinge on whether the student passes Notoriously Difficult Class and hits 60 units this semester. This is neither easy to explain nor justify to the student.*

*EO 1100 provides some latitude on the prerequisites for upper-division courses. Requiring the Golden 4 (which the student should complete in the first year anyway) and having 45 units completed before starting upper-division GE – as opposed to having 60 units completed at the end of the first upper-division semester – solves the above problem while still ensuring adequate academic maturity on the student’s part.*

*2. We are requiring the student to complete lower-division requirements in a particular letter area (B, C, or D) before taking the upper-division course in that area. This requirement is necessary to allow for integration but does constitute a change from current practice. It will require advising changes so that students don’t save lower-division B, C, and D courses for their last semester. It’s also possible that it would pose a challenge for programs that have UDGE courses that double-count for the major and need the students to take these courses as early as possible. The latter issue may be solvable with the Met-in-Major provision described in the next subsection of this policy.*

- V. Students may double-count UDGE courses to satisfy both GE and major/minor requirements.
- VI. Programs may designate specific courses in the major that satisfy UDGE for majors only.
  - A. These “Met-in-Major” UDGE courses:

1. Must meet all of the requirements for UDGE courses in terms of learning outcomes, integration, assignments, assessment, and professional development.
2. May be restricted to majors/minors or hold a significant number of seats for majors/minors.

*Provisions 1 and 2 don't explicitly address the prerequisites for met-in-major UDGE. The intention is that the prerequisites for these courses must include all of the UDGE prerequisites listed above, but may also include other, possibly discipline-specific, courses.*

3. Will not be listed in the GE pattern visible to all students.
4. May double-count for the major/minor and GE.

*The rationale for this provision is that, by the time students reach upper-division status, an unsurmountable gap in experience in their major may have opened up between them and the general student population.*

*This problem is particularly acute in skill-based subjects, so we will switch our working example department from Winemaking to Math.*

*Scenario: Math 4XX, "Terrifyingly Advanced Calculus VI" (not a real course), meets all of the UD Area B requirements, and the instructor is willing to modify it to include the necessary integrative and reflective content. We have two less-than-perfect options:*

*1. Math 4XX counts as an upper-division GE course, even though it is the opposite of "generally accessible."*

*2. Math 4XX doesn't count as an upper-division GE course, even though it meets all the outcomes and is particularly rigorous on quantitative reasoning. Math majors then have to take an additional class for their UDGE, and the path of least resistance will be to take Math 3XX, "Math for People Who Haven't Done Much Math in the Last 3 Years." For the math students, this will be perceived as a meaningless hoop to jump through and will breed a justified cynicism. For the students in unrelated majors who haven't taken a math class in three years, Math 3XX is likely to be a demoralizing experience with the Math students in the room, and it will also be difficult for the instructor to "teach to the middle" of the range of student proficiency.*

*Scenario 2 won't necessarily occur in every major, even majors that are highly skill-based and vertical. But we think it is worth avoiding.*

*The idea, then, is that programs may designate one upper-division course as a "stealth GE," counting for their majors' UDGE without appearing in the general GE pattern.*

*For departments considering adopting a met-in-major course, here are some points to consider:*

*1. If you're worried about losing units in your major due to the new GE pattern, allowing a met-in-major course may alleviate some of that problem by*



*letting students double-count a course they're taking anyway.*

*2. The price of this double-counting is that the course content must be modified to include the integrative pieces. Again, this is a requirement for courses in the GE program, not an attempt to hijack the learning outcomes of the major.*

*3. Recall that, to take a UDGE course, a student must have completed all lower-division courses in that area (B, C, or D). This means that programs will want to choose their met-in-major courses carefully so as not to create bottlenecks for students who are advanced in their major but behind in GE.*

- B. Programs may choose at most one GE area (B, C, or D) in which to offer met-in-major UDGE courses (students may only take up to 3 units as met-in-major per major). This does not preclude departments from offering UDGE courses that are open to all students in any GE Area (B, C, D) for which the course meets the Course Approval Criteria and the requirements in Section II, above.
- C. The “Met-in-Major” UDGE course program will be subject to review at the next GE Program Review (in 2022-23). At that time, the GE subcommittee and EPC will make a determination about whether to continue this part of the UDGE program, or to have all UDGE open to all students regardless of major. This decision will be based on assessment data from this program, including a study of how the GE experience and outcomes are affected by the mix of disciplines represented among the students.

