TO: The Academic Senate

FROM: Committee on Instruction and Curriculum (CIC)

SUBJECT: New Freshman Clusters

PURPOSE: For Action by the Academic Senate

ACTION REQUESTED: That the Academic Senate approve the New Clusters for a three year term; effective Fall 2012.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: At its meeting on May 2, 2011, CIC, after careful consideration of the several suggested cluster proposals, with useful input from General Studies Director Sally Murphy, voted unanimously to approve all the proposed freshman clusters for the coming year.

The following Area B cluster proposals (Natural Science Learning Communities; Designed for science majors) were approved at the GE subcommittee meeting on 4/25/11:

- How Things Work
- Atoms are Everything
- Molecules
- Healthier Living/Engineering
- Diversity of Life
- Biology of Humans

The following Area C cluster proposals (Humanities Learning Communities) were approved by the GE Subcommittee on 4/25/11

- Ancient World
- Language
- Structure, Expression and Meaning
- Spirituality, Creativity, Human Experience

The following mixed clusters (Science &/or Humanities and/or Social Science; open to all students) were approved at the GE Subcommittee on 4/25/11

- Earth Crisis
- Energy and the Environment
- Beats, Physics and the Mind
- Bodies at Play
- Individual and Society

The GE Subcommittee, and thereafter CIC voted, via email on the following three clusters:

- Viewing Diversity - Mixed
- Making a Difference - Area D (Social Science Learning Community)
- Thinking Globally - Mixed
Committee on Instruction and Curriculum  
Subcommittee for General Education  
Call for GE Freshman Learning Community (Cluster) Proposals

This is a call for thematically integrated three-course learning community proposals that meet the lower division GE requirements and learning outcomes\(^1\) in Natural Sciences (GE Area B) and/or Humanities (GE Area C) and/or Social Science (GE Area D). DUE: April 1, 2011.

Cal State East Bay’s cluster or learning community general education program for incoming freshmen are intentionally integrated, year-long sets of courses that provide a cohort of students and faculty with an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary exploration of a compelling issue, idea, or theme. Learning community enrollment is mandatory for all CSUEB freshmen. Learning communities help first year students understand the connections between and among disciplines and integrate writing, speaking and research courses. All courses meet general education and/or graduation requirements. Since the implementation of our freshman learning community program in fall 1998, CSUEB’s one-year retention rates are strong among the CSUs. Students who successfully complete a freshman learning community simultaneously complete a third or more of the lower division GE requirements. We anticipate a need for approximately 10 learning communities for freshmen not planning to major in music or the sciences in fall 2011. Music, pre-nursing, science and Kinesiology majors have specific clusters designed for the major.

1000 and 2000 level introductory courses required for majors in any field are excellent candidates for GE clusters. Proposals may be for new learning communities or may be [revisited and/or modified] current clusters. All currently offered clusters, if the departments wish to continue them, must submit the complete proposal form. Faculty submitting proposals should assume that most freshmen need some level of remedial work in English composition and/or mathematics. Complete learning communities include basic subjects courses: composition, information literacy, and oral communication and freshman seminar\(^2\), that should be integrated with the discipline courses and the cluster theme.

Proposal Requirements

1. The three science, humanities, and/or social science courses in the cluster must be from three different departments or disciplines.\(^3\)
2. An integrating theme that speaks to interests and experiences of our entering freshmen\(^4\).
3. Clearly indicated points of integration for the three disciplines and integrated writing, research, and speaking opportunities in discipline courses for basic skills development\(^5\).
4. Approval of faculty, chairs, and college deans assuring support for the three-year cluster cycle.

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\(^1\) Lower division general education learning outcomes were approved by the Academic Senate on February 17, 2004. They may be found at [http://www.csueastbay.edu/ge/subcommittee/ge/learningoutcomes.htm](http://www.csueastbay.edu/ge/subcommittee/ge/learningoutcomes.htm).

\(^2\) Freshman seminar focuses on supporting student success through development of time management and study skills, team-work and goal-setting, financial literacy, major and career exploration, and self-motivation and responsibility.

\(^3\) For example, our Geology department offers instruction in several disciplines: meteorology, oceanography, planetary science, etc.). Proposals may include two courses from a single department if the courses represent different disciplines. Exceptions are made for Modern Language study and may be made if a very strong case is offered for a sequence of courses to meet course requirements in heavy unit majors like the sequences listed at the end for science majors.

\(^4\) The best themes address freshmen-relevant questions or interests, provide a strong context for interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary perspectives and opportunities for research and communication skills development.

\(^5\) Sally Murphy, Director of GE, 885-2941, [sally.murphy@csueastbay.edu](mailto:sally.murphy@csueastbay.edu) is available to consult with faculty interested in developing a freshman learning community.
Submit one application for each learning community proposal. Faculty must be willing to permit and/or participate in assessments of disciplinary (science, humanities, or social science) GE learning outcomes in the fall, winter and spring course(s).

The faculty teaching in the learning community should schedule six hours (3 two-hour or 2 three-hour meetings) during spring term to work together to integrate the discipline and skills courses with the theme. Some time will be devoted to pedagogies appropriate for 18 year-olds and strategies that can maximize the advantages of the cluster structure. The meetings will include communication, composition, information literacy, and freshman activities faculty.

**IMPORTANT ITEMS**

We encourage proposals with themes that support CSUEB’s mission to prepare “all its students to be socially responsible contributors to their communities, locally and globally”. Cluster proposals that create opportunities for community engagement or service learning and those that support greater global awareness are particularly welcome.

Please give very careful thought to themes, questions, or issues that are compelling for our urban, highly diverse freshman population. The more intriguing and relevant the questions/issues/themes are for our 18 year old freshman population, the more meaningful will be their engagement in their first year of college.

We encourage faculty in programs that require coursework from other departments for their major to work with colleagues in those departments to design clusters that include those courses. Please note also that one course with the major’s prefix, if taken as a part of a freshman learning community, may be "double-counted," that is, the course may be used for both major and general education credit.

Freshman learning communities enroll approximately 90 freshmen who register in some of the cluster’s courses each quarter of their freshman year. The General Education Office staff works closely with Admissions and the College Deans to try to assure sufficient enrollment for each learning community. This is a predictive effort; some adjustments are likely each year to accommodate unexpected fluctuations in freshman enrollments.

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6 Attached is a list of the themes and courses for current and past learning communities. Please consult with faculty currently teaching in freshman learning communities for ideas and feedback.