Summary of the 2001-2 General Education Review

Committee on Instruction and Curriculum

Dr. Terrence Kelly
Chairperson, CIC
(July 2002)
**Introduction**

In 1995 the Academic Senate created a radically different model of General Education on campus. Replacing the rather unstructured approach (an approach criticized by WASC), the Senate created a G.E. program that strongly integrated the learning experience of lower division students on campus. This was done by forming a series of “learning communities” or “clustered” courses centered on a specific theme. Lower division students are required to take one such cluster in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

The Senate policy required the review of this program after five years. The Committee on Curriculum and Instruction was charged with this review in the Fall of 2001. This report is a summary of the nature of that review and the information gathered by CIC. As of the writing of this report, the review is not complete because important information was not available to CIC at the close of the 2001-2 Academic Year. For the same reason, this report does not draw conclusions or make recommendations; that is the task of the 2002-3 iteration of CIC. The goal of this report is to familiarize members of the 2002-3 CIC, as well as all those who are interested, with the information gathered by the 2001-2 CIC.

The G.E. program has been under review for some time. CIC began the review already supplied with Sheila Cowen’s second year assessment report of the program (produced in September 2000). This report summarized faculty and student surveys as well as data regarding skills improvement and enrollment and retention.

CIC developed a procedure of review that would allow from maximum input from the various elements of the campus community. As much as possible, CIC wanted feedback from students and faculty—those most obviously affected by the lower division G.E. learning community or cluster program. CIC also invited feedback regarding the overall G.E. package (both upper and lower division).

CIC decided to create a number of forums that would provide public spaces for campus community members to voice their considered judgements on the G.E. program. These forums included a number of hearings carried out during CIC meetings. Throughout the year CIC held separate hearings for:

- Faculty
- Students
- Deans
- Chairpersons
- Student Advisors
CIC was also aware that public hearings might alone would be an insufficient method of collecting community feedback. Such hearings might attract a limited sample of community members (i.e. those with an “axe to grind”) or might be intimidating for vulnerable members of campus. For instance, several lectures and untenured faculty members expressed interest in voicing their concerns about the G.E. program, but were unwilling to do so publicly given the partisan nature of the debate on campus. Students, likewise, could feel intimidated by the nature of a public hearing before faculty members. Furthermore, there are, of course, well known problems of “one shot” hearings that often distort community opinion (i.e. scheduling difficulties, access, apathy).

For these reasons, the hearings were augmented by other forms of opinion gathering. These included:

- A anonymous survey sent to all faculty members
- Focus discussion groups with faculty members (not available at this time)
- Focus discussion groups with students (not available at this time)

CIC also had at its disposal the routine student evaluations of clusters that are performed for each cluster.

Finally, CIC invited Dr. Jackie Donath from Sacramento State University to visit campus as an independent external examiner. (not available at this time)

CIC was also expecting follow up assessment data for the years following Sheila Cowen’s report.

The following is a summary of review that CIC carried out in the 2001-2 Academic Year.
I. CIC General Education Review Hearing with Faculty Members
   February 18, 2002 Biella Room, University Library

Summary of Faculty Presentations

Faculty Member #1 - summarizes his history
2 concerns from the beginning -
1) equity - unequal distribution of students in freshman courses. Some larger
departments would parlay this into source for themselves.
2) exposure - lower division students are exposed to different disciplines as possible.
They don't know what they might be interested in. marketplace of ideas. moving away
from smaller departments. encourage students to explore
3) freedom of choice issue - queries students he comes into contact with. not a good
school to come to as a freshman or sophomore. They want to sample courses.
4) clusters locked into time frame throughout the year. students committed to block of
time for 9 months
Satisfaction surveys do not cover students who do not come here or participate in clusters
possible solution- should be options or choices. opt out of clusters.