*The Met-in-Major concept is a bit clunky, and the committee is also concerned about how it reduces the “generality” of UDGE. It’s also possible that programs may not need it – they may have upper-division courses that both count toward the major and are accessible to the general population. So we consider this “Met-in-Major” provision to be experimental, and we recommend that the next GE program review follow up to make an evidence-based decision about its usefulness.*

# **GE PROGRAM: AREA DISTRIBUTION**

EO 1100 does not leave many degrees of freedom for the GE area distribution on individual campuses, so the area distributions in section follows directly from the terms of the executive order.

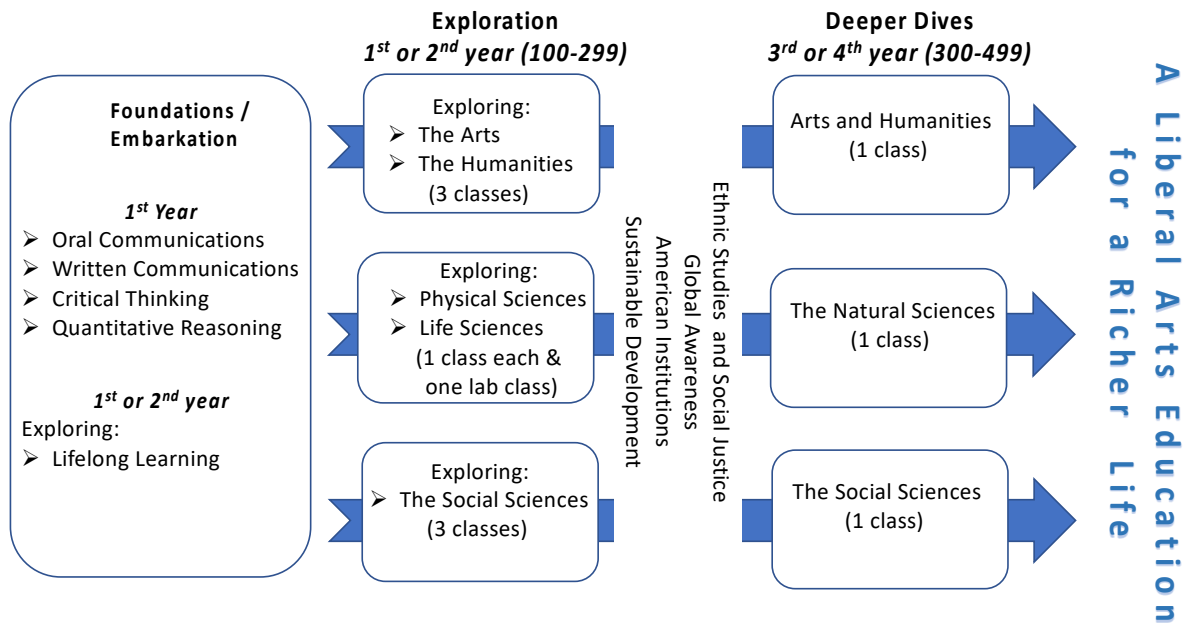
The GE Program Review made clear that the current presentation of the GE program to students encourages a “checkbox mentality” of jumping through a series of hoops, rather than an integrated understanding of each course’s role in their education. Therefore, while we are required to follow the CSU area designations for the purposes of transferability, we recommend that the program be presented to students in a different way, one that tells the “story” of their general education.

This section describes both the underlying GE area distribution and the recommended presentation for students.

## **VISION FOR STUDENTS**

GERS recommends that the GE pattern be presented to students in a visual format that emphasizes its underlying structure and goals. Students – especially transfer students – cannot be entirely shielded from the language of A1, A2, etc., but it shouldn't have to be their initial introduction to the GE program.

Unlike the current GE pattern, this version does not explicitly enumerate the courses in each area. This change is intentional: these lists quickly become out-of-date, increasing students' frustration, and they are not able to provide enough information about each course for students to begin to make an informed decision. By far the better option is for lists of all GE courses in each area, as well as the subset that are offered in a given semester, to be kept on a dynamically updated website by Academic Programs. The next page shows the visual structure of GE as it should be presented to students



## SAREA DISTRIBUTION

EO 1100 mandates the following overall GE structure:

	A	B	C	D	E
Upper Division		3	3	3	
Lower Division	9	9	9	9	3

Our current GE pattern has some subareas that are unique to our campus. Given the highly constrained nature of the EO 1100 prescriptions, our proposed program includes only the subareas mandated by EO 1100, with maximum flexibility outside of those requirements. Therefore, our area distribution matches this table taken from the [CSU "Campus FAQ" on EO 1100-Revised](#), which is shown on the next page.

