



WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY 42101

good job

Office of Associated Student Government

Associated Student Government's Reaction to the General Education Task Force Proposal

We, the members of Associated Student Government, have studied the new General Education Task Force Document rather extensively. This paper is our written response to that proposal. It contains points of agreement and points of disagreement as requested by the Academic Council. However, we feel that the current program, with some modifications, would be superior to the Task Force Proposal. As a working model for refinement, we suggest the College of Education's Proposal.

Points of Agreement

1. We agree with the idea that the number of hours required in general education courses should be reduced. The current number of general education hours puts a heavy load on any student in any field. Any general education offered by Western should be comprehensive without overburdening the student. (Note point 1 under disagreement)
2. Also, we agree with the aspect of narrowing the field of general education courses. The current program is broad and needs to be reduced somewhat. This would assure the quality of each course in the general education program. (Note point 2 under disagreement)
3. We also agree with the mathematical reasoning component of the Task Force Proposal. Across the nation, there is a deficiency in mathematics as opposed to foreign countries. We feel that any university educated person should be learned in mathematics.
4. Another point on which we agree is the foreign language requirement. Learning to speak a foreign language teaches a student more than just a different language. The student learns the derivatives of words, their connotations and denotations, and how the English language originated.

Points of Disagreement

1. We feel there is a possibility that the new Task Force Proposal could cause a student to take more hours. For example, in many majors and minors, certain

courses are required outside a student's major or minor. In the current requirements, a student can use these courses for general education, as well as for their major. Under the new proposal in many cases, a student would be unable to do this, thereby requiring a student to take more hours.

2. Any general education program should not be restricted to the point of only one course per discipline. Also, it should not be narrowed to the point where the choice is taken away from the student. Availability of choices is an important part of augmenting a student's major or minor with courses the student feels will be beneficial to his or her overall general education.
3. The new general education proposal will require an incoming student to take 42 hours of general education in his or her freshman and sophomore years. In addition to hurting the student, this "core" of classes will hurt the university as well. Here are some problems that we think may harm the student and the university.
 - A. First, it will be difficult for a student to take classes in his or her major during their first two years of college. Often students during their first semester take 7 or 8 hours combined from their major and minor. If an average load of hours per semester is 15 hours, this leaves only about 8 hours for general education. Under the new proposal, however, a student must take at least 10.5 hours of general education per semester during their first two years. This makes for an average of 17 to 18 hour semesters. Considering the adjustments made by each student upon entering college, an 18 hour semester would be harmful to many students.
 - B. A general education should allow students, if they choose, to take general education throughout their four years of study. Students should not be forced to take a "core" of classes during their first two years. If students were allowed to take courses for general education while they are juniors and seniors, this would permit the students to concentrate more on their major and minor during their first two years.
 - C. Second, since every student will have to take the same classes, larger classes will be needed. In smaller classes, students feel more comfortable, ask questions more readily, and get to know the teacher better. This seems to go against what we feel Western is all about.
 - D. Also, it will become more difficult for students to schedule their classes. Undoubtedly, if a student has to take a certain class, conflicts will arise. In some majors, there is one introductory course that must be taken before moving on to higher courses. Also, in many cases, this one course is only offered once per semester at a certain time. No matter how many sections of general education courses are offered, scheduling conflicts will arise more than before.