Faculty Member #2 (began early with clusters) -
Clusters should be kept, shouldn't be judged in a few years time. Wants to emphasize
that she is a representative of the writing program (speaks for them - list server) about
95% in favor. Student papers from one class also favor the clusters. "Her faculty"
Contextual and content oriented, good for learning due to scaffolding. Freshman become
a community - from faculty who have seen changes in freshman since the beginning of
the clusters. Faculty who teach remedial students think that they have more success since
clusters. Helpful for commuter campus. Negatives from students- no choice, feels like
high school, get tired of theme. Doesn't force students to make up their own minds.
Positives from students - reduces confusion, builds academic community, helps with
relationships with faculty. Improves proficiency for ESL students - write about
something that they know. More negative items- from faculty. refers to degree of
administrative support for clusters, especially for lecturers; faculty assigned to a cluster a
week ahead of time; faculty removed from cluster that they had taught for two years;
would like tenure-track faculty teaching them, but this won't happen. Students would like
faculty to have more interaction with other faculty. Writing faculty now seek out this
interaction, but often ignored. If you want students to have a sense of autonomy, but
have a sense of the university/community then the clusters are good.

Faculty Member #3-
Was and is a strong supporter of the cluster system. Limits her comments to her own
direct experience- taught in one cluster course and was on GE subcommittee. Most of
her hopes for clusters were disappointed; elements that seemed hopeful- interdisciplinary
aspect, team-teaching aspect, integration of subject and writing/speaking, creation of
learning outcomes and their assessment; more coherent curriculum; one unit activity
course;
Info on each item-
Had assistants in one unit activity course that were very helpful; speakers, videos, helped them design assessment of clusters themselves; but students told her that they hated the activity courses, they were a waste of time.
Disappointment 1 - Team-teaching- all three courses taught with all three instructors versus reality of three independent courses where she rarely saw her other colleagues; factors specific to her own cluster where one course was very large - three core faculty intended to meet regularly, but rarely did, others were lecturers and were too busy and when they did meet they talked about discipline problems. Students resented rigid scheduling because they couldn't see what they were getting for it.
Disappointment 2 - Learning communities - but really anti-learning communities. Too many freshman and high school ethos moved in. Discipline problems which she had never experienced before, refusal to do work etc. Relieved when these two courses were over and asked to be relieved of teaching in the cluster courses. Skills courses with - scheduling problems with them - difficulty working with writing faculty. Arbitrary set of courses were not replaced with coherent sets of courses. Problem with agreeing on this during the design year. Hrd to get rid of courses once they were in.
Keep these aspects - learning outcomes and assessment; remedial courses with same teacher; complete remedial work as soon as possible.
Misc. questions - departments versus faculty as unwilling to compromise re previous classes

Faculty Member #4 - experience with first year students and activity sections in ancient world cluster. Believes that it has been successful for students; his concerns lie with the faculty. Large sections of one content per quarter/ two regular faculty and one lecturer. he became responsible for what should have been the responsibility of the content faculty; integration of material was not clear; he took this on in activity sections over the whole year. Interesting change on campus- he knows students from all over campus; this didn't happen before; they come to theatre productions more often; other observation - students are not enthused about this when they first come to campus, but he thinks that they are more positive after they complete the program.

Faculty Member #5 (political science) Conflict, Culture and communication. Excited about working with colleagues from other disciplines - integrating material, but one quarter at a time. Introduced material from other disciplines, nevertheless. Relate info back to other courses (Anthropology, Speech, and Poly Science). votes for small clusters, would help to overcome some of possible problems. Note that this was a sophomore clusters.
Address two main concerns-
Themes are too narrow - intro to social sciences etc. students resent specialized focus for three quarters. Solution - have department chairs - broad themes for intro to say social sciences. Introduce students to specific disciplines - about how faculty view their fields. Fair allocation of resources- some departments have used this to try to build resources. Resentment at departmental level are due resource issues.

Faculty Member #6
Philosophical concerns- teaches in two clusters; troubled by past debates - school of education and being marginalized from general education. problems with institutional power and money.  
Own cluster - integration of material. two courses developed for cluster and one was a pre-existing course. Half of enrolled students in latter class are not cluster students. Harder to integrate material. Students are aware of this difficulty with this third class.  
Plus side - agrees that interaction with faculty in other departments has been good. Likes interaction with non-majors. Enjoys teaching clusters, but wants to work out problems. Thinks it would be helpful to increase number of disciplines involved.  

**Faculty Member #7** involved in original GE package - faculty would create new interdisciplinary courses, but this is not how it happened; take three existing courses and put them together- women’s' studies, recreation ?  
Now teaches in a sophomore cluster and the difference between the quality of the students is night and day.  