**Attachment A**  
**Requirements for Lower- and Upper-Division**  
**California State University General Education Breadth**

GE Area	Lower-Division Semester Units	Upper-Division Semester Units	Total Semester Units* Required
<b>Area A English Language Communication and Critical Thinking</b>			
One course in each Subarea			
A1 Oral Communication			
A2 Written Communication			
A3 Critical Thinking			
<b>Area A total semester units required:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Area B Scientific Inquiry and Quantitative Reasoning</b>			
One course in each Subarea			
B1 Physical Science			
B2 Life Science			
B3 Laboratory Activity - associated with the course taken to satisfy either B1 or B2			
B4 Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning			
<b>Area B total semester units required:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Area C Arts and Humanities</b>			
At least one course in each Subarea			
C1 Arts: Arts, Cinema, Dance, Music, Theatre			
C2 Humanities: Literature, Philosophy, Languages Other than English			
<b>Area C total semester units required:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Area D Social Sciences</b>			
<b>Area D total semester units required:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Area E Lifelong Learning and Self-Development</b>			
<b>Area E total semester units required:</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>Total GE Units Required</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>48</b>

Note:

# **GE PROGRAM: SEAWOLF STUDIES REQUIREMENTS**

We expect this recommendation to be the most controversial part of our proposed GE program, and understandably so: imposing graduation requirements beyond the CSU-mandated minimum necessarily means that it will be more difficult – or at least require more care – for students, on average, to graduate on time. Given our campus’s commitment to student success and to the CSU Graduation Initiative, how can we justify such a thing?

## **RATIONALE AND DEFINITIONS**

First, a preamble and some terminology: our existing GE program has several requirements that are orthogonal to the A/B/C/D/E area distribution. The best example is Ethnic Studies: students must take a



course in Ethnic Studies, but such courses can be found in several GE subareas, so students are advised to be efficient with their GE course planning and take a course that covers a needed subarea while fulfilling the ethnic studies requirement. One useful term for this type of requirement is an **overlay**.

The CSU-mandated Graduation Writing Assessment (GWAR) is a different kind of overlay, in that it is a graduation requirement but is not confined to the GE pattern. Students may fulfill it by passing a proficiency test (the WEPT) or by taking a designated Writing-Intensive Course (WIC). WICs can be GE courses, but they can also be courses in the student's major or minor, so they overlap with the GE pattern without being included in it. We will refer to this type of requirement, which may be met in any of GE, the major/minor, or possibly another measure of proficiency, as a **graduation requirement**.

GWAR is the most unambiguous example of a *graduation requirement*, but there are examples of similar requirements:

- The ethnic studies requirement. In the current GE pattern, this is an overlay, as discussed above. In our proposal, it will be a graduation requirement that can be met outside GE.
- The legislatively mandated "American Institutions" requirements: American History, the Constitution, and State & Local Government. Our current GE plan defines two subareas around these requirements (D3 and D4), so they are neither overlays nor general graduation requirements. However, turning them into graduation requirements is compatible with the legislative mandate and has additional advantages discussed in the next subsection.
- The 9-unit upper-division GE requirement. This is currently an overlay: students have flexibility in the GE letter areas in which they take these courses and are advised to take courses that "kill two birds with one stone." In contrast, EO 1100 prescribes

specific letter areas for all of these 9 units, so they will become part of the letter area pattern – as described in the previous section – and will no longer be an overlay.

This raises the reasonable question: are graduation requirements, which are not confined to the “GE pattern,” really a matter for GERS and the GE Subcommittee? We would argue for a broader definition of GE that includes these requirements; after all, we determined the GE goals and outcomes by asking what abilities and dispositions should be shared by every graduate. University-wide graduation requirements are also part of this picture. We refer to the requirements that we want to include in this broader pattern as “Seawolf Studies” requirements, as opposed to university requirements like the 120-unit minimum that do not directly address GE learning outcomes.

