

# **REIMAGINING GENERAL EDUCATION AT SSU**



**General Education Revision Subcommittee (GERS)**  
**Last updated: November 21, 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 0.4 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 released to the campus in 2019-20. We are grateful to the many people whose suggestions and corrections are reflected in this version.

# 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 (A2) 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 make the roll-out process easier 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 that do not satisfy other campus requirements must be 3 or fewer units.
- In limited cases and by exception, GE courses that double-count for a major or minor may be 4+ units. See “What Constitutes a GE Course?” for GERS’s suggested policy on such courses.
- 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. GERS strongly recommends that, in the initial 3-unit offerings of these courses, the administration develop models to compensate faculty for a fourth unit in recognition of the course revisions and professional development they will need to undertake. In addition, GERS and Academic Programs



are working on a proposal by which faculty could apply for a fourth unit of workload for activities related to assessment, interdisciplinary team planning/team-teaching, and other activities.

### **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 students 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 colleges 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 transcriptable 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 first-year 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 offers a variety of courses that didn't fit neatly into B1, B2, or B4, which are 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. The current upper-division GE B3 courses should be able to move to the general upper-division GE B category. However, the current lower-division 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. In addition, upper-division Area E courses will need to change level, move to a different area, or drop from the GE program.

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

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

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, courses that double-count for another program may in some cases be more than 3 units – see “What Constitutes a GE Course?” for our recommended policy.

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. They would also like to see pathways through GE that provide meaning and coherence to their experience.

Lack of coordination; the GE program comes across as a collection of distinct courses rather than a cohesive whole.

Difficulty for students to find GE courses they could actually take – many listed courses are not regularly offered, restricted to majors, or are inaccessible due to specific prerequisites.

These items 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.

The challenge GERS has faced is to use the Sonoma State mission, its new Strategic Plan, its student-centered faculty, and the High-Impact Practices that the campus is already known for to create a high quality, meaningful, and distinctive curriculum even with the constraints of the state and system regulatory environment. GERS believes that the revised General Education Program will serve students first and foremost by providing a more structured and distinctive set of integrated paths for students to gain the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to be successful.

# 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 campus-wide 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 the Academic Senate's Structure & Functions committee. 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 GERS's curriculum development process but could not cast votes.

Committee members are:

Suzanne Rivoire,  
Computer Science

Voting member, March-August 2018;  
Chair, Fall 2018

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Chiara Bacigalupa,  
Education

Voting member

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Michael Balasek,  
Advising

Alternate March-August 2018, voting  
member starting September 2018

Jeff Baldwin, Geography,  
Environment, & Planning

Voting member

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Michelle Jolly, History

Voting member

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Hope Emry Ortiz,  
International Programs

Voting member March-August 2018

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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***

The Senate's faculty retreat focused on the meaning of GE, the challenges faced by departments and students, and the pros/cons of GE models used on other campuses.

### ***Spring 2018***

- GE Revision Subcommittee created as a subcommittee of EPC.
- GERS developed a 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***

- GERS incorporated feedback from the campus community into revised goals, learning outcomes, and statement of purpose.
- GERS developed a model for GE based on goals/outcomes, campus feedback, the new Strategic Plan, parameters established by the executive orders, and models from other universities, while working to keep in mind the constraints of existing SSU programs.
- GERS made recommendations for implementation.

### ***Fall 2018***

- GE model made 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 is implemented for new first-year and transfer students.
- Sufficient courses are available to serve continuing students on the old GE pattern during this transitional period.

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

Before determining learning goals and outcomes for the GE program, we stepped back to 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, both inside and outside the classroom, addressed to the incoming student. The "Seawolf Experience" includes but is not limited to GE.

As we drafted our recommendations, we revisited this document and determined how those recommendations 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 first-year or transfer student, the Seawolf Experience makes you part of the SSU community – people who are passionate about academic excellence, community and civic engagement, diversity, 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 first-year learning courses (FLCs)
- 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 Sea Lane 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.

- Explore connections, communities, and guidance for transfers to SSU through Transfer Transitions

- Take Deeper Dives into Natural Sciences, Arts, Humanities, and Human Societies through upper-division GE, developing your foundational skills.
- Continue to follow a Sea Lane, 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 and environmental resilience, 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

Foundation and Exploration (lower division)	GE	Major	Transitions	Grad. Reqs.
<p>During your first two years of college, you will lay the foundation for college success and begin to explore areas of interest</p>	<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> <li>Consider a Sea Lane – a program in which your GE courses are integrated around a particular theme.</li> </ul>	<p>For some majors: lay a foundation through introductory courses.</p>	<p><b>First Year:</b></p> <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> <p><b>Second Year:</b></p> <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>	<p>Can address in FLCs, SYE, or LDGE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ethnic Studies</b></li> <li><b>Sustainability and Environmental Resilience</b></li> <li><b>Global Awareness</b></li> <li><b>American Institutions</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Reflection &amp; Integration (upper division)</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p><b>Upper-Division Years</b></p> <p>Take Deeper Dives into Natural Sciences, Arts, Humanities, and Human Societies through upper-division GE, further developing your knowledge and integrating your lower-division work.</p>	<p><b>Upper-Division Years</b></p> <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>Address any remaining requirements in Ethnic Studies, Sustainability and Environmental Resilience, Global Awareness, or American Institutions in UDGE or major</li> <li>Complete the Graduation Writing Assessment</li> <li>Requirement by taking-Intensive Course to strengthen your ability to write for audiences both inside and outside your field of study, or by passing the Written English Proficiency Test.</li> </ul>

# GE LEARNING GOALS AND OUTCOMES

This section provides two GERS proposals:

- I. Statement of Purpose and Goals (May 18, 2018)
- II. Learning Outcomes (May 4, 2018; minor revisions Oct. 12, major revisions Nov. 16)

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.

