

**General Education  
at California State University San Bernardino**

**REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on an analysis of campus documents  
and interviews with faculty, administrators and students.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Our comments on the General Education program at CSUSB are based on the reading of materials provided by the campus (campus catalog, WASC reports, General Education Committee materials, etc.) and on the information gleaned from a two-day site visit that was devoted to meeting with campus constituent groups (interested faculty, G. E. committee, university administrators, including the University President, Dr. Tony Evans; community college transfer personnel). Our general impressions from a digestion of the information from the printed material provided and the site visit are very positive. Clearly, the faculty, administrators, and staff at CSUSB are committed to providing students with a well reasoned and academically defensible program. There is as well a sincere commitment to on-going review with both internal and external reviewers. These make the campus unique in many respects from other CSU institutions.

The present structure of the General Education Program at California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) was approved by the faculty in the spring of 1987, with some further modifications incorporated in subsequent years. The enabling provisions in the State of California Education Code section of Title V, article five's provisions in paragraphs 40404 "United States History, Constitution and American Ideals," and the four specific General Education paragraphs 40405 and 40405.1-3, govern all CSU General Education programs. CSU Chancellors Office Executive Orders signed by Chancellors Dumke and Reynolds covering these sections: EO#338 (General Education-Breadth Requirements), EO#342 (G. E. Certification), and EO# 405 (U. S. History, Constitution and American Ideals), further explain these Code sections. Additionally, they provide CSU campuses with implementation guidance. The intent of the General Education reforms implemented by these Executive Orders and the California Education Code was to provide students in the California State University with an integrated and coherent program that was sufficiently different from prior programs. Thus, new courses would have to be designed to meet the provisions of the program. The issues of Gender, race, ethnicity, global and multicultural perspectives would all have to

be infused into this part of the curriculum in such a way that these content areas would not be considered simply as add-ons. The Chancellor's Office along with the State-wide Academic Senate created a new General Education committee that would serve as the review committee for all General Education programs developed on the CSU campuses to meet the General Education reforms. Dr. Carl Waggoner from CSUSB served on the committee for a number of years. One of the underlying premises of the curricular reform was that the old idea of a smorgasbord approach to General Education and the use of existing "introduction" to specific discipline courses would be discouraged.

Obviously, the success of the curricular reform and the change in attitude it was to foster has been limited in the fifteen years since the implementation of EO # 338 (October 29, 1980). While there were several areas of ambiguity in the State Education Code sections governing both the United States History and Government requirement and the so-called "integrated being" section of the General Education requirements, neither the CSU Chancellor's Office, System-wide Executive Orders, nor the State-wide General Education review committee were able to provide clarification. Thus each CSU campus and the 106 community colleges have used widely differing methods of meeting these requirements. Some areas of confusion have been resolved through direct negotiations between CSU campuses and feeder community colleges, while many others have not, thereby creating varying degrees of confusion as to what exactly does the "integrated being" area, for example, require in terms of specific course work. Also, many CSU campuses include the #40404 section requirements as part of the overall General Education requirements with no additional course units added (Cf. Cal Poly Pomona's program) while others such as CSUSB add an additional unit requirement for this degree component. Such decisions are within the competency of each CSU campus.

The CSUSB program was designed and implemented in the midst of an era of widespread national concern with strengthening general education in the college curriculum, a concern addressed over the past decade by as many as 90 per cent of senior level colleges and universities in the United States. Thus, while the program was shaped to meet California State University standards and directives for general education, the CSUSB program also functions in a context of new national emphasis on undergraduate education. This evaluation report examines the program in the context of national trends and directions in strengthening undergraduate education. The evaluation we provide does not take the CSU mandates as either an absolute constraint or as a sufficient framework for general education and at points suggests directions that may be challenging to reconcile with the CSU mandate. Over time, CSUSB faculty and administrators may find that it makes sense to initiate an effort to update the CSU system framework for general education so that CSUSB, in moving forward to strengthen its own program, will not be hindered by assumptions about general education that were articulated over a decade ago and themselves stand in need of fresh conceptualizations.

## **Organization of the Report**

This report is divided into three parts. The first part assesses the strengths of the CSUSB program design, which are considerable. While any program nearly a decade old requires rethinking both to correct problems in implementation and to adapt to changing expectations, many aspects of this program were well-designed at the outset and should

be sustained even as the program as a whole is strengthened. This part of the report also suggests ways of building on these program strengths to create a more coherent and powerful overall program.

The second part of this report notes problems and weaknesses in the administration of the GE program. These are primarily problems of implementation. Despite a well-conceived and conscientiously implemented review system put in place as part of the current GE program, there are obvious fault lines between intention and praxis in the program that clearly need redress. Addressing these issues requires stronger GE leadership and a clearer connection between faculty and administrative leadership for effective general education.

The third part of the report proposes modifications in the conceptualization of the program. For example, in the multicultural/gender area, the campus, ahead of its time when the current requirements were developed, needs to rethink and clarify the multiple purposes of this requirement in light of several years of campus experience and new thinking at the national level. Again at the level of conceptualization, the campus needs to think fresh about what upper level general education requirements are supposed to accomplish educationally, about their purposes in the context of a campus whose students increasingly take entry level general education elsewhere, and about how best to implement advanced general education. This part of the report suggests that faculty give fresh attention to the relations between majors and advanced general education so that students taking junior and senior level work at CSUSB will view general education as an integral part of their advanced work, not a distraction from it.

Finally, in this section of the report, we make suggestions about ways of assessing long-term outcomes from general education requirements. Such assessment requires changes in the conceptual framework for general education.

