

# UAC's thoughts on the new Gen Ed Task Force proposed by the SEC, January 2010

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Subject UAC's thoughts on the new Gen Ed Task Force proposed by the SEC, January 2010

Hi, all. Here is my summary, subject, as ever, to your corrections!!

Gail, please forward this to the full SEC, including me, so I get to see any responses. Thanks! j

UAC's comments for the Task Force on the new 7/10ths gen eds, 1/27/2010, summarized by Joan Savitt.

## **UAC asks that the membership of the task force pay attention to the points below.**

**TIME AND PURPOSE: Should this not be a deliberative process ???** If one of the goals of the rules for GenEds, as reflected on the SUNY-wide transcript supplement which breaks out which categories have been satisfied, is to simplify the transfer process, particularly for CC students to 4-year SUNYs, then these changes are potentially massive at both the CC end and at UA's. We need to be aware of how the CCs are advising their students. We have to be clear on what we *are* requiring, especially if we do not make immediate changes. (The CCs better not be telling their students that 7/10 is going to be the rule at UA!) It is probably not wise to think about changing all of this in 3 months. Should we not take more time than that to implement changes??

**RETHINKING WHAT MAKES A UA DEGREE:** now that we have the flexibility to change the options that are available to students, shouldn't we **rethink what we want our students to know**? For example, we could reduce categories entirely; we could think about categories and options within groups, in a manner similar to what major departments do with their electives; we could create a series of freshman seminars... We could also decide to increase depth or breadth by making some of the requirements at a higher level (300-level rather than 100- or 200-level coursework).

**RETHINKING / AFFIRMING WHETHER THESE ARE "LOWER DIVISION" GEN EDS OR NOT:** we already are saying that a student should be considering gen ed as part of a 4-year process, not just a set of requirements to be met during the first two years, all the while blocking seniors from early registering for 100-level courses. Should we now be thinking about what areas should be completed at the upper-division level, as the upper-level writing requirement is now? Should we not also be thinking about which requirements are basic and must be done early on, such as information literacy?

**REINSTATING THE POLICY THAT TRANSFER STUDENTS WITH COMPLETED AA OR AS DEGREES BE LOWER-DIVISION GEN ED EXEMPT:** we now have the flexibility to bring back this policy, which we used to have. **This could be brought back even before any other changes were made.**

**WRITING REQUIREMENT:** perhaps the writing program proposal can be reworked to mesh with the gen eds now? We should also be looking at the recommendations of the FYE taskforce, because their those might now become feasible, esp with regard to crossing disciplinary areas. We might want to be innovative in how we meet this requirement.

**CONSIDERATION OF CURRENT AND FUTURE PRESSURES FOR COURSE SEATS:** there should be updated data on seats offered vs. seats taken to see where the pressures are now. For example, are seniors waiting to take some GenEds now because they elect to do that or because they didn't have a chance to get into those classes before?

**CONSIDERATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN AND THE GRADUATE PROGRAMS' REVIEW:** several groups have already given serious consideration to issues that impact departments. Pay attention to their work.

**CLASS SIZE AND SECTION STAFFING:** since GAs and part-time faculty often teach Gen Eds, and their numbers are being cut back, there might be larger or fewer classes. Some faculty will retire: what kinds of hires will be made to replace them? What role will the full-time faculty play in teaching these courses? How will this affect their teaching loads?

**THE FALL, 2010 SCHEDULE IS ALMOST DONE AS WE WRITE THIS!** And the DARS system will need a serious reworking.

**RECRUITMENT AND STUDENT ACCEPTANCES:** by April/May, students will be making their decisions where to go. What will we be telling them?

**THE WORLD WITHIN REACH:** how will our GenEds mesh with our mission and motto? How will UA present itself to the world?

**DISPARITIES:** policies that block the transfer of credits impact the time to degree. Some policies work in favor of transfers, and others in favor of students who start as frosh here. For example, GenEds satisfied at other SUNY schools satisfy

GenEds here, even if they do not match (e.g., 1 science course vs. 2, etc.), but UA made this determination, and could change it if we wished to stiffen our requirements in certain areas. Courses with grades below C don't transfer, and although they may count for checking off a GenEd category, they do not count toward the minimum of 30 gen ed credits or the 120 credits required for a degree, while courses with D- grades earned at UA, in almost all categories, satisfy the category and count as credits toward the 30 and the 120.

**SUNY PROVOST'S DETERMINATIONS OF WHAT WOULD SATISFY GEN EDS:** the determination that an 85 on a Regents' exam would satisfy a category, vs. an 80 which UA might have preferred, could perhaps be changed at this time, even before any categories themselves were reworked, if we asked. We might also be thinking about what else students who do not take Regents' exams might be able to present that would meet the spirit of these rules.

**PRIOR SYSTEM- WIDE WORK DONE ON GEN EDS:** there was a group made up of representatives of the 4-year SUNYs and the CCs that worked for over two years to devise a set of system-wide GenEds that produced a set accepted by all campuses and by their then current academic vice presidents. It was passed by the Faculty Senate and by the CC's governance group as well, but the chancellor did not sign the bill, and then the trustees made up the current set of GenEds which we have had for the past 10 years. It is available for review and might be helpful.

**UAC recommends that the TF contain representatives from the following areas:** UAC itself, and its Gen Ed Committee; advisement services; the GE assessment group; CAS; administrative offices with responsibility for GE; admissions; people who schedule courses and deal with questions of seat issues and classroom space; librarians, as info lit is one of the required areas; representatives of the department chair, who do the scheduling at the departmental level; and FACULTY in general!

**Possible members of the TF :**

Martin Hildebrand, representing UAC, Gen Ed, and able to speak to questions about the math requirement. [Martin is willing to serve if asked.]

Trudi Jacobson, Head of User Education, for her input on the IT component of Gen Ed. (Trudi served on UAC in the past.) [We do not know whether Trudi would accept this or not.]

jns

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