TO: Executive Committee of the Academic Senate
FROM: Committee on Instruction and Curriculum
SUBJECT: Review of CSU General Education Breadth Requirements, 2005-06
PURPOSE: For Information to the Executive Committee
ACTION REQUESTED: No action requested

CIC was requested to review the structure of the CSU General Education Breadth Requirements as described in EO 595. In our Oct. 17 meeting, we had a lengthy discussion where several proposals and suggestions were discussed (with a wide variety of opinions) and two specific recommendations were passed by a majority vote.

1. There was general agreement that the Lifelong Understanding (Area E) requirement is poorly defined and should be eliminated or replaced.

2. CIC passed (8/1/1) a recommendation to replace the Lifelong Understanding requirement with a requirement for an interdisciplinary course, in the spirit of E.O. 595, Section II.A.5 which asks campuses to consider “the possibility of incorporating integrative courses, especially at the upper division level, which feature the interrelationships among disciplines within and across traditional G.E. categories.” The suggestions about this course indicated that it could be a stand-alone interdisciplinary course or could be fulfilled as an overlay on another GE course.

3. CIC passed (8/0/2) a recommendation to require a course on diverse cultural groups and women in the spirit of E.O. 595. Section V, paragraph 5 states that GE courses “should recognize the contributions to knowledge and civilization that have been made by members of diverse cultural groups and by women.” This is already a GE requirement at CSUEB and has worked very well for our students. The Cultural Groups/Women GE requirement may be satisfied as an overlay on another GE course.

4. There was general agreement that the General Education Breadth Requirements should continue to be organized along the traditional learning areas (Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences) and Skills area (Area A).
5. There was general agreement that every General Education course should be required to incorporate at least a subset of the skills defined in E.O 595 Section III.A. These skills include the “ability to think clearly and logically, to find information and examine it critically, to communicate orally and in writing, and to reason quantitatively.” Skills requirements have been incorporated into the General Education learning outcomes at CSUEB. These learning outcomes (and their skills requirements) are used to select courses for application to General Education and to develop assessment of student learning.

6. There was general agreement that the CSU should compare the GE Breadth Requirements with comparable institutions.

7. There was general agreement that the lower division Quantitative Reasoning requirement represents a skill analogous to Oral Communication and Written Communication. Currently, the Quantitative Reasoning requirement is considered to be part of Area B in the Natural Sciences. Mathematical skills are not exclusive to the Natural Sciences and are necessary for a wide variety of other fields including the Social Sciences and Business. Quantitative Reasoning should be placed in Area A and could be renamed “Foundational Skills.” As an alternative, Quantitative Reasoning could be separated as its own category in the General Education matrix. If this suggestion were adopted by the CSU, the committee further agreed that the required units in the major learning areas Natural Sciences (Area B), Humanities (Area C) and Social Sciences (Area D) should be equal.

8. There was a suggestion that campuses should be encouraged to double count GE courses and the State Code requirement in U.S. History and Institutions. This issue was controversial and there was no agreement. Arguments in favor include that it would streamline the GE program and reduce the overall number of units that students would have to complete outside their major requirements. In addition, many or most transfer students to the CSU complete the Code requirement as part of their GE programs at other institutions but native CSU students may not be able to double count these courses. Already, many CSU campuses permit double counting of GE courses and the Code requirement. Arguments against the suggestion include the idea that double counting would limit the number of other Humanities and Social Science courses that students would take as part of GE, resulting in decreased student learning opportunities in the Humanities and Social Sciences. There was also the suggestion that those campuses that currently allow double counting have more GE requirements than CSUEB, effectively compensating for the decreased learning opportunities that result from double counting. Lastly, there was the argument that double counting GE and Code requirement courses would devastate the FTES of smaller Humanities and Social Science Departments.

9. There was also a suggestion that the number of units in the CSU GE Breadth Requirements should not be increased. This issue was also controversial with arguments made for and against increasing GE Breadth Requirements.