A second argument for a broader definition of the GE program that incorporates these requirements is one of campus pride, identity, and distinctiveness. Since the adoption of EO 1100, faculty throughout the CSU have bitterly contested the process by which it was developed, deploring the lack of faculty consultation in such a detailed curricular matter. To preserve our campus and curriculum’s distinctiveness – which was also a main recommendation of the GE program review – we can view the CSU-mandated 48-unit pattern as just one aspect of a coherent GE program rooted in SSU’s core values.

Finally, it’s important to acknowledge again that adding new graduation requirements will necessarily impact advising and – at least for some students – graduation time. The magnitude of the impact hinges on the implementation of these requirements, so our proposal includes both the requirements themselves and recommendations for their implementation.

# **GERS RECOMMENDATION: SEAWOLF STUDIES REQUIREMENTS**

## **Introduction**

This section provides an annotated version of the “Seawolf Studies Graduation Requirements” recommendation, adopted by GERS on October 5, 2018. Annotations and elaborations are boxed and italicized, as shown:

*This comment is not an official part of the GERS recommendations and has not been voted on. It’s here to provide additional context or elaboration, and possibly to guide future revisions.*

Text outside of these boxes has been adopted by GERS via formal vote.

Please note that the numbering convention used in the standalone GERS proposal is different; it has been changed in this report to align with the conventions used in other recommendations.

## **The Proposal**

The Seawolf Experience offers students a general education experience that cuts across the entire college career, encouraging students to explore different disciplines and interests and to integrate ideas and knowledge from many parts of their education. As part of that curriculum, these courses fulfill graduation requirements, ensuring that students complete at least one course (or a relevant educational experience) in areas that reflect campus-wide core values as an essential part of our students’ education. There are currently four areas (reflecting the core values of SSU’s Strategic Plan 2025) with graduation requirements that students must meet:

*This proposal doesn't include GVAR in the list of Seawolf Studies requirements, but it easily could in principle, and GVAR provides a working example of this type of requirement. Subsequent committees may want to either add it to this list or package it alongside these requirements when communicating with students.*

- Ethnic Studies and Social Justice (1 course)

*We already have an Ethnic Studies overlay. Turning it into a graduation requirement that can be met outside GE may free up seats in ethnic studies GE courses, making this requirement easier for the average student to meet.*

- Sustainability and Environmental Resilience (1 course)

*This is a new requirement. The subject is wide-ranging and interdisciplinary enough to be met in any GE area, although areas B and D are likely the main areas with existing courses that would fulfill this requirement.*

- Global Awareness (1 course)

*This is also a new requirement, with some background. GERS was split 3-3 on whether to incorporate a language requirement into the GE pattern. All members agreed upon the transformative impact of language learning for students, but some were daunted by implementation hurdles – particularly the very different required high school background for “native” CSU students versus transfer students.*

*Global Awareness is a compromise that provides a wider breadth of means to address some of the educational goals of language learning. Without this compromise, GERS would have adopted a language requirement.*

- American Institutions (2 courses)

*As explained in the previous subsection, this is the most flexible possible implementation of the American Institutions legislative mandate.*

Courses certified as meeting the Seawolf Studies requirements may be upper or lower division, may be in General Education, a major or minor, or may be electives. Courses may “double-count,” meeting a Seawolf Studies requirement in addition to another requirement. Individual courses and relevant educational experiences may count for a maximum of 2 of these requirements.

*The “2 of these requirements” language is intended to refer to the Seawolf Studies requirements only. So it is possible – although discouraged and probably extremely rare – for a course to meet two of these outcomes. It is flat-out impermissible to meet three or more. That means there is no point in creating Seawolf Studies-bait courses like “US history as told through the environmental practices of Group X, in Group X’s native language: a writing-intensive course.”*

## **Seawolf Studies Graduation Requirement Areas**

- I. Ethnic Studies and Social Justice (1 course, 3-4 units)

*We are revisiting the definition of this area but did not want it to delay this report.*

*Allowing non-GE courses to meet the Ethnic Studies requirement can only help in relieving any bottleneck in this area.*

Ethnic Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that seeks to address/foster social justice by understanding the ways society is culturally and institutionally constituted by ideas of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and nation. Ethnic Studies and Social Justice at Sonoma State University centers on the histories, lives, and experiences of marginalization/disempowerment by people of color and non-dominant identity within the U.S. and transnationally, specifically defined as African American, Latinx, Asian American/Pacific islander, Native American (the majority of course content must cover one or more of these populations).

