

4-9-1979

Amendment and addition to General Education Program

The College at Brockport, College Senate

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Routing #2178-79 -79

Resolution #16
1978-1979

Amendment and Addition to General
Education Program

TO: PRESIDENT ALBERT W. BROWN

FROM: THE FACULTY SENATE

Meeting on 4/9/79 & 4/23/79
(Date)

RE: XX I. Formal Resolution (Act of Determination)
II. Recommendation (Urging the fitness of)
III. Other (Notice, Request, Report, etc.)

SUBJECT: **General Education Program**

(See Attached)

Signed _____ Date Sent 4/30/79

(For the Senate)

..... Charles Jenkins, President, Faculty Senate

TO: THE FACULTY SENATE

FROM: PRESIDENT ALBERT W. BROWN

RE: I. DECISION AND ACTION TAKEN ON FORMAL RESOLUTION

*Ad. C 5/24/79 approved in
principle, implementation, provisions to
be prepared by Fac. Sen.*

(a) Accepted. Effective Date May 24, 1979

b. Referred for discussion with the Faculty Senate on _____

c. Unacceptable for the reasons contained in the attached explanation

II., III. a. Received and acknowledged

b. Comment: Approves Resolution #20 as amended by #21.

DISTRIBUTION: Vice Presidents: Janis, Burke, Miller, Smith, Nolan

Others as identified: Fac. Sen.

Distribution Date: _____

Signed: AWB
(President of the College)

Date Received by the Senate: JUN 4, 1979

Resolution #21, 1978-89

General Education Program

Faculty Senate Meeting 4/9/79

Amendment to General Education Program, p.5, last paragraph preceding the heading "General Education Curriculum":

The following requirements for the baccalaureate degree shall be completed in place of the present Communication Arts and Liberal Arts Core Distribution requirements at such time and for such entering students as the Coordinating Committee for General Education shall determine, not to be implemented later than Fall Semester, 1980. The Coordinating Committee has the responsibility of determining when the proposal will be implemented and for what entering students, and these determinations must be made by Fall Semester, 1980.

Faculty Senate Meeting 4/23/79

Be it resolved that the General Education Coordinating Committee will recommend to the Faculty Senate policies for the implementation of the General Education Program.

Routing #20 78-79 3-79

General Education Program

TO: PRESIDENT ALBERT W. BROWN

FROM: THE FACULTY SENATE

Meeting on April 9, 1979
(Date)

RE: XX I. Formal Resolution (Act of Determination)
II. Recommendation (Urging the fitness of)
III. Other (Notice, Request, Report, etc.)

SUBJECT: **General Education Program**

(see attached)

Signed _____ Date Sent 4/9/79
(For the Senate)

..... Charles Jenkins, President, Faculty Senate

TO: THE FACULTY SENATE

FROM: PRESIDENT ALBERT W. BROWN

RE: I. DECISION AND ACTION TAKEN ON FORMAL RESOLUTION

- a. Accepted. Effective Date May 24, 1979 (See Res #21 for amendment)
- b. Deferred for discussion with the Faculty Senate on May 7, 1979
- c. Unacceptable for the reasons contained in the attached explanation

II., III. a. Received and acknowledged

b. Comment: *general education committee with V.P. Farris and appropriate staff will respond to the specific issues raised on 4/19/79 at this time*

DISTRIBUTION: Vice Presidents: _____

Others as identified: _____

Distribution Date: _____

Signed: awB
(President of the College)

Date Received by the Senate: 4/23/79

6/1/79

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Introduction

During the fall of 1976 the College at Brockport initiated a comprehensive review of its undergraduate general education program. The Task Force of 1976-77 articulated a set of general goals for this element of the curriculum and found Brockport's present Liberal Arts Core Requirement "seriously deficient" as a means of achieving those educational purposes. The 1977-78 Task Force continued the review process with the aim of developing a program more likely to achieve the goals and purposes of general education. In undertaking this effort the Task Force operated within a set of parameters which included the following:

1. The program will address the goals of general education as formulated by the 1976-77 Task Force.
2. The program will take account of the skills, knowledge, and habits of mind which the students have acquired prior to their entry at Brockport.
3. The program will address the problem of transfer student articulation.
4. The program will address itself to the question of cognitive skills - verbal and computational.
5. In number of hours the program will not impinge on any present concentrations.
6. The program will not require any additional resources beyond those currently available to the institution. Nor will the resources needed for the proposed program impede the viability of the academic concentrations.
7. The curriculum of the proposed program will have its own integrity and identity.