Echo a comment - re what is social science? involve other disciplines  

**Faculty Member #8** (psychology) - no direct experience in this program, but involved in retention of students. Do they stay or do they leave? No convincing evidence that clusters have increased retention, but no evidence to the contrary either. Refers to Sheila Cowan's reports - enrolled fall 1999 538 retention rate of 70% ? What was retention rate before the program began? What is it at other campuses without cluster programs? page 32 - 2) students in a cluster program progress in a timelier manner towards graduation, but evidence has not been provided on this topic.  

Sally -Leone Nidifer - 2-5% for last year; newer report - ??  

**Faculty Member #9**  
1) development of procedures to make decisions about clusters - relates to faculty governance- get broadest view about continuation of program, which elements are retained, which classes are retained. CIC has an important role; subcommittee - makes recommendations to CIC; departments deliver these clusters retain opportunities to review these programs. Inclusion of a broader group of faculty  
2) most palatable cluster - most interaction among faculty. procedural change would be broader themes, faculty really team-teach, so that course is divided up into representations on same broad theme. Impact of technology - science, social science, humanities - increase cohesion among faculty. Versus a cluster with all three courses from say science. [this is how the clusters are supposed to be now - How to encourage team teaching vis a vis resources for encouraging this? Administrators need to support this.  
misc. trade-off between interdisciplinary aspect and training in the specific discipline - one quarter
II. CIC General Education Review Hearing with Students
March 4, 2001 Biella Room, University Library

Summary of Student Presentations

Lindsay - was a part of the Ancient History cluster as a freshman- California History, and Law and Society clusters as a sophomore.
Advantages - many advantages the first year - familiarity with CSU, familiar faces, create schedule, especially the first quarter. The other two quarters were not as helpful. The courses were not as connected in her sophomore clusters (for example Conservation Biology and now Geology). Why are they a cluster anyway? She would prefer clusters even the second year if they were well correlated and integrated. Material in the courses were well correlated the first year. Scheduling conflicts were a problem in Winter Quarter. The classes are large, but did fill up (some variation from year to year). The sophomore clusters are not as valuable. She thinks that sophomore students need more freedom. She praises the ancient History cluster. She wants to know if why the courses need to be taken in sequence? She was asked if cohort was helpful socially. It was familiar and comforting, but might not be positive for all. Question regarding age diversity in classes. She commented that there was age diversity even in the freshman cluster. She was asked about changing clusters- she's heard that it's too much trouble to switch etc. She would like more flexibility to change clusters (if you hate the first one

Elizabeth - sophomore English major
She doesn't like the cluster system. She was looking forward to having more choice when she came to college versus high school. She didn't like the choices. She's at the end of the alphabet, so she did get her second choice. Flexibility - so hard to change clusters, so most people don’t try. She would like variety. She feels as though she has lost her anonymity. Her classmates are predictable quarter after quarter. She took Statistics and loved it, more variety in classmates and in their background and ideas. She had AP credit, but needed to fill up spaces. Cluster system is not very flexible. She describes talking to high school students and describing the cluster system and having them not like the sound of it. She thinks that many people her age would like more independence. She is from Moreau High School (good Catholic High School). But she states that she has solicited info from students at other high schools. Some discussion of how this might vary among high schools.
Freshman - Evolution cluster- Physics, Geology, and Biology, not connected to one another, biology lab not even connected to biology class. The sophomore cluster (Sports and Society cluster) is a bit more connected. Sign language (not a cluster, but it counts).
General Studies - not helpful (orientation, but just drug out for weeks).

Beth - sophomore (plays basketball here). She will be transferring because CSUH does not meet her academic expectations. Viewing Diversity cluster in the freshman year, Science and the 21st century and Culture and Technology. The first year was a very good experience, no initial idea, went in with an open mind. The professors were all in the same class. They debated each other. English was also well connected, while the speech
cluster was not connected at all. It was a large class and she got a lot of it. Change in practice times only two choices for Science cluster- doesn't have a major and is trying to explore things, but cluster makes it hard to do that. GS - first quarter was good, but the second and third quarters are boring. The library info was helpful in classes later on. First quarter - campus is so new that it is helpful to get lots of info on where stuff is and makes this less scary. Book on how to become a Master Student, but didn’t use it in her GS. Last quarter- too much work for a one-unit class. Read book related to cluster and find newspaper articles etc. Cluster- aids meeting people, but can do this in other classes as well. First year, note big lecture hall and doesn't stay in touch with any of them now. Re academic expectations - probably just GE, but lack of choices and lack of substance.