## II. Sustainability and Environmental Resilience (1 course, 3-4 units)

*Since this outcome is new and multi-/inter-disciplinary, we provide a long list of sample questions that courses in this area may address. We welcome and encourage a variety of disciplinary perspectives on this topic.*

The need to cultivate more sustainable relationships with our environments is ever more pressing. Courses in this area provide an opportunity to teach and to learn about a wide range of topics related to past, present, and potential future modes of living as citizens of our living planet. Courses may apply a range of perspectives to questions concerning sustainability; science and technology, humanities, and social sciences all offer potential insightful modes of exploration. Classes can focus upon a range of questions focused upon

sustainability and environmental resilience exemplified by but not limited to:

- A. Where do ideas about the environment come from? How have scholars and philosophers in Western traditions and beyond interpreted ethical human-environment relations?
- B. How might we measure environmental change, both in moving away from and towards greater resilience?
- C. How do various schools of thought interpret and shape more and less resilient human-environment relations?
- D. How have past and present social groups worked to develop more sustainable ways of living, and how might we apply those lessons to improve our relationships with our environments?
- E. How do expressive, textual, artistic, and cultural projects move us towards insights into our relationships with our environments?
- F. How could new technologies address mitigation and or adaptation to climate change?
- G. How have social movements worked to address environmental injustices?
- H. What insights do less human-centered philosophies offer?
- I. How do human-environment interactions both help determine and are also determined by geographic, historical, and cultural contexts?
- J. What might a sustainable, ethical relationship with nonhuman environments look like?

III. Global Awareness (1 course, 3-4 units)

*As stated in the previous subsection, this requirement is best viewed as a broader and more flexible alternative to a language requirement.*

Our students leave our institution with a clear sense of the value of cultural difference and inter-cultural competence, preparing them to be

agents of change and to engage socially, economically, and culturally with rapidly changing globalized communities.

Students will be offered several options to fulfill this one 3-4 unit course requirement in various disciplines. Courses in this category help students to function in an increasingly interdependent and globalizing environment and to develop an appreciation of other cultural perspectives, past or present

A. Language Proficiency Option:

1. Successful completion of, or credit by examination for, an intermediate level (200-499) 3-4 unit language course
2. Demonstrated native or near-native proficiency in a language other than English. We recommend that appropriate departments create a shell course for this requirement, analogous to the POLS 151 credit-by-exam state and local government requirement.

B. Course Option: Successful completion of an approved 3-4 unit Global Awareness course (see definition above).

C. Study Abroad Option: Spend one academic term outside of the United States, with successful completion of at least one 3-4 unit course.

D. Academic Certificate Option: Successful completion of relevant certificate offered on campus, such as the French Competency for Wine Business Certificate or the Foreign-Language Research Certificate in History.

E. Internship or Service-Learning Option: Successful completion of an internship or service-learning experience conducted in a location outside of the United States. Internships must meet policies related to the number of service hours per unit (3 units = 135 hours of work)

F. We recommend developing an option for international students not covered by any of the above options to certify their global awareness experience.



#### IV. American Institutions (2 courses)

As preparation for engagement in American civic life, Sonoma State University and the State of California require students to study the historical development of American institutions and ideals, the Constitution of the United States and the operation of democratic government under that Constitution, and the processes of California state and local government. Courses certified in this area may be from upper or lower division, may be in GE, a major or minor, or may be an elective, as long as they fit the parameters outlined in the CSU guiding note:

[http://www.calstate.edu/app/documents/GeneralEducation/Guiding\\_Notes\\_GE\\_AI.pdf](http://www.calstate.edu/app/documents/GeneralEducation/Guiding_Notes_GE_AI.pdf).

At SSU, this requirement has historically been met through two LDGE courses, one History course in American History and one Political Science course on American, state, and local government. Under this plan, other approved courses—including 4-unit major or elective courses, as well as 3-unit GE courses—could be used to satisfy the requirement. Credit by exam, including approved Advanced Placement or CLEP exams, may also be used to satisfy the requirement. Most students will likely continue to meet the requirement through GE courses, but other options would be available, offering students a broader way to meet this requirement.