## 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

**Critical Reading:** Actively analyze *texts* in a variety of forms, genres, and disciplines.

**Information Literacy:** Iteratively formulate questions for research by gathering diverse types of information; identifying gaps, correlations, and contradictions; and using sources ethically toward a creative, informed synthesis of ideas.

**Argument:** Advance cogent and ethical arguments in a variety of genres with rigor and critical inquiry.

**Communication:** Communicate clearly and eloquently in written, oral, and/or performative forms in a variety of genres and disciplines.

*Information Literacy is one of the [four core competencies WASC expects from every college graduate](#). To better assess this competency, GERS split "Argument" into separate "Argument" and "Information Literacy" outcomes. GERS also worked to minimize overlap among these first four outcomes.*

**Quantitative Reasoning:** Interpret, evaluate, and employ quantitative analysis and arguments.

**Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Knowledge:** Identify, interpret, and apply methods, intellectual approaches, and fundamental concepts from disciplines within the social sciences, natural and physical sciences, arts, and humanities.

**Integration:** Synthesize and apply theoretical and practical perspectives from multiple disciplines to develop an understanding of complex issues.

**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.

**Civic Responsibility:** Drawing on the past and present, develop knowledge and skills that promote active citizenship, with the capacity to deliberate, act, and lead in a democratic society.

**Sustainable Development:** Explore past and present 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.

**Global Awareness:** Develop knowledge of past and present political, economic, and cultural relations operating at international to global scale.

**Creative Problem Solving:** Apply knowledge, skills, and multiple perspectives in new situations to analyze and formulate solutions to complex problems with confidence and creativity.

**Creative Expression:** Produce new work through performance, design, construction, art, or creative writing that is characterized by innovation, divergent thinking, and intellectual risk taking.

*The Creative Expression outcome is intentionally broad to allow for both aesthetic/artistic expression and creativity through "making" or functional design.*



# 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 revisions on October 12 and November 2. 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

- 1) Meet at least three GE Program 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.*

- 2) Meet the Course Approval Criteria for the relevant GE Area.

*Developing the course approval criteria will fall to the standing GE Subcommittee.*

- 3) Be 3 or fewer units, except for Upper Division courses specified in "Met-in-Major" section below. If sufficient seats are available in 3-unit courses in a (sub-)area, EPC and Academic Programs may approve additional exceptions.
- 4) Be suitable to both majors and non-majors.
- 5) 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 members 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 it is worth clarifying how this new provision interacts with department- and faculty-level learning outcomes and pedagogical decisions.*

*The signature assignment requirement is a condition of participating in the GE program, which is overseen by faculty governance. The department or program offering a course will have its own set of course goals and outcomes, and those will continue to be outside the purview of GERS and the GE Subcommittee. **GERS anticipates that most current GE courses already have assignments addressing the programmatic course learning objectives that will also be suitable for assessing the GE outcomes.***

- 6) 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) and promote exploration.
  - 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. Examples of such sequences might include high school pattern requirements and introductory language courses. In addition, a lower-division GE may require completion of one or more of the Golden 4 GE areas (A1, A2, A3, and B4).

*With respect to language courses: high-school students who proceed straight to the CSU 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 college may not have taken a language in high school at all.*

- D. Departments may not ordinarily reserve seats in lower-division courses. Departments should consult with Academic Programs and EPC to request exceptions to this provision and determine how to communicate those exceptions clearly.

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

*1. A "GE" course that is and should be restricted to majors. Such courses may have been included 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 both address the GE learning 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 Winemaking majors 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 become visible to Academic Programs and faculty governance.*

- 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 teaching a GE course in the new program.

*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. Be 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. Must have prerequisites of 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 or is Met-in-Major.

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

1. Students should be eligible to take upper-division GE courses after they have reached 60 units. However, when students register for the following semester's classes, the prerequisite-checking system optimistically assumes that students will pass all of the classes they are taking in the current semester, and this assumption is never verified after grades are assigned. GERS would like to minimize the number of situations where students register for an upper-division GE, fail to reach 60 units once grades are assigned for the current semester, go on to take and pass the UDGE course the following semester, and then find out that the course doesn't count for UDGE credit. This is a very hard situation to justify to the student. Instead, GERS recommends 45 units at the time of **registration** for upper-division GE. For the vast majority of students, this will mean that they take the UDGE courses during or after the semester in which they reach 60 units.

Regarding compliance with EO 1100: The executive order provides some latitude on the prerequisites for UDGE courses, as long as the student has completed the Golden 4. New CSU requirements already mandate that students complete A2 and B4 during the first year and complete A1 and A3 by the end of 60 units. Because completion of the Golden 4 before taking UDGE is an absolute requirement from the CSU, it may be also be best to enforce completion of the Golden 4 at the time of registration, which means students should finish those during the first semester of sophomore year if they want to take UDGE in their first semester of junior year.

GERS believes that mandating 45 units plus the Golden 4 provides necessary flexibility while still ensuring adequate academic maturity on the UDGE student's part.