In the fall of 1978 three subcommittees were appointed by the liaison committee to review, develop, and make recommendations to the Undergraduate Academic Policies Committee of the Faculty Senate. This committee reviewed and compiled the following recommendation for a change in policy.

Statement on Goals

The general education component of the undergraduate degree program, as distinct from the concentration portion of the college experience, has two distinguishing features. The first is its constituency, for a general education experience should be required in some form of all Brockport students. It is that portion of the undergraduate curriculum which includes a certain commonality of experience and helps to define the extent and nature of the intellectual community. Thus the importance, indeed the centrality, of general education to Brockport's Statement of Mission is affirmed.

Secondly a general education program is distinguished by its scope. It is broadly representative of major areas of learning rather than narrowly specialized. While the "free elective" portion of the general education program can be explicitly tailored to individual student needs and interests, the "core" portion of a general education program focuses on those skills and understandings most essential for lifelong learning, a common citizenship, and active, productive participation

in society. And while the major field aims more at disciplinary competence and/or occupational preparation, general education is more concerned with enabling students to view their concentration and themselves in larger and more meaningful contexts.

The following goals command wide assent and embody a variety of curricular implications. They are listed in no necessary order of priority.

Goal I: The general education program should focus explicitly on skill development of at least two types. There are first those general intellectual skills of problem identification, analysis, and solution; and secondly, communication skills (verbal and non-verbal modes). Rationale: This may in fact be one of the more important ways in which the general education curriculum can contribute to the concentration and to the career goals of our students, for these are skills that are useful, indeed essential, in almost any academic major and vocational pursuit.

Goal II: The general education program should help produce broadly educated persons by exposing them to "ways of knowing" and "modes of inquiry" which have been found useful in comprehending our universe and expressing insight and feelings about it. Rationale: Such breadth of exposure should help students become aware of the extent and limits of their knowledge, and the strengths and limitations of the various methods of inquiry available.

Goal III: The general education program should enable students to recognize the contribution of a variety of disciplines to the understanding of a topic. Rationale: If a "vision of the whole" is no longer possible for 20th century man, it should be feasible to encourage "wholistic thinking" in limited areas and thus disclose something of the complexity of the world.

Goal IV: The general education program should aim, where appropriate, at developing students' capacity to think critically and creatively about the moral and ethical implications of the subjects they study. Rationale: This is a particularly important ability in a modern democratic and pluralistic society where individual alternatives are so many and pressing social choices, at least in part, are a matter of citizen input.

Goal V: The general education program should work toward enhancing our students' sophistication and awareness of the world and provide them with the ideas and knowledge necessary for its understanding. Rationale: These are qualities necessary for informed persons to cope with the competing sources of information, a culturally plural society and an international context which increasingly impinges on our national life.

Goal VI: The general education program should attempt to serve as an intellectual focal point for the college community and an arena of common discourse and purpose for all faculty members and students. Rationale: A general education program to which many people contribute might help restore, at least in part, a sense of common endeavour.

Goal VII: The general education program should provide students with an opportunity to explore a variety of fields, preparatory to making an occupational commitment. Rationale: Occupational choices are among the most critical and far reaching personal and moral choices persons must make during their lifetimes.

Goal VIII: The general education program should provide students with the opportunity to obtain knowledge and develop skills contributing to the satisfying enjoyment of leisure. Rationale: The winning of leisure time for personal development and enjoyment has been one of the great goals of our civilization, being deeply rooted in our concept of the requirements of a good life and the development of well-rounded persons.

Goal IX: The general education program should introduce students to the ideals and standards of excellence, of creative endeavor, of scholarship and service - by providing them with opportunities to engage in such activities by personal association with scholars. Rationale: An appreciation of the ideals of scholarship, e.g., impartiality, accuracy, rationality, both for their sakes and for the sakes of consequent behavior are the universally recognized hallmarks of educated persons.

Rationale for Change

Following its deliberations on the goals of a general education program, the Task Force undertook a review of the present general curriculum in an effort to determine the extent to which current efforts support these goals. In this review, the Task Force focused on the existing Liberal Arts Core Requirements (LACR). While the core is not entirely synonymous with general education as defined by the Task Force (core and electives), it is, however, the only curricular structure in the general education area subject to programmatic evaluation. Our findings are presented in the following observations:

A. Current Liberal Arts Core Requirements lack an adequate rationale.

A survey of existing literature disclosed no clearly identified goals for the core curriculum. The 1975-76 Campus Master Plan does contain statements which appear to address many of those principles embodied in the Task Force goals. However, neither the Undergraduate Academic Policies Handbook nor the 1975-76 Campus Master Plan provide any compelling explanation of what the college expects of its students in the core portion of their program. We believe that the goals of general education need to be stated succinctly, cogently, and frequently if our students are to take this element of their education with the seriousness it deserves. The lack of such an articulated rationale doubtless enhances student perceptions of the core as a series of the hurdles to be endured or evaded while getting on with the more serious business of their concentrations.