*Allowing additional flexibility is especially important because EO 1100 will reduce the number of Area D units offered at SSU from 15 to 12. Only 9 of those 12 units may be in the lower-division, which leaves students who meet the American Institutions option via the traditional courses with only one free lower-division Area D path. The committee thinks this restriction on students' explorations in the social*

*sciences is extremely unfortunate and hopes that the additional flexibility in the American Institutions requirement may, at least for some students, give them more freedom to explore the social sciences within their 48-unit GE pattern*

## **Implementation of Seawolf Studies Graduation Requirements**

*Careful implementation of this requirement is particularly important to ensure that it does not create undue barriers to graduation.*

- I. We recommend that the requirement be implemented in the 2019-20 catalog, but courses can be recertified, added, and approved in the area categories over time. We recommend that the following courses be immediately considered for inclusion in Seawolf Studies:
  - A. Ethnic Studies & Social Justice: Begin with existing ethnic studies courses.
  - B. Sustainability and Environmental Resilience: Begin with courses listed in the STARS report.
  - C. Global Awareness: Begin with courses in C3, language courses, D2, and D5 courses.
  - D. American Institutions: Begin with existing AI courses
- II. Sufficient courses must be offered in GE so that students can meet these requirements in GE without taking additional units.

*This is meant to parallel the EO 1100 requirement that campuses offer sufficient 3-unit courses to allow any student to complete the pattern in 48*

*units. Likewise, we want to be sure that an arbitrary student can complete Seawolf Studies without adding units beyond their other GE and major/minor requirements.*

*These requirements implicitly provide some time for ramp-up, since not all students will be subject to the new requirements right away.*

*Finally, we acknowledge that "sufficient" is not a well defined term either here or in the EO, meaning that Academic Programs and the GE Subcommittee must oversee the course offerings in all of GE, including Seawolf Studies, to assess whether students' needs are being met.*

III. To oversee curriculum in these areas, we recommend that the Senate create standing workgroups for each area, reporting to the GE Subcommittee. The workgroups should primarily or entirely consist of faculty with disciplinary expertise and teaching experience in the specific area.

*This process parallels what the GE Subcommittee does in practice when met with a difficult decision on an Ethnic Studies course proposal. Our goal is to bring that process into the light, providing structure, accountability, and a resource for faculty members looking to certify a course in one of these areas.*

IV. The initial charge of the workgroups will include reviewing the initial body of courses for each area to create

- A. Specific guidelines and curricular approval processes for each area.

- B. Articulation recommendations for courses offered by the community colleges and universities providing substantial numbers of incoming transfer students.

*The idea is to do this proactively for our major sources of transfer students, rather than waiting for individual articulation requests to trickle in.*

- C. Specific requirements for faculty expertise and training. At a minimum, faculty teaching in a given area must be able to document adequate training in the discipline, as defined by the completion of a Doctorate or Master's degree in an appropriate discipline, publication record in the field, or teaching experience, etc.

*We recognize the tension between ensuring qualified faculty and territorial "gatekeeping." We encourage the workgroups to be as flexible and clear as possible with these requirements.*

*Currently, the GE Subcommittee does not place formal requirements on faculty expertise, although tacit requirements may exist. Again, in the interest of transparency, these requirements should be publicly spelled out.*

*This provision would mean that, in order for a course to count toward a Seawolf Studies requirement, it would have to be taught by a faculty member who is "qualified" under these criteria. While this has not been done before in GE, it is the model currently used for writing-intensive courses. However, for these areas, there is*

*presumably no need for an additional faculty development component.*

- V. Once the initial guidelines and requirements are established, the role of the workgroups will be to
- A. Be available to the GE Subcommittee for consultation on course approval and articulation.
  - B. Support campus recognition for faculty and student work in each area, involve faculty expertise, and schedule events to showcase research and scholarship of teaching related to integration of the work in these key areas.
- VI. For at least the first five years of these new requirements, we recommend that the Senate charge the Academic Advising Subcommittee to gather feedback from campus about any difficulties for particular populations of students (specific majors, transfer students, etc.). The Academic Advising Subcommittee should report these difficulties to the GE Subcommittee, which should issue clear criteria for providing waivers for these requirements.

*We want to surface these speedbumps and obstacles as early as possible and, until any structural problems can be addressed, be prepared to waive any Seawolf Studies requirements that provide undue obstacles to some students.*

# **FRESHMAN LEARNING COURSES (FLCS)**

This section provides an annotated version of GERS's "Recommendation for First-Year Programming," adopted on August 8, 2018. We have not yet revisited it to consider whether to address the Seawolf Studies graduation requirements.