2. This policy now requires the student to complete lower-division requirements in a particular letter area (B, C, or D) before taking the upper-division GE course in that area. This requirement is key to allow for the integrative assignments (described



*immediately below), but it 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 the 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. This latter problem may be solvable with the Met-in-Major option described in the final section of this policy.*

*GERS had several goals with this requirement:*

*1. Ensure the generality of GE courses, as discussed above.*

*2. Ensure that UDGE courses are meaningfully upper-division by requiring a lower-division foundation in the area.*

*3. Allow for integrative and reflective assignments across the student's LDGE experience in the area.*

*4. Provide uniformity and clarity for students and advisors.*

*Regarding goals 2 and 3: A centerpiece of the proposed GE revision is the signature assignment and reflection built into the upper-division course requirements, that will draw upon understanding of a broad area perspective--i.e. just what ARE the social sciences, natural sciences, and arts and humanities, in terms of their distinctive approaches to understanding the world and producing knowledge about it. It is through this assignment that upper-division GE becomes something more than "three more classes you have to get through," to genuinely add explicit integration to the entire General Education experience. In order for this integration to occur, however, there must be some*

*knowledge of the area's perspectives already in the students' experience from their lower-division coursework. Hence GERS feels it is imperative to retain the requirement that lower-division GE courses in a given area (B, C, or D) be completed before the student takes their upper-division GE in that area--the lower-division courses provide the foundation upon which the upper-division integration piece builds.*

*To this end, we considered several options:*

*1. Allow UDGE courses to have specific, individualized lower-division prerequisites (e.g. "Winemaking 100" or "any lower-division Winemaking course"), or no prerequisites at all beyond the unit minimum and Golden 4. This policy would have the advantage of preserving the status quo and thus minimizing the required changes to courses, which is no small thing. However, it is difficult for students to navigate and cuts against the general accessibility of GE courses. It also makes it more difficult to determine whether there are sufficient GE offerings in an area to serve all students.*

*2. Allow UDGE courses to have individualized lower-division prerequisites, but only in terms of GE area (e.g. "any lower-division B2 course"). This isn't a bad option, but we would want to set a minimum prerequisite in that letter area (B, C, or D) to allow for integration and ensure that the course outcomes are upper-division in a meaningful way. Which leads to variations like...*

*3. Require UDGE courses to have a minimum prereq of "at least one LDGE in the area" or "at least 2 LDGEs" in the area. The problem here is in Areas B and C, in which UDGE courses may require students to have taken specific subareas. For example, a department offering a UD B2 course*

*could reasonably want to exclude a student who has credit for LD B1 and B4 but not LD B2.*

*Ultimately, requiring completion of all LD GEs in the area seemed like the best way to reduce confusion for students and advisors while ensuring the generality of GE and the academic outcomes of UDGE. GERS strongly encourages faculty governance to consider these goals in determining the appropriate area-based prerequisites for UD GE.*

- D. 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 students can easily assemble a GE portfolio with courses from multiple CSUs and/or community colleges.*

*GERS thus decided that the best place to include some integration is in 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, as described in the previous point.*

- E. 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.
- F. 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).*

- G. 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. Students may double-count UDGE courses to satisfy both GE and major/minor requirements.
- V. 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.
  - 3) May exceed 3 units.
  - 4) Must enforce, at a minimum, the prerequisites required of other upper-division GE courses. May have additional prerequisites beyond this minimum.
  - 5) Will not be listed in the GE pattern visible to all students.
  - 6) Will double-count for the major/minor and GE.

*The rationale for Met-in-Major is that, by the time students reach upper-division status, an unsurmountable gap in disciplinary experience in their majors 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 or more upper-division courses as "stealth GE," counting for their majors' UDGE without appearing in the general GE pattern. Students searching in the Seawolf Scheduler or on the advising website will not be able to find these "met-in-major" courses, so they will not try to enroll in them and be frustrated by finding they are restricted to majors only.*

*For departments considering adopting met-in-major courses, 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 that 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 their GE capacity, 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.*
- 4. For some majors, there is no single course that is taken by all upper-division students. In that case, it is possible to designate multiple courses as Met-in-Major, as long as each individually meets the requirements. These courses should all be in the same GE area, and each student in the program will get met-in-major credit for that area only.*

- 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 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 GERS considers this "Met-in-Major" provision to be experimental and recommends that the next GE program review reconsider its utility based on evidence collected over the first five years of its implementation.*

# **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 above follow 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.