B. Present Liberal Arts Core Requirements do not substantially satisfy the general education goals established by the Task Force.

1. The first deficiency involves Goal I and the question of skill development. While the present requirements demand completion of two courses in Communication Skills, they do not assure any proficiency in computational skills,

an essential part of effective communication. And while individual courses may address the skills of problem identification, analysis and solution, the present LACR does not establish these skills as a necessary focus on a general education program.

2. The LACR does not foster the kind of intellectual community to which Goal VI is directed nor the interdisciplinary understandings envisaged in Goal III. During the current semester, the college offered over 600 courses that satisfied LACR requirements. This "smorgasboard" approach to general education lacks philosophical integrity, for it permits an almost infinite number of cores to be fashioned haphazardly from a multitude of disciplinary courses by the students as they make their individual ways through college. Thus there is seldom generated any sense of educational community, any recognition of the common frontiers of learning or any perception of the mutual concerns shared by liberally educated men and women. Indeed, the present LACR appears to have been created with no reference at all to the goal of building an educational community, and this, we believe, is one of its most serious weaknesses.

3. The LACR lacks any explicit concern for the moral and ethical dimensions of intellectual inquiry highlighted in Goal IV. Recent events in our nation's history have generated a renewed demand that education go beyond the conveyance of facts and technology by creating an awareness of the "moral choices" that confront society and the individuals who comprise it. With this demand the committee is in agreement. We do not, of course suggest that any particular ethical or moral system be inculcated but simply urge that students be persistently reminded of the moral dimensions to practically everything they study. While individual courses no doubt address these issues, the core requirements do not seem to have been constructed with this goal in mind.

4. The Task Force has concluded that the general education portion of the undergraduate program should have a certain distinctive character and an integrity of its own. The current LACR, however, affords no such distinctiveness or integrity to the core curriculum. Nowhere is there an effort to distinguish between courses designed for specific major or career goals and those more appropriate for general education. Thus while the handbook on Undergraduate Academic Policies urges students to complete their core by the end of the Sophomore year, it advises those who have not done so to use upper level courses for their core. A sampling of May, 1976 Brockport graduates suggests that a substantial number of our students do in fact delay completion of their core, including communication courses, until their Senior year. We question whether the "broad liberal arts education to which the core is devoted can be adequately ensured through the taking of 9 courses chosen from a menu of over 600 offerings which vary widely in their purpose, clientele, and level of presentation. Anything is possible within such a system, but very little, except distribution, is ensured.

C. Current core requirements depend for their effectiveness on thorough advisement, which is not provided for and certainly not required for our students.

With a maximum of choice, the college furnishes a minimum of guidance for the making of wise curricular decisions. It is here that the system is at its weakest for unless students actively seek - and receive - competent advice, they can

B. Cognitive Skills

1. This component shall involve instruction in two areas: a) communication skills, and b) quantitative skills. This instruction will be based on the objectives for Cognitive Skills appended. Upon entrance to Brockport the level of each student's skills in these two areas will be evaluated. On the basis of this evaluation, the student will be placed in one of the following levels in each area:
 - A level - the student needs support from the Learning Skills Center and/or preparatory courses before and/or in addition to registration in appropriate Level B course(s).
 - B level - the student should take the course designed to develop the competencies in the area.
 - C level - (Quantitative Skills only) the student should take one of a designated list of courses designed to reinforce the competencies in that area.
 - D level - the student may waive the requirement by passing a competency-based exam in the area.
2. Level B courses shall be designated as follows:
 - a. Communication Skills I (3 credits) will involve instruction in basic expository writing and critical reasoning skills.
 - b. Communication Skills II (3 credits) will reinforce the skills addressed in CS. I and initiate instruction in oral communication skills, non-verbal communication skills and media analysis.
 - c. Quantitative Skills (3 credits) will involve instruction in mathematical skills and data analysis.
3. Level B courses will be housed in the department best suited to coordinate instruction in that area. Such departments will house and develop courses in their area subject to approval by the Coordinating Committee for General Education. However, teaching of Cognitive Skills courses will be open to all qualified faculty, subject to the approval of the General Education Coordinating Committee and the department housing the course. The housing department will provide inservice support to all faculty teaching the skills course. FTE credits will remain with the department of origin of the individual faculty member.
4. Competency-based final examinations will be developed for each of the Level B and C courses and will be common to all sections of the courses. Students eligible to test out of either of the Communications Skills or Quantitative Skills areas (Level D) will take the final exam(s) relevant to that area. The student is required to pass competency-based final examinations for Level B and C courses.