First-year programming at Sonoma State University requires a common framework and clear articulation of the importance of transitional learning to each program. Current first year courses/programs have no unifying framework, making them difficult to understand; some programs do not provide students with opportunities to complete General Education requirements; and some options do not comply with EO1100. GERS recommends that all first-year programming at SSU have the following characteristics.

- 1) **Be *available* to all entering first year students.** First-year programs should not required, since some students will not be able to fit one into their schedules.
- 2) **Meet at least two GE Areas,** *at least* one of which is A1, A2, A3, or B4.
- 3) **GE content is identifiable on transcripts as meeting 3 units of GE credit for each area addressed by the course.** GE instruction may be blended across the year and among courses offered in a semester, so long as each area is listed on the transcript separately.
- 4) **Be a year-long program.** Year-long courses should typically be taught by the same faculty with the same cohort of students.
- 5) **Deliver transitional content.**
  - a) In each semester, students co-enroll in a 1-unit transition course (UNIV 102)
  - b) FLC Faculty earn WTU's by supporting transitional education, working with Peer Mentors and serving as the instructor of record for the UNIV 102 course
  - c) Include and support roles for trained Peer Mentors

Implementation issues to be worked out by FLC stakeholders

- Existing programs will need time to align themselves with this framework or to provide a rationale for deviating from it.
- Awarding credit per semester in FLCs with blended content
- Advising students who fail the first semester
- Possibility of losing so many students at the end of fall semester that the course is under-enrolled in spring



# SEA LANES: AN OPTIONAL THEMATIC APPROACH THROUGH GE

This section provides a lightly annotated version of the “Sonoma Sea Lanes: An Optional Thematic Approach Through General Education” recommendation, adopted by GERS on September 21, 2018. Annotations and elaborations are boxed and italicized, as shown:

*This comment is not an official part of the GERS recommendations and has not been voted on. It’s here to provide additional context or elaboration, and possibly to guide future revisions.*

Text outside of these boxes has been adopted by GERS via formal vote.

## Introduction

A thematic approach to general education helps to tell a meaningful story about a student's exploration of learning beyond their chosen major. Sonoma State's thematic approach to general education (Sea Lanes) offers participating students greater coherence in their General Education studies. Students may elect to join a sea lane, enjoying exposure to the approaches of multiple disciplines related to a common theme or topic. Faculty and staff will work to provide advising and co-curricular support that enriches the meaningfulness of general education. Further, within thematic areas, some sequences may be developed and offered by associated departments and faculty, providing even greater coherence and community for students wishing a "cohort" model through their studies.

Although thematic approaches to upper-division courses may be designed, they will not offer enough units to count as an official theme. Sea Lanes are primarily designed for those entering Sonoma State as first-year students.

*One method of integrating GE that has been adopted on other campuses is "guided pathways," or linked courses in different areas that form a coherent whole. Another common practice is to take those linked courses in cohorts. Both of these practices provide exciting opportunities for integration but are more suited to the "traditional" student who finishes college in exactly 4 years at one institution.*

*Our goal is to provide integration for students who want a more meaningful GE experience, without forcing every single student to fit into this model.*

## **The Basics**

In completing a theme, students will complete approved courses in:

- A minimum of 18 units.
- Courses in six different sub-areas of the general education program.
- Courses chosen to help students meet multiple overlay requirements in their General Education program.
- No more than three courses in any one program or department.
- At least one Upper-Division course, taken as the last course in the thematic cluster, which includes coursework dedicated to reflection upon both the theme and the overall general education experience. Ideally, this and other courses in the thematic cluster would address a “wicked problem” from several disciplinary and inter-disciplinary perspectives.

## **Advising & Planning**

The office of Academic Programs will assist faculty in planning curriculum for Sea Lanes. Sea Lanes are meant to provide coherence, but are not meant to be blocks to graduation.

- Ideally, each Sea Lane will offer multiple courses in each GE area it covers.
- Advisors and/or peer advisors associated with the Sea Lane will need to work closely with students so they can plan the rest of their GE program in the areas not covered by the particular Sea Lane (these will vary).
- Students may leave a Sea Lane at any time and complete their GE program without ill effect. Provided they are able to complete

the requirements, students may also jump into a Sea Lane even if they did not start with it as a first-year student.