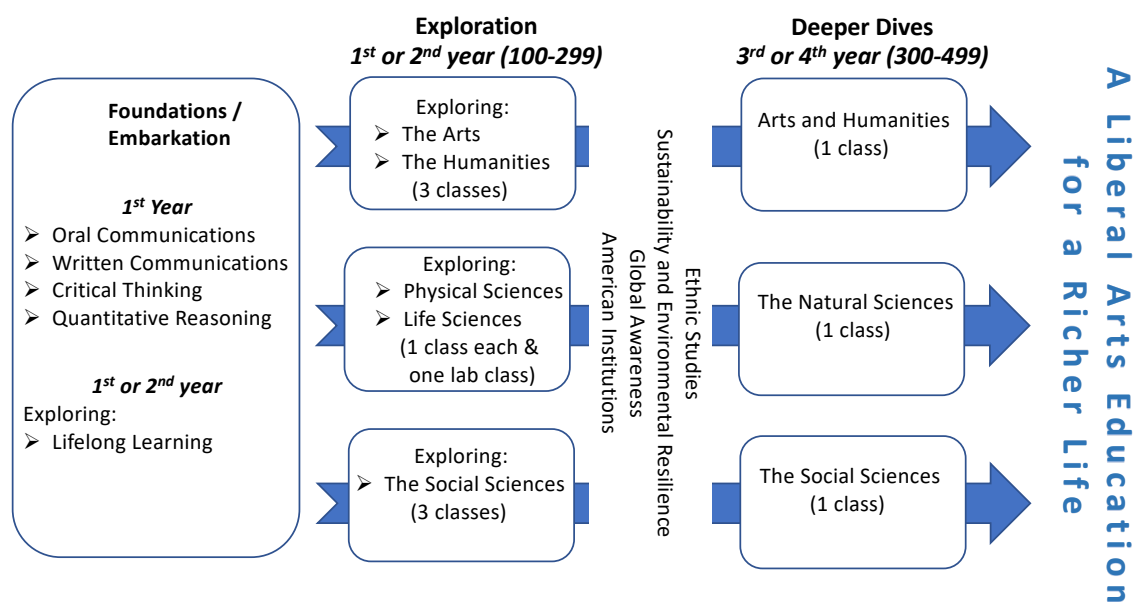
## **VISION FOR STUDENTS**

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.



## AREA 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. The detailed list is:

Area A: English Language Communication and Critical Thinking

Oral Communication (A1)	3 units
Written Communication (A2)	3 units
Critical Thinking (A3)	3 units

Area B: Scientific Inquiry and Quantitative Reasoning

Physical Science (B1)	3 units
Life Science (B2)	3 units
Lab Activity (B3, assoc. w/ B1 or B2)	1 unit
Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning (B4)	3 units
Upper Division B	3 units

Area C: Arts and Humanities

Arts: Arts, Cinema, Dance, Music, Theatre (C1)	3 units
Humanities: Literature, Philosophy, Languages (C2)	3 units
3 more units in either Arts or Humanities	3 units
Upper Division Arts and Humanities	3 units

Area D: Social Sciences

Lower Division Social Sciences (D1)	9 units
(in at least 2 different disciplines)	
Upper Division Social Sciences (D2)	3 units

Area E: Lifelong Learning and Self-Development

Lower Division Lifelong Learning/Self-Development	3 units
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# **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 could 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 commonly used 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 Title V 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 is 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 the other official recommendations.

## **The Proposal – approved October 5, 2018; revised October 22**

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:

*Note that the Seawolf Experience referenced in the first sentence is the 4-year vision discussed in a previous section, not the Seawolf Studies graduation requirements being described in this section.*

*This proposal doesn’t include GEAR in the list of Seawolf Studies requirements, but it easily could in principle, and GEAR 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 (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. 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 and a key capacity for 21<sup>st</sup> century college graduates. 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 (1 course, 3-4 units)**

*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 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, and that also helps students develop some capacity to enter a globalized workforce.*

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 course. 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:

*GERS is considering revising this document to recommend deferring the two new categories (Sustainability & Environmental Resilience, and Global Awareness) until the 2020-21 academic year.*

- A. Ethnic Studies: 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 defined 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.*

*GERS is considering revising this recommendation out of concern for the GE Subcommittee's already substantial workload.*

- 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.

*GERS is strongly considering revising this language to apply to the curriculum rather than the faculty delivering it.*

- 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.*

# FIRST-YEAR LEARNING COURSES (FLCS)

This section provides an annotated version of GERS's "Recommendation for First-Year Programming," adopted on August 8, 2018 and revised on October 26, 2018 and November 2, 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.

## **GERS RECOMMENDATION: FIRST-YEAR LEARNING COURSES**

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 be required, since some students will not be able to fit one into their schedules.
- 2) **Meet at least two GE Areas.**
- 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. To offer more than 3 units in a GE area, FLCs must follow the general GE process for seeking exceptions to the 3-unit rule.

*Many current FLCs are already doing this.*

- 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).

*The University Studies Subcommittee has recommended that this course be transcribed separately from the 3-unit GE (which we think the GERS proposal requires) and that it be taken for a letter grade.*

- b) The same faculty member should ideally teach the 3-unit GE and 1-unit transition components unless the faculty member strongly prefers a different arrangement. A faculty member who wants to teach the 1-unit transition component may not be prevented from doing so.
  - c) FLC Faculty earn this WTU by teaching transitional curriculum, working with Peer Mentors and serving as the instructor of record for the UNIV 102 course.



*USS recommends the language: "working with a trained Peer Mentor to teach and assess transitional topics."*

d) Include and support roles for trained Peer Mentors.

*USS adds: The Center for Transfer and Transition Programs will serve as a resource for faculty by providing sample curriculum and different models for delivering transitional content.*

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 and revised on November 2, 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 15 units.
- Courses in three different letter areas (A, B, C, D, E) 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

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This FAQ includes common questions and concerns from members of the GE Subcommittee, EPC, and the campus community at large.

Some of these questions are based on older versions of GERS' recommendations. In those cases, our answers direct the reader to the new versions of the policies. Questions are in normal text, and GERS' responses are *italicized and in blue*.



## NOMENCLATURE, OVERSIGHT, AND ASSESSMENT

**Question:** What is the Seawolf Experience? How is it different from GE? How do we talk about the EO 1100 area distribution vs. the Seawolf Studies requirements?