C. Breadth Component: 24 credits minimum

The following conditions will govern this component of the general education program.

1. Students will be required to complete eight (8) courses in this component, two courses in each of the following categories:
 - a. Arts
 - b. Humanities
 - c. Social Sciences
 - d. Natural Sciences and Mathematics
2. All courses in this component shall explore the modes of inquiry and basic organizing principles characteristic of the disciplines or area involved. Each course shall attempt to compare the issues it addresses, the methods it employs and the perspectives it generates to those of other areas or disciplines.
3. Each course in this component should seek both to exemplify and to inculcate the ideals and standards of academic excellence.
4. All courses in the breadth component will be taught in such a manner as to afford opportunity for student discussion and writing integral to the course and subject to qualitative evaluation. Normally this will require a limitation of enrollment.
5. Within each area, no more than one course may be taken from a single curricular unit.
6. In multi-section courses, it is to be expected that the several sections may differ in emphasis and choice of content, though all sections of a single course should share a set of explicit educational goals, explore a range of common issues, and seek to develop a set of similar skills.
7. Each curricular unit may offer a maximum of four courses in this component and may apply to have a particular course listed in any one of the four areas indicated. Additional interdisciplinary courses may be approved by the General Education Coordinating Committee.
8. At least one course in the Natural Sciences and Mathematics area requirement must include substantial laboratory or field experience.
9. At least one course in the Fine Arts area requirement must include substantial studio experience, with an emphasis on the integration of practice and theory.
10. All courses in this component shall be at least three credit hours.
11. All courses in this component shall be submitted to and approved by the Coordinating Committee of the General Education Program on the basis of criteria established herein.

progress from Freshmen Summer Orientation to Senior Check-Out without the benefit of counsel. The result could be - and the Task Force believes it often is - a distortion or evasion of the purposes of the Master Plan and the Goals of the Task Force. There is no doubt that many students graduate each year with well-constructed "cores" and electives, in addition to a well-chosen major to fit their career goals. But the Task Force believes this happens in spite of rather than because of the operations of the present system. In short, the present system lacks an adequate enforcement mechanism.

On the basis of these observations, it is our conclusion that the current core requirements at Brockport are seriously deficient as a means of providing a general education to our students.

General Education Curriculum

A. The Dimensions of Liberal Education

1. Students receive one credit for this component of the program. One credit reflects the amount of time students meet with their mentor/advisor, and the amount of time students devote to the substantive course content.
2. All entering full time Freshmen must enroll in this course during their first semester. (MAP students may substitute MAP 380 Life Planning for the Returning Adult Student.)
3. Mentor/advisors and their students should examine the nature, purposes, and scope of a liberal education. Among those areas that could be considered are: the personal and social value of a liberal education in the last quarter of the 20th century; the goals of a liberal education; the history and future of liberal education; and the relationship between a liberal education and the curriculum. This would provide an element of commonality and intellectual focus for the students.
4. Curricular units may offer sections designated to demonstrate the relationship between the curricular area and a liberal education in addition to #3 above.
5. Grading will be pass or fail (S/U). Grading will be based on the substantive content of the course and may be determined by regularly scheduled examinations, essays, assignments, etc. as specified by individual instructors.
6. The mentor/advisor will continue to serve as the student's academic advisor until the student secures a major advisor. The mentor/advisor will help students construct coherent programs, relevant to the students' needs, and monitor student progress during the Freshman year.
7. In addition, the instructor will be responsible for introducing students to the wide variety of available campus and community facilities (library, counseling center, career guidance center, etc.).
8. Participation in this component of the program is open to all faculty members and to any other member of the professional community with relevant qualifications.

D. Contemporary Issues Component: 3 credits

1. Courses in this component shall focus explicitly on major issues or problems of contemporary significance. Such courses shall provide the historical and theoretical background necessary for informed judgments. They shall work toward enhancing students' abilities to identify relevant elements of enduring human significance, to understand various and perhaps conflicting views on the subject and their different value premises, and to formulate and articulate in a rational manner their own positions on controversial matters.

2. Courses in this component shall normally be taken in the Junior or Senior year and bear upper level credit. This will serve to extend the general education function into the final two years of the undergraduate experience.

3. Courses in this component shall be taught in such a way as to afford a maximum opportunity for student participation.