Megan - junior who has completed the program - Human Development major. Freshman year- didn't her first choice ended up in the How things work? cluster. She hated every one of them. People were sitting on the floor in many classes. She agrees with Elizabeth. No choice, stuck in that cluster. Kind of repetitive, gets boring after a while. Clusters had nothing to do with each other. GS classes - again like a long orientation. But the second year - Sign Language cluster and Sport and Society cluster. Economic course had nothing to do with the other two courses. Once you are in a cluster you are stuck. On questioning- if she enjoyed classes the lack of choice would not be so bad. But three quarters feels like a really long time. Her practice times did not interfere too much with finding clusters to take. She says some friends decided not to transfer her as a result of the cluster system. But actually she does not hate the clusters that much. She is happy that she got through everything. Did the clusters help you to get all of your GE classes out of the way? Did it help you to progress faster? She agrees, but notes that coaches also help them stay on track. She also agrees that if you don't have a major, the clusters limit your ability to explore.

Student satisfaction - Joy brings this up - was this addressed during any surveys? They think not.

Summary -
Beginning with the positive - like the first the quarter of GS. They valued the clusters that were the most integrated and interconnected.

Informal information from Advisors -
Were these students remarks consistent with what they hear from their students?

Main complaint - GS courses are not linked; at her previous institution it was only for one semester. Maybe one quarter would be sufficient.
Scheduling problems - especially for some
Like the links with English and Speech if linked with cluster material.

Getting student info - one on one, surveys not as helpful. Some students like the clusters, but by the third quarter they are tired of the cluster. Go to one GS class and talk to all of the students to get a more diverse opinion. They want to talk to you and do not want to write it out. Cluster students on probation - different perspective. Students who work
have scheduling problems with the clusters. Students can't have MWF or TuTh class schedule. Hard for part-time students or for students who need remediation - need more info from them. Students have figured out that they can take a course or two at another campus and then they can get out of being in the cluster requirement. Students who are not in cluster and do not have permission to do so, might be in trouble.
III. CIC General Education Review Hearing with Department Chairs  
April 29, 2002  Biella Room, University Library

Summary of Discussion

Several chairs attended this meeting and were almost all highly critical of the lower division GE program. Many of the chairs relayed complaints they are hearing from their faculty. These complaints were consistent with many of those expressed at the hearing with faculty members. They included:

- Behavior problems
- Rigid structures
- Lack of support

Some of the chairs had experience teaching in the clusters themselves, and noted that they experienced the same problems as their staff. Indeed, one chair noted, only “half jokingly,” that one of the perks of becoming chair was scheduling himself out of the department’s cluster courses.

Other chairs noted the scheduling difficulties that are created by the cluster system. Cluster courses must be locked into a specific schedule—and this lack of flexibility creates numerous problems when staffing needs (or availability) changes. It can also lead to situations in which a department is committed to teaching a course that might otherwise have been cancelled due to low enrollment.

At least one chair urged the committee to discontinue the program and return to the old program. Also, at least one chair reported that recruitment into their program had been hurt by the cluster system. One chair thought the program was working just fine. The rest of the chairs seemed highly critical of the program, but came short of urging that it be discontinued.
IV. CIC General Education Review Hearing With Counselors and Advisors
June 3, 2002 Room 800 Warren Hall

Summary of Discussion

Guests Present: Evette Castillo, Terry Cunningham, Veronica Fong, Evelia Jiminez, Margaret Lewis, Valerie Taniguchi, Sam Tran (written comment).