**Answer:** *The Seawolf Experience is a vision for the entirety of a student's academic (major + GE) and co-curricular experience at SSU. It was a starting point for us in understanding the goals of a student's full college experience and the role that a general education program should play. It is not synonymous with the GE program we're proposing.*

*Nomenclature for "overlays" vs. the EO 1100 requirements is a harder question. Our recommendations use a more expansive definition of GE than the CSU-mandated pattern; rather, it encompasses all academic requirements that apply to every undergraduate student. We'd advocate for this broader understanding of GE, but we also understand that the 48-unit CSU pattern is typically called "GE" and that this may create confusion. We're not wedded to any particular terminology.*

**Question:** What's the relationship among EPC, the GE Subcommittee and now GERS, IGEA, and ASPIRE?

**Answer:** *GERS is an ad hoc subcommittee of EPC whose sole purpose is to propose these GE program changes and which will be dissolved when faculty governance approves the changes. EPC's first reading of the proposal is scheduled for November 29. From this point on, GERS' only role will be to provide revisions and explanations by request from EPC or the Senate.*

*EPC and the GE Subcommittee are standing governance structures within the Academic Senate, and their charges are provided in the Senate Bylaws and the Senate website. EPC is a standing committee with "primary responsibility over the curriculum." Its role with regard to the proposed General Education curriculum is to review and recommend action to the Academic Senate on the proposal submitted by GERS. (<http://senate.sonoma.edu/governance/academic-senate-laws#Article5.3>)*

*GE Subcommittee is a standing subcommittee of EPC and its charge with relation to the GERS proposals is to "submit recommendations for*

*proposals for significant changes in the GE curriculum, . . . to the EPC for consideration and action.”*  
(<http://senate.sonoma.edu/memberships-and-meeting-dates/epc#GE>)

*IGEA is an ad hoc working group of faculty, staff, and administrators assisting GERS with the development of an assessment plan for the proposed GE curriculum.*

*ASPIRE is currently an administrative working group of faculty, staff, and administrators associated with the Office of Academic Programs. Its purpose is to foster a culture of assessment at Sonoma State, coordinating the work of the School Assessment Coordinators and engaging both academic programs and departments across campus in creating a learning-centered environment that fosters “improvement based on the results of inquiry, evidence, and evaluation” (2013 WSCUC Handbook of Accreditation, Standard 4). ASPIRE’s role with regard to the GERS proposal has been to review and provide comment on the GE Learning Outcomes. Moving forward, it will likely be involved in helping implement the assessment plan for the proposed GE curriculum.*

**Question:** The new Seawolf Studies areas – and even the idea of allowing the old areas of GWAR, American Institutions, and Ethnic Studies to be met outside of GE – should not necessarily be the purview of the GE subcommittee, since they transcend the 48-unit pattern. I’m wary of giving the subcommittee this much work.

**Answer:** *The definition of GE (see previous question) will play a role in how one thinks about this problem and the partitioning of oversight. We have proposed a structure in which workgroups oversee the individual requirements and report to the GE Subcommittee. As long as there is transparency in the oversight of these new requirements, GERS is not invested in the particular committee structure and welcomes alternate solutions that faculty governance might prefer.*

**Question:** Who will create the assessment rubrics associated with each GE learning outcome (best practice should be that the rubric is designed before the assignment)?

**Answer:** *Creation of assessment rubrics should be a collaborative effort among the GE Subcommittee, the faculty teaching courses that*

*address the learning outcome, and assessment experts in Academic Programs.*

## **GE COURSE DEFINITION AND AREA DISTRIBUTION**

**Question:** One common frustration with the current GE pattern is the inconsistency in when courses are offered. How does the new GE program mitigate that? Are there requirements for when/how frequently LD or UD GE courses should be offered?

**Answer:** *GERS recommends doing away with a static list of courses for this and other reasons. Having a dynamically updated list will allow dormant courses to be marked as such.*

**Question:** As courses convert from 4 to 3 units, what's the support level like for having that 4th WTU become assigned time for the instructor's professional development?

**Answer:** *As stated in the revised version of the proposal, there is a possibility of assigning an additional WTU in faculty workload (not student credit hours) for doing assessment, interdisciplinary team-teaching, and other important curricular functions. Academic Programs and the deans are working to develop possible approaches. We cannot guarantee that every course that changes from 4 to 3 WTUs will include a 4th unit of faculty workload moving forward, but there are a number of ways in which we can lessen the impact on lecturers.*

**Question:** The [original] policy states that GE courses whose units double-count toward a major or minor may be however many units the program requires. How will we determine who gets to take advantage of this provision and who does not? In other words, if all majors insist on offering their GE courses as four units, who must provide the three-unit courses? Negotiating this question has been difficult in past GE revisions.