- E. Fourth, the proposal undermines the essence of a college general education. A general education from Western should provide the student with all the elements for which the proposal strives. However, the proposal does not take into account that every student on this campus is an individual. They differ in needs, ability, and interests. A general education should allow students to take classes on their own level, classes that interest them, and classes that will benefit them in their field of study. This proposal overlooks this simple fact, that as college students, we are capable of choosing courses that we feel will be beneficial to our future.
4. The proposed introductory overview courses are another drawback of this document. We feel that these new courses will not benefit the student or the university.
- A. An introductory overview course in Biology, Government, Sociology, or any other course would not be able to go in depth. Teachers would be forced to go fast in order to cover all of the material for the course. This would not leave time for questions, demonstrations, discussions, or projects. We feel that when one enters college, one begins a higher education - an education which will require students to use their abilities to their utmost, not one which will simply require students to memorize information.
 - B. Another disadvantage of the overview introductory classes is that students would be required to take the same level course as everyone else. Exceptional students will not be challenged by these courses, while other students may find it to difficult. A college general education should allow a student, if he or she wants, to take a higher level course in place of a general education requirement.
 - C. Also, we feel the Task Force Proposal will inhibit much of the transfer of credit hours from one college or university to another. These overview introductory classes will hurt a transfer student coming to Western or transferring from Western. A survey of the general education guidelines for the other state colleges and universities will show that these difficulties will arise.
 - D. We are also concerned about the Task Force Proposal's reliance on introductory courses which have not been created. It will take a fair amount of effort to develop and test these courses to assure that they are as reliable as existing general education courses.
 - E. Another point which the Task Force Proposal overlooked was the cost of such classes that require laboratory components. As of now, the university does not have sufficient funds to allow every student to take a laboratory course. The laboratories on campus are not equipped to handle the influx of students which will occur if the new proposal is adopted. The university will have to spend a large amount of money to staff and equip these laboratories to offer the courses in the proposal.

5. We are disturbed by the fact that some very basic general education courses were left out of the proposal.
 - A. The proposal omitted any classes pertaining to health and physical development. The proposal was supposed to provide "students a broad academic preparation in basic areas of human knowledge..." We feel that health and physical development are major areas of concern in a general education provided by Western.
 - B. The proposal also failed to include Astronomy as a general education option. Astronomy is one of the basic sciences dealing with the universe. Its influence on history and science is overwhelming. Moreover, the principles of Physics and other sciences would not be the same without Astronomy. Also, with the amount of money that Western has invested in this field, it seems only fitting to include Astronomy in general education. The Planetarium and the observatories are excellent facilities that are outstanding in the state. Without Astronomy in the general education options, students would not use these facilities to their fullest.
 - C. Considering the technology of today, a general education should involve a basic course in the use of computers. The computer is a tool which will be used by almost everyone. Consequently, computers are everywhere in the job market of today. Graduates from this or any college or university need to be functionally literate in the use of computers.
 - D. Even though the Task Force Proposal states that oral presentations should be emphasized in all the general education classes, a speech class is not offered by the proposal. A speech class will teach the student how to verbalize his thoughts and to get his ideas across. Any general education offered by Western should allow a student to take such a course.
 - E. Also, the Task Force Proposal omits any applied business courses. An applied business course would cover topics such as, loans, interest rates, mortgages, etc. We feel that an applied business course as an option would greatly enhance Western's general education program.
6. We feel that six hours of history under the new proposal would not benefit the student. A general education should provide the student with a background of history. Therefore, we feel that Western Civilization needs to be in any general education adopted by Western. However, under this proposal, the courses will include much more than just history. Religion, culture, outlook, and ideas of that historical period as well as the flow of events are to be included into one course. This is entirely too much to include in one course. The religion, the culture, and the ideas of that historical period obviously contain enough information to create a specific course dealing with just those subjects. We suggest that courses about religion, philosophy, and world cultures, such as,

cultures of Africa, the Middle East, or the Soviet Union, be offered as a humanities option. This would allow for a three hour course of western civilization, while still keeping other excellent humanities courses.

7. The new Task Force Proposal is not balanced between colleges. Totalling the number of hours from each college shows an overabundance of classes from Potter college. We feel that a general education classes from Western should offer the student an introduction to all areas of education. This will enable a student to alter or make a choice concerning his or her field of concentration.

Conclusion

Therefore, we, the concerned members of the Associated Student Government of Western Kentucky University, respectfully submit this as our official statement concerning the new General Education Task Force Proposal. Overall, we feel that the new document would overburden the student and not provide the best possible general education program. The goals which the new proposal strived for are ideal and should be included in any general education policy offered by Western. However, the document under consideration falls far short of fulfilling these ideas. Therefore, we believe that the existing system of general education, with adjustments, would allow students a broad understanding of History, English, Science and other disciplines. Also, it would provide the student with enough choices to fulfill personal interest and needs without compromising the concept of a university educated person. Consequently, we recommend, as a working document, the College of Education's Proposal.

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