- Liberal Studies majors hate it. Courses or clusters do not fit into LBST requirements. It is very restrictive and doesn’t offer much selection. Students feel they do not have a choice and would prefer the old way of choosing GE courses from a list. Students are limited to the California Cluster for the Social Science – area D requirement.
- Students get into the rhythm of meeting with an advisor and following the GE cluster plan. Students are more savvy in completing all lower division GE requirements.
- Students are very frustrated when entering as an undeclared major. Students are not sure how their courses will apply once they select a major.
- Advising is complex. More research and time is required for hand written, manual petitions. More developmental counseling is required.
- GE Cluster program is more purposeful and builds relationships.
- Students reported that there is too much assistance, “overkill” if you will. GS is offered each quarter – students should only be required to enroll in it for their first quarter.
- We set students up for failure. Excel staff had a student who was a Health Science major who was encouraged to enroll in a Science cluster for their first year. Student failed BIOL 1301 and 1302, is trying her second attempt at Math 950, and was thereby encouraged to attend a community college to complete their remedial requirements before returning to Hayward. Student was excited to return as a non-cluster student.
- Students have reported becoming bored with topic or theme by the third quarter. The clusters may not be a positive experience for students in their first year if their first choice was not available.
- Most of the frustration experienced by students in the clusters who are progressing are that cluster courses are not offered during the summer and they’re limited to code requirements or electives. (It was shared by the GE Coordinator that faculty were not willing to commit during the Summer to teaching clusters.)
- Students have left CSUH to other universities because the clusters were constraining. Students want to be in clusters with students of other age groups.
- In working with graduating seniors, students appreciate the structure of completing lower division GE in their first two years.
- The program fosters co-dependency and lacks a process for empowering students to choose GE courses. Students must meet with an advisor each time a change in their
course schedule occurs or the student must change a cluster due to work schedule or failing a linked discipline course. The program requires a great deal of handholding.
V. Visit of the Independent External Reviewer: Dr. Jackie Donath, Sacramento State University

As with the overall review, CIC wanted to create maximum opportunities for the various members of the campus community to interact with the external reviewer. As such, Dr. Donath visited campus for two days, May 13-14. Her schedule allowed her to meet and speak with most, if not all, relevant campus community members. Her report was not available at the writing of this summary. Her schedule was as follows:

**Monday May 13, 2002**

8:30—10 am  Sally Murphy, GE Coordinator  
Warren Hall (WA) LM 55

10:10—11 am  Carl Bellone, AVP Academic Programs and  
Terry Kelly, Chair, Committee on Instruction and Curriculum (CIC)  
WA 859

11:10—11:50 am  GE Advisors  
WA 400

12—1 pm  Lunch at University Club with Faculty Members

1:10—2 pm  Private Meetings with Faculty Members  
WA 800

2—2:40 pm  Time to relax, think  
GE Break Room

2:45--3:45 pm  GE Subcommittee and CIC  
Library Conference Room

4—5 pm  General Studies faculty  
WA 400

5—5:30 pm  break

5:30—?  Dinner with Carl Bellone and Terry Kelly

**Tuesday May 14, 2002**

8:30—9:30 am  Michael Strait, Director of Assessment and Testing
WA 443

9:45—10 am  Frank Martino, Provost
             WA 9945

10:10—11 am  Cluster students
             AE 379

11:10—12 pm  Sally Murphy, Carl Bellone, and Terry Kelly
             WA 859

12--?  Lunch with Linda Kinrade, Assoc. Dean School of Science & Gale Young, Assoc. Dean School of Arts, Letters, & Social Sciences
        Off campus
VI. Faculty Survey

The response to the faculty surveys was the strongest of any component of the GE review. CIC received 98 responses from faculty members and in many ways they reinforced the views that had been expressed at the open GE hearings. A copy of the survey follows.

California State University, Hayward
COMMITTEE ON INSTRUCTION AND CURRICULUM
Faculty Survey on the GE Program

CIC welcomes your participation and feedback on the 1998-2002 General Education Program. The General Education Program is known for the thematically linked courses (clusters) that comprise each learning community. The goals of the clusters are to provide 1) a sense of community for student success and retention; 2) integrated involvement of the faculty; 3) continual assessment for program review; 4) multiple teaching strategies; and 5) preparation for a world in which they are more likely to become enthusiastic lifelong learners. The learning outcomes are: 1) development of communication skills: reading, writing, quantitative reasoning, and speaking skills; 2) problem solving: the ability to define and analyze problems, synthesize and use information for the resolution of problems, in an environment in which the student is working well with others; 3) information competency; 4) connected learning; and 5) awareness of issues of cultural, racial, ethnic, and gender diversity.

Background Information:

1a. Have you ever taught in the clusters? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes:
1b. What level cluster? Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Both ☐

1c. What year(s) did you teach in clusters? (mark all that apply)

1d. What level of courses do you usually teach?
Lower Division ☐ Upper Division ☐ Equal mix ☐

1e. What is your academic rank?
Lecturer ☐ Assistant Professor/Librarian ☐
Associate Professor/Librarian ☐ Professor/Librarian ☐

1f. Are you tenured ☐ or untenured ☐?