**Answer:** *Recent versions of "What Constitutes a GE Course?" are more prescriptive about this issue, specifying that GE courses must be 3 units even if they double-count, while allowing for exceptions via an approval process.*

*EO 1100 mandates that we must offer enough 3-unit courses for students to complete their GE curriculum in 48 units, if they choose to do so. The impact of this EO 1100 rule is that exceptions may differ from one area to another. For example, Area B already generally conforms to the new rule: non-majors' courses are generally 3 units,*

*majors' courses are sometimes 4+, and there are historically enough seats in 3-unit Area B courses to serve the campus. Given that conformity, the few exceptions that will be needed can be easily identified and discussed with GE Subcommittee in advance.*

*In Area C, almost all GE courses are currently 4-unit courses that double-count toward a major or minor. Most of those courses will need to be offered in 3-unit versions that are open and available to non-majors. The proposal recommends that FLCs be offered in a 3 + 1 format, with the one unit added for transition curriculum. Other courses that traditionally have had "lab" components, such as language classes, might apply to have an additional unit added for that component. Area D currently offers mostly 3-unit courses, although most 4-unit courses may need to convert. Again, GERS anticipates there would be very limited exceptions. GERS and the GE Subcommittee are developing an implementation plan and schedule that includes the exception process. New revisions of "What Constitutes a GE Course?" specify that the criteria will be standard practice in the discipline and the current state of 3-unit offerings in the GE area.*

**Question:** Regarding the reflective assignment: Each area covers a wide range of disciplines, specialties, instructors, and courses, and that's not even considering the courses that students can transfer in from other institutions. So how are faculty in a position to judge the quality of a reflection?

**Answer:** *The point of the reflection is for the student to relate the content, methods, and ways of knowing in lower-division courses in a particular area to the upper-division course the student takes. This site provides a good discussion of the purpose and benefits of such an assignment:*

*<https://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Law/faculty/teaching-resources/Student-Reflection-Rubric.pdf>*

*In particular:*

*"One of the most common concerns in assessment of reflection is the fact that the product of the reflection is not something one can predict or which might be measured against some objective standard. However, if it is the skill of reflection that is the outcome being targeted, the assessment should focus on that skill, rather than the conclusions drawn from its application. With explicit criteria for evidence of a reflective process, reflections*

from very different experiences with very different conclusions can be compared and evaluated.”

*In the upper division, students should have the academic maturity to engage in such reflection.*

**Question:** The proposal requires every GE course to offer a “Signature Assignment.” I’m worried about the workload associated with creating this assignment and modifying my course structure to accommodate it.

**Answer:** *The signature assignment is not conceived as an outside unrelated assignment to be imposed on faculty! It is just an assignment that assesses the GE learning objectives addressed by the course, which will likely be an existing assignment. The professional development workshops required of GE instructors will largely focus on the signature assignment model and GE assessment.*

**Question:** How many courses or seats do we need to provide for each of the E.O. 1100 categories for the next few years? What if we have too few or too many proposals in an area?

**Answer:** *Academic Programs and the new Associate Dean are responsible, working with Reporting and Analytics and the GE Subcommittee, with projecting seats needed in each of the EO 1100 categories. There cannot be too many proposals for **courses**, but the **schedule** for offering those courses must be compatible with demand. If there were not enough offerings in a particular subarea, Academic Programs and the GE Subcommittee would investigate the barriers for course submission and suggest ways to address shortcomings. The AVP will then work with Deans and Department Chairs to provide enough sections to meet demand.*

## **SEAWOLF STUDIES REQUIREMENTS**

**Question:** I’m also concerned that these requirements – particularly the new ones – are allowed to be met with 4-unit courses. Won’t that become a problem for high-unit majors?

**Answer:** *Much like with EO 1100, we will need to provide enough seats for students to meet the new requirements within the 48-unit CSU GE pattern if they so choose.*

**Question:** I'm concerned about having enough offerings in these new areas **and** about how these graduation requirements will shift demand for courses. Is this creating another bottleneck?

**Answer:** *As in the previous section, it is the responsibility of Academic Programs and the GE Subcommittee (or whichever body ends up overseeing these requirements) to monitor the availability of seats. EO 1100 by itself is likely to shift demand for courses significantly already, which will require adaptability and flexibility across campus.*

*We are very mindful of the possible bottleneck that another requirement could create, and we want to be sure it is resourced appropriately. We have recommended delaying implementation of the two new overlays until the second year of the new GE program.*

**Question:** I'm concerned about the impact on transfer students and whether they will have the option to take these courses at their community colleges. We expect them to have Ethnic Studies and American Institution completed at the time of transfer, but that leaves Global Awareness, Sustainability, and the GVAR to take in the upper division or in their major. Could we postpone the adoption of the new areas for transfer students, so that we have time to articulate courses for students to take at their JCs?

**Answer:** *That seems completely fair.*

**Question:** Who would be responsible for approving articulations for courses meeting these requirements? Courses wouldn't be in a specific department or even GE area; they would be across multiple disciplines.

**Answer:** *Over the last year, GE Subcommittee in collaboration with Academic Programs and Records and Registration has developed a GE Course Substitution Form that could easily be deployed to include the overlays. We already use the form for Ethnic Studies courses. In addition, the plan is to survey our top 5 feeder institutions, get lists of courses that meet our overlay criteria, and pre-articulate those courses. GE Subcommittee would oversee this pre-articulation process with Academic Programs and Records and Registration.*

**Question:** We have transfer students who participate in California Promise and/or who transfer with Associate Degrees for Transfer. With California Promise, we guarantee students will graduate in 2 years as long as they follow the prescribed advising roadmap, and some



programs also guarantee it for ADT students. It will be very difficult for these students complete all their UDGE, Major requirements and now the overlays in 60 units or less. With the exception of the GEAR, there are some campuses that waive this type of graduation requirement for ADT students. Is this something we may want to consider?