- All courses approved in themes are also approved for and will count towards the 48-units required in general education.
- Generally, larger classes will be developed early in the Sea Lane (such as First-Year Learning Communities and/or large lecture courses). As the student advances, smaller sections of related courses will be offered.
- The Office of Academic Programs will work with schools to address the best way to ensure available seats for students continuing in a Sea Lane. Not all students in a particular general education course will be taking it as part of a Sea Lane, but seats will be reserved for those who are.
- Departments & Programs offering a course for a theme will agree to offer it at least once annually for four years.

### **Certificates/Recognition of Completion of Sea Lane**

GERS strongly considered detailing specific requirements for a certificate to be awarded to students and identified on their transcripts. However, we feel that planning should begin without limiting creativity with prescribed ideas about certificates.

- The primary importance of Sea Lanes is to provide integrated educational experiences. We want faculty to develop thematic approaches that will be interesting to them and to students, allowing the intellectual practices of multiple disciplines to be explored around a common theme or problem. We want that multi-disciplinary inquiry, rather than certificate requirements, to drive planning for Sea Lanes.
- We do not want to create additional roadblocks to graduation until we see how a thematic approach works in practice. For

instance: How many students will persist in a Sea Lane after the initial course(s)?

- Some in the GERS Committee were not sure that an area of Emphasis through General Education quite rises to the level of certificate. It may be that a more apt term could be used to recognize completion.
- As Sea Lanes are developed beginning in 2019, the GE Sub-Committee can examine the proposals and work with Academic Programs to determine the viability of awarding certificates. Perhaps noting on transcripts that "An area of Emphasis through GE in \_\_\_\_\_ ) would suffice.
- If a decision is made in AY 2020-21 (or 21-22) to recognize Sea Lane completion on transcripts, it could still be awarded to students who began in AY 2019-20.

### **Community Engagement & Co-Curricular**

Ideally, Community-based learning of some sort would be featured in a well-developed Sea Lane. This is something that should be addressed when certificate requirements are determined. This could be accomplished with:

- a common service experience for students across a range of courses,
- a specifically designed service-learning course as part of the thematic approaches,
- an internship experience that addresses community needs.

As each Sea Lane will be devised to have students focus on a wicked program from multiple angles, it would be valuable if the Community Engagement experiences would be aligned with the "wicked problem."

Additionally, for some Sea Lanes it might work to include semester(s) studying abroad as part of an ideal program.

For all Sea Lanes, it would be appropriate to develop events in order to foster intellectual community. Some ideas include:

- Faculty panels discussing topics across courses
- Field trips
- Student presentations of their work

## **Proposals**

The office of Academic Programs will develop protocols for soliciting proposals. During AY 2018-19, organization meetings will be planned to match faculty from across disciplines around possible topics. Once topics have been determined, calls will go out to the faculty at large to offer (new or ongoing) courses that might fit with a theme.

## **One Possible Model: Cohort Approach**

A cohort would be a sequenced path through a particular theme. It would be an advising path and would not confer additional recognition on transcript. It would, however, provide opportunities for students to connect and re-connect over their years of study. Even more could be done to enhance education with co-curricular events and/or residential life experiences.

- Cohort models will allow for intense curricular planning amongst groups of interested faculty should they wish to do so.
- Cohort models should be constructed so as to complete the definition of a thematic cluster (Sea Lane).
- All courses in a cohort track should be sequenced with larger classes in the beginning, and fewer or smaller classes as the students progress.

- Departments and programs must commit to offering courses in the year promised to the cohort's students.
- Students may leave a cohort and still complete a thematic cluster on their transcript.
- Seats will be held in cohort classes for cohort students, but will be made available to other students to capacity.
- Courses in a cohort model must also be approved for inclusion in the area of thematic emphasis.
- Upon proposal, cohort models will be approved by the General Education sub-committee, with support and coordination from Academic Programs.

Not all areas of emphasis may include or lend themselves to cohort models: Some possible examples include:

- "The future of food"
- "Science-fiction crossings"
- "Labor movements past and present"
- "Service-learning as inquiry"
- "The 'Sorting Hat': education and class"
- "Blowing up the world: apocalyptic visions"
- Arrgh, Matey!: Pirates past and present
- Attack and defense through the ages
- War and peace; peace studies
- Touching the Future: Youth in Society