1g. Your school is: ALSS ☐ SBE ☐ SEAS ☐ SCI ☐ UNIV ☐
Library ☐

2. Did you?
Help to design the cluster ☐ Get assigned to teach in the cluster ☐
Volunteer to teach in the cluster ☐

**Considering the goals listed in the introduction …**

3a. What do you believe are the primary strengths of the GE Program?

3b. Conversely, what are the limitations or weaknesses of the GE Program?

3c. What is your overall opinion of the GE Program?

4. If you have taught in clusters, please tell us what can be done to provide greater support for your GE course
   a. From your department
   b. From your school
   c. From the university

5. What effect, if any, do you think participation in teaching lower division GE classes has had on your retention, promotion, and/or tenure?

6a. If you had the choice, would you volunteer to teach in a cluster? Yes ☐ No ☐ Why or why not?

6b. If you had the choice, would you volunteer to teach Upper Division GE? Yes ☐ No ☐ Why or why not?

7. Any additional comments you would like to provide on the GE program as a whole (taking into account the entire program, not just the clusters).

When completed, please RETURN this to the Academic Senate Office, WA 877 by May 21, 2002
SURVEY RESULTS

Background Information

School:

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<td>38%</td>
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<td>University</td>
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Have you ever taught in the clusters?
50% Yes
50% No

Of those who have taught in the cluster program:

49% have taught at the freshman level
22% have taught at the sophomore level
29% have taught at both the freshman and sophomore levels

Primary Strengths of Program (common themes):

• Creates social cohesion
• Breadth in basic skills
• Integrative involvement of faculty
• Forces students to take care of requirements in a timely manner
• The interdisciplinary format

Primary Weaknesses of the Program (common themes):

• Behavior problems/reinforces high school culture/“anti-learning communities”
• Student resentment
• Rigidity/complexity/lack of student choice
• Clusters not foundational/themes too narrow
• Age segregation
• Lack of institutional support
Overall Opinion of the GE Program:
The overall opinion question was open-ended, so any breakdown of respondent opinions requires a judgment of what counts as a favorable, unfavorable and mixed opinion. For the purposes of this summary, those responses that consisted only of positive remarks were counted as favorable, those only with negative were counted as unfavorable, while those with both were counted as mixed.

Overall Opinion of GE Program
Favorable: 25%
Unfavorable: 34%
Mixed: 26%
No Opinion: 15%

This breakdown is also consistent with the views of those who have experience teaching in the clusters:

Favorable Overall Opinion: 27%
Unfavorable Overall Opinion: 33%
Mixed Overall Opinion: 26%
No Opinion: 14%

Some typical comments:

Favorable:

“It is a good way to ensure that the requirements are met in a timely way. Else, graduating seniors spend their final quarter in 1000-level classes.” (89)

“It’s better than what existed previously and the students I see seem to like it as well as anyone ever likes GE. I think it’s doing what it should—help students connect with each other, get their GE done and then get on with their majors.” (85)

“Helps to integrate the student body (“connected learning”) and diversity (goal #5), broadens the curriculum and teaches students problem solving techniques and approaches (see goals #2, 1). (95)

Unfavorable:

“I view the clusters as a grievous disservice to students, and if I were a student forced to plan my schedule around clusters, I would consider switching schools.” (42)
“The GE program is of no use to immature students. It is a waste of time of dedicated instructors who believe in teaching their discipline to individuals with an academic focus.” (33)

“(1) too complicated. (2) too hard to understand. (3) too much reflective of “turf wars” between different schools clamoring for FTES.” (55)

Mixed:

“The general idea is fine. The clusters are questionable. Many classes are taught with too little content or challenge.” (50)

“A great idea that feels very cumbersome. To be successful the faculty truly have to coordinate and there has to be encouragement, support and rewards for doing so.” (24)

“It’s OK. I wish there was a way to do without the rigidity and keep students and give them a sense of community.” (56)

Support Issues (themes):

- Smaller sections
- More sections of each course to allow for more joint teaching
- Understanding of the extra time required by cluster classes
- Support and compensation for extra time required by cluster classes
- Release time for participation in clusters
- More writing tutors
- Money for field trips

- A number of respondents indicated they found university, school and department support to be satisfactory.