**Answer:** *We will need a lot of upper-division GE courses that satisfy the Seawolf Studies requirements for exactly this reason. With EO 1100, we see an opportunity to unify graduation requirements for transfer and 4-year students, and we'd prefer not to have different paths. That said, we are concerned about this problem, which is why we prescribe monitoring availability of these courses, and we've outlined a process for students to waive the requirements if necessary -- some ADT/California Promise students may need this option.*

## **FIRST-YEAR LEARNING COURSES (FLC)**

**Question:** How will "transitional content" for FLCs be monitored or assessed?

**Answer:** *SSU's current practice is that the Director of the Center for Transfer and Transition Programs is responsible for monitoring and assessing transitional content. Those analyses are vetted through the University Studies Curriculum Committee, and when necessary or appropriate, through the GE Subcommittee and EPC. We do not see that model changing. The only change introduced by this proposal would be to separate the FLCs into 3 + 1 transcriptions, which should make it easier to monitor and assess the transitional content.*

**Question:** Two related faculty questions about the transitional content of FLCs:

- I would like to teach an FLC but don't feel equipped to teach transition topics. Do I have to teach that component? If not, will I still get 4 WTU?
- I would like to teach an FLC and really want to teach both the academic and transition content. However, it seems like my department chair has every incentive to give the 1 unit of transitional topics to University Studies lecturer so that I can be assigned to our other course offerings. Can you guarantee that I will be able to teach both components of the FLC?

**Answer:** *FLCs must be taught in a 3 + 1 format, in which the 1 unit is transitional curriculum. If a program wants to keep an existing FLC at*

*4 units, the faculty should be prepared to offer transitional course work.*

*In the November 2 version of the FLC policy, GERS added the following language to address the common concern about who teaches transition topics:*

*5b) The same faculty member should ideally teach the 3-unit GE and 1-unit transition components unless the faculty member strongly prefers a different arrangement. A faculty member who wants to teach the 1-unit transition component may not be prevented from doing so.*

*5c) FLC Faculty earn this WTU by teaching transitional curriculum, working with Peer Mentors and serving as the instructor of record for the UNIV 102 course.*

**Question:** How will the two GE areas met by an FLC be transcribed? Is it one GE area per semester, half of each area each semester, or up to the program?

**Answer:** *It will need to be transcribed as one area met in its entirety each semester. Pedagogically, we recognize that the areas will likely be integrated over the academic year, and we will need to develop plans for students who pass only one of the two semesters.*

**Question:** Could the GE lab requirement count as one of the two areas met by an FLC (B3)?

**Answer:** *B3 is not synonymous with the EO 1100 lab requirement, since a lab can also be integrated in a B1 or B2 course. Per EO 1100, B3 is not a subarea in the same sense as B1, B2, and B4 are, and B3/lab should not count as one of the two areas for FLCs. It's perfectly fine if an FLC meets the lab requirement in addition to satisfying two area requirements, though!*

## **SEA LANES**

**Question:** Why is this a certificate and not a minor?

**Answer:** *GERS is not at all attached to the particular language / recognition awarded to students who complete a Sea Lane, and we would advocate for Sea Lanes even in the absence of transcribed recognition. We trust faculty governance, in consultation with Academic Programs, to determine an appropriate designation.*



**Question:** It's going to be very hard for transfer students to follow a Sea Lane, since they will have already completed most of the GE pattern. If students are awarded recognition on their transcript for completing a Sea Lane, it could be perceived as an academic benefit and should apply equally to both groups. Would it be possible to articulate transferred courses into a Sea Lane?

**Answer:** *This is a very fair point, and we have reduced the required number of courses for a Sea Lane in the most recent revision of our recommendation. We do anticipate that a substantial subset of transfer students will have the available units to pursue Sea Lanes, either because they are still taking lower-division courses in their major or because they are in a low-unit major and need additional coursework to reach 120 units. Given the specificity of Sea Lanes, articulation could be tough, but GERS is open to it. If Sea Lanes are a deal-breaker for transcripted recognition because of the effect on transfer students, as noted above, we support Sea Lanes even without transcripted recognition.*

**Question:** Implementing Sea Lanes sounds like a lot of work on top of the mandatory GE program changes – can we vote on it later?

**Answer:** *For this reason, we recommend deferring the **implementation** of Sea Lanes to the second and third years of the new GE program: providing support for faculty to come together and create Sea Lanes in Year 2, with pilot offerings available to students in Year 3. In order to avoid wasting the efforts of those pilot faculty, GERS strongly recommends that faculty governance approve the structure of Sea Lanes as part of this GE program revision.*

# CHANGELOG

## 0.4: NOVEMBER 16, 2018

### FAQ added.

### In “GE Learning Goals and Outcomes”

Replaced policy with new GERS revision dated November 16, 2018. Complex goals have been broken down into smaller ones. Changelog from this revision:

Numbers changed to bullets, with the intent of referring to outcomes by their **bolded names** rather than by numbers that change from draft to draft.

- Renamed Literacy outcome to “Critical Reading”
- Added Information Literacy learning outcome.
- Edited Argument outcome to reduce overlap with new Information Literacy outcome.
- Moved Communication outcome to create a logical order to outcomes 1-4.
- In Communication outcome: added “eloquently.”
- In Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Knowledge: added “from disciplines within” to emphasize disciplinarity.
- Added Integration learning outcome.
- Renamed Civic Engagement outcome to Civic Responsibility to avoid confusion with community engagement; added language on drawing from the past and present day.

- Added “past and present” to Sustainable Development.

Added annotations explaining the new Information Literacy outcome and the breadth of the Creative Expression outcome.

### **In “What Constitutes a GE Course?”**

Replaced policy with new GERS revision dated November 16, 2018.