## **PART I**

### **The Current General Education Program: Educational Vision, Coherence and Vitality**

On paper, the general education program established at CSUSB was, at the time of its approval by the faculty, a design in the forefront of national models for general education. It still embodies standards and approaches that many other institutions have not yet achieved. This report will make many recommendations for improvement and fundamental change. But because this is an impressive program, revisions should seek, at least in part, to build on current strengths. These include:

**1) The scope and comprehensiveness of the program.** In keeping with CSUSB's original mission as a liberal arts institution, the GE program is one of the most extensive in the state system. It is also a substantial program by national standards, distinctive for a) upper level requirements in general education and b) for the scope and clarity of its requirements across the humanities, social sciences and sciences. The scale and comprehensiveness of the program impressively signal that the campus values students' preparation for all aspects of their lives in society, as well as their development of the preprofessional knowledge and competence typically sought by American college students. The commitment to a comprehensive and challenging education that provides substantial and coherently framed educational experiences in a broad range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary arenas is a strength that should be sustained.

**2) The focus on students' analytical and communication skills.** While evidence from student assessments (noted in the WASC Accreditation Self-Study) suggests that much remains to be accomplished in bringing students to high levels of analytical and communications competence and performance, the present program already includes commendable features that ought to be extended and developed in future revisions. These include the recognition that writing, to be effective, should be taught in multiple courses, including advanced courses, and across-the-curriculum, not simply in general courses. The development of 495 courses in different departments and schools and the extensive effort to provide faculty preparation for teaching writing are all strong initiatives that should be continued.

The approaches taken in writing provide a general direction that can be fruitfully adopted for addressing other across-the-curriculum capabilities, including critical thinking, formal/ quantitative reasoning, and the use of technology in problem-solving and analysis. All these capabilities require practice over time for their development. With a good model for writing across-the-curriculum already in place, CSUSB can now develop comparable models for other essential analytical skills and abilities.

**3) The establishment of upper level, integrative capstone courses in the humanities, social sciences and sciences.** While later sections of this report are strongly critical of the way these courses have been implemented, advanced general education is an

emerging direction nationally and an arena in which the CSU system has been a leader. CSUSB's decision to require all students to take several integrative and interdisciplinary advanced courses is a path-breaking direction that ought to be more effectively conceived and implemented.

**4) The serious attempt to make multicultural education an integral part of all students' learning.** CSUSB students take dedicated courses that make multicultural/gender issues the focal point of the course and also are increasingly likely to find cultural diversity in a broad range of their course selections. While this campus has much more to accomplish in changing the curriculum to incorporate multiple cultural traditions and perspectives, it is still in the forefront of schools striving to meet this goal. Later sections of this report suggest new directions for multicultural and gender education. It is only possible to offer such proposals because many faculty members at CSUSB have already spent several years developing strong courses and strong faculty dialogues about diversity in the curriculum. This is a local strength on which the community as a whole can build.

**5) The first year seminars.** These seminars, introduced at CSUSB in 1992-93, were not part of the original general education program. But campus studies suggest that they have been effective in improving student retention and in providing orientation to the challenges of college learning. Faculty members should now review the relationship between these first year seminars and the purposes of the GE program. Minimally, these seminars should be strongly related to the ethos of the entire program and should be taught by persons who understand that ethos thoroughly. Ideally, the first year seminars should provide their own orientation to and practice of the critical thinking, writing, and communications skills emphasized in general education. Similarly, the 100B seminars offered to transfer students ought to provide a comparable transition to the values and emphases of the CSUSB GE program.

**6) The decision to make general education continuously self-monitoring and self-revising.** It is unusual to find a general education program that has put each of its component parts on a five-year review cycle with a time-certain deadline for review of the entire program. This design creates a context in which large parts of the faculty routinely are reminded of the goals of general education and receive feedback from their colleagues about course-specific progress and problems in achieving those goals. CSUSB should continue and build on this strong tradition of self-monitoring.

## PART II

### Implementation Problems in the Current Program

Notwithstanding the considerable strength of this program, conversations with faculty, administrators and students indicate that the GE program is less effective and less coherent in practice than might have been hoped or expected. Some of the issues are conceptual and those are discussed later in this document. But the core problems also reflect the somewhat piecemeal way in which the program has been implemented.

Listed here are some of the most salient difficulties:

**1) Student orientation and advising.** There is a striking gap between the intelligent thought that went into the design of this program and the almost total absence of compelling ways to describe the program's purposes to students. In practice, student compliance with this program is too often a matter of filling out forms, checking off items. Part of this is a matter of advising. While faculty are being asked to make certain their courses comply with GE criteria, the students often have little idea why they are even taking GE courses. CSUSB needs to create imaginative ways of telling them. More than that, students need guided opportunities to understand how taking a GE course—e.g., in multicultural/gender studies—relates to their long-term interests. The campus needs to rethink its advising program from stem to stern, and to develop compelling ways of helping students envision the purposes and the benefits of the requirements they are expected to fulfill. This is much more than a matter of increasing the effectiveness of one-on-one consultations, although both the quantity and quality of individual advising are problems for many students. CSUSB faces two important challenges in implementing general education which are increasingly common, but which only a handful of institutions handle well. The first is designing advising that acknowledges the situational diversity of the student body in relation to the common requirements of the GE program. The student body is predominantly comprised of transfer students, some of whom come in with GE already certified (but with upper level requirements still to complete); some of whom still have GE requirements to fulfill. Only a few hundred students actually take the GE program in full as the campus has designed it.

Rethinking advising in relation to GE means, at a minimum, thinking differentially about the needs of these differing categories of students and providing targeted advising for each of them. The