

January 23, 2012

TO: Linda Bisson  
Chair, Academic Senate

FR: Margie Longo, Chair, College of Engineering Executive Committee *MLL*  
Angelique Louie, Chair, Undergraduate Educational Policy Committee *AL*  
Jean VanderGheynst, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies *JSV 6*

RE: Request to approve permissions for students in the College of Engineering completing GE2

We are writing to present some issues the new General Education (GE3) requirements are posing for College of Engineering (COE) students and ask for your approval to allow exceptions to the general education policy to help during the transition from the previous General Education (GE2) requirement to GE3.

Under GE2, departments had the option of requesting a GE topical breadth designation for their courses, yet many courses that clearly fit the criteria did not receive such a designation (e.g., SOC 130, Race Relations was not classified as Social Science topical breadth). Thus, the courses that students could use to satisfy the requirement were only a subset of courses offered on this campus that truly fit the definition of a particular topical breadth category. We believe some departments may have chosen not to seek GE designation because of concerns (perceived or real) that such a designation might create enrollment pressures, while other courses may simply have remained undesignated because the required paperwork was never submitted. Thus, there are many courses on the books and that students took prior to the implementation of GE3 that meet the GE2 criteria, but never made it to the official list of courses that could be used. On a case by case basis, the College of Engineering historically made exceptions for students who had inadvertently taken a course they thought was topical breadth, if in the opinion of the College, the criteria for topical breadth had been met and the student had a compelling need to graduate in a timely manner.

The move to GE3 seemed to remedy this by indicating in the original communication about GE3 that all undergraduate courses on campus, with very few exceptions, would be classified in one of the three topical breadth categories, thus eliminating the inconsistency of GE2 classifications. The definition of the topical breadth categories did not change in the move from GE2 to GE3.

In the process of each department assigning topical breadth for GE3, however, a new inconsistency has arisen. If a course, with no change to content, is now designated as topical breadth and a student is completing GE2, the student is not allowed to use the new topical breadth designation unless they choose to complete the new GE3 requirement (which may extend time to degree for engineering majors due to their already high unit load). Similarly, courses designated with writing literacy and/or world cultures literacy under GE3 seem to meet the criteria for writing experience and/or social-cultural diversity requirements of GE2. As faculty, we cannot find any justification to disallow students to use these courses in satisfaction of a changing requirement that benefits our students' educational experience. Rather than open

up a wide field of applicable coursework, we must advise the student that administrative reasons (it isn't on a list) prevent them from using a desired course. An additional concern that we share is that the GE2 course list is no longer printed in the CSRG and is not the default GE course list at this time. We fear that students across campus will frequently confuse the GE3 and the GE2 list.

To address these concerns, the faculty of the College of Engineering have approved a proposal to permit the following exceptions for engineering students who plan to complete GE2:

1. To allow the topical breadth designations of GE3 to apply to GE2
2. To allow GE3 Writing Literacy courses to apply to the GE2 Writing requirement
3. To allow GE3 Civic and Cultural literacy courses to apply to the GE2 Social and Cultural Diversity requirement

We would like to request permission from the Academic Senate to approve the exceptions for all COE students completing GE2.

Our other option at this point is to pursue the provision in the new general education requirement (AS regulation 523D) that allows us to pursue individual program certification of general education requirements. We considered this and determined that making the above exceptions, particularly during this time of transition, was far more efficient and less confusing for students and ultimately in the best interest of the students in the College of Engineering.