Changelog from that policy:

- Section V-A-6: Changed “may” to “will”.
- Section V-B: Added provision to allow programs to offer multiple met-in-major courses in order to ensure that each student in their program takes one.

Updates to annotations:

- Modified met-in-major annotation to explain changes to V-B.
- Added explanation of UDGE area-based prerequisite requirements; see text beginning with “GERS had several goals.”

## **0.3: NOVEMBER 5, 2018**

Formatting updated for consistency, minor typos fixed.

### **In “About this Document”**

Version number updated to 0.3.

Added thank-you to those who have provided feedback so far.

### **In “High-Level Vision: The Seawolf Experience”**

Introduction clarified: “The Seawolf Experience” refers to the totality of a student’s academic and co-curricular experience at SSU and not just to the GE program, however broadly construed.

### **In “GE Learning Goals and Outcomes”**

Introduction revised to note that this document will be revisited at the November 9 GERS meeting with an eye toward incorporating the great deal of feedback we have received; conciseness; and inclusivity.

## **In “What Constitutes a GE Course?”**

Replaced policy with new GERS revision dated November 2, 2018.

Changelog from that policy:

- Section I-C: Clarified criteria for exceptions to to the requirement that GE courses be 3 units.
- Faculty professional development for LD GE (Section II-E) and UD GE (Section III-G) clarified: each faculty member should do professional development ONCE, not once per semester or once per course.

Updates to annotations:

- Typo fixes
- Signature assignments: emphasis added that signature assignments can be – and often will be – existing course assignments.

## **In “GE Program: Area Distribution”**

Chart from EO 1100 FAQ replaced with more detailed breakdown.

## **In “GE Program: Seawolf Studies Requirements”**

Note on Implementation-IV-D revised to indicate that GERS is considering moving the expertise requirement from the faculty member to the curriculum design.

## **In “First-Year Learning Courses”**

Replaced policy with new GERS revision dated November 2, 2018.

- Point 3: Explicitly described process for including more than 3 units from a GE area
- Point 5b: Added new item specifying that the same faculty member should teach the GE and transitional components.
- Point 5c: “Supporting transitional education” changed to “Teaching transitional curriculum,” to emphasize active role of faculty member in transition topics.

Added recommendations on transitional content from the University Studies Subcommittee as annotations. These recommendations are

not in conflict with the GERS proposal but have not (yet) been officially adopted by GERS.

### **In “Sea Lanes: A Thematic Approach Through GE”**

Replaced policy with new GERS revision dated November 2, 2018.

Changelog from that policy:

- Number of units reduced from 16 to 15
- Minimum of 6 sub-areas changed to minimum of 3 letter areas

### **0.2: OCTOBER 26, 2018**

Changelog added!

### **In “About this Document”**

Version number updated to 0.2.

Miscellaneous wordsmithing and typo fixes.

### **In “Why Change?”**

“Units of GE Courses” subsection revised to better reflect the implications of EO 1100 and the revisions in “What Constitutes a GE Course?” by making clear that GE courses of 4+ units will be allowed in rare cases.

Typo fix: EO 1110 concerns A2 and B4, not B2 and B4

Consequences of EO 1100 for Areas B3 and E elaborated.

In GE Program Review section, explanation of why revision won’t solve the 3- vs. 4-unit problem has been clarified.

In GE Program Review section, sentence added about the finding that students want meaningful pathways through GE.

Concluding paragraph added to “Summary” subsection discussing the foundational values of SSU GE.

### **In “High-Level Vision: The Seawolf Experience”**

“Diversity” added to first paragraph.

Updates to visual version:

- Names of overlays made consistent with Seawolf Studies recommendations
- Sea Lanes moved to LDGE
- GWAR/WIC moved to Overlays from UDGE
- Cleanup in LD overlays

### **In “What Constitutes a GE Course?”**

Replaced policy with new GERS revision dated October 19, 2018.

Changelog from that policy:

All GE courses (Section 1)

- I-A: “at least 3-5 GE learning outcomes” => “at least 3 GE Program learning outcomes”
- Added explicit 3-unit limit, with exception of UDGE met-in-major

LD GE

- II-C: Edits for clarification on exceptions to prerequisite pattern and elaboration of Golden 4.
- II-D: Language about reserving seats for specific programs and populations modified. Minimum of 50% seats restricted reduced to 0.

UD GE

- III-C: Removed reference to “3-5 learning outcomes”

Sections IV and V on UDGE combined.

Met in major

- Added “May exceed 3 units” to contrast with new language in previous provisions
- Added explicit enumeration of allowable prerequisites for Met-in-Major GE

### **In “GE Program: Area Distribution”**

Visual summary for students: Overlay area names changed to match rest of document.

### **In “GE Program: Seawolf Studies Requirements”**

Initial comment revised to clarify that the Seawolf Experience is not the same thing as Seawolf Studies.

As approved by GERS 10/22/2018, "Ethnic Studies and Social Justice" renamed to just "Ethnic Studies."

Note added that GERS is revisiting workgroup structure out of concern for GE Subcommittee's workload.

### **In "Freshman Learning Courses"**

Section title changed to "First-Year Learning Courses" to reflect revised name of program.

Replaced policy with updated version from October 26, with the following change:

Language removed: Meet at least two GE Areas, ~~at least one of which is A1, A2, A3, or B4.~~

### **0.1: OCTOBER 17, 2018**

Original version sent to EPC.