Promotion and Tenure

Most respondents had no opinion on this matter. Some believed that teaching in the clusters had helped in the PTR process. A number of respondents noted that because they teach cluster courses, they owe their current employment to the cluster program.

Would you volunteer to teach in a cluster course?

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<td>Yes</td>
<td>39%</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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65% of respondents would volunteer to teach Upper Division GE?

However, of that group 40% (or 26% of total respondents), while willing to volunteer for Upper Division GE, would not volunteer for clusters.

Additional Comments on GE Program (themes)

- Create upper division math and science requirements
- Go back to old system
- Clusters should be optional
- Faculty should do more to make clusters work
- Give students more freedom
- Clusters hurt recruitment
Chair’s Summary

Any comments here must be seen as extremely provisional as key pieces of information are not yet available. These include the independent reviewer report, the summary of the focus discussion groups, and various data regarding student retention, and skills improvement.

The comments here pertain only to what CIC was able to learn during the 2001-2 academic year. It will be up to the 2002-3 iteration of CIC to determine how the information summarized here fits with the outstanding information that should be available by the Fall of 2002.

The program has certainly had successes. Many faculty members report that students form stronger communities in the cluster program. Many also report that they enjoyed working with other faculty members in developing and teaching. The program helps students progress towards their degree in a more timely fashion.

Without doubt, however, the consistent theme of the GE Hearings with Faculty, Students, and Chairs was that the current GE package suffers from serious defects. The central problematic chain seems to be as follows: students dislike the clusters because they are overly structured and deny students much freedom in course selection. The resentment that results, as well as the age segregation created by the cohort model, creates “anti-learning communities” in which students exhibit disaffected high school behavior—sometimes in the extreme.

Faced with such a classroom environment, many faculty have recoiled from what they perceive to be a defective program. A number of faculty members describe teaching in the clusters as the “worst teaching experience of my life.” Distressingly, a number tenured faculty members have withdrawn from the clusters. Indeed, in the hearing with department chairs, one chair, only “half jokingly,” commented that one of the perks of being chair was his ability to schedule himself out of the clusters.

The clusters are thus increasingly taught by lecturers or tenure track faculty who have no choice but to teach the courses assigned to them. According to the faculty survey, only 39% of respondents would be willing to volunteer to teach cluster classes.

The open hearings were poorly attended so one must be careful with the limited sample. However, the opinions expressed in those hearings seem confirmed by the faculty survey to which 98 faculty members responded. As one can see from the survey summaries, 60% of respondents hold a negative or mixed overall opinion of the cluster system.

Still, the majority sentiment seems to be against discontinuing of the program. The cluster program is, one must admit, an experimental program—one that is bound to have difficulties that must be overcome. For most faculty members, the program needs, and is worth, repairing.
Without doubt, the most controversial aspect of the GE program is the lower division cluster or “learning community” program. However, the surveys also uncovered a number of themes relating to the upper division GE as well. These include upper division GE requirements for science and mathematics.

There were also a number of governance issues raised by the review. Both the faculty hearing and survey indicate that many faculty members are extremely troubled by the process by which courses are evaluated and approved for the GE program—especially the lower division. A distressing number of surveys indicate that respondents believe that GE is nothing more than an “pork barrel” FTES project. They criticized the fighting amongst the schools and/or feel marginalized from participation in GE.

Again, it is the work of the 2002-3 CIC to determine the best ways to address these problems. Clearly though, the student alienation and the disaffected behavior that follows is the lynchpin of the program’s difficulties. Reforms of the program (and there certainly should be reforms) must address this issue above all else.

During the year, a number of potential revisions of the program were proposed. These included:

- Offer the GS class only in the fall of the freshman, not all three quarters
- Make the clusters optional
- Make clusters optional for the Sophomore year
- Make clusters two instead of three quarters and combine them with a list of “free standing” GE courses
- Discontinue the program
- Develop an Honor’s cluster
- Increase resource support and only offer small sections
- Each department should offer three sections of each cluster course a year to facilitate more team teaching

Which revisions are the best (and this is hardly an exhaustive list) will be decided by the 2002-3 CIC and Academic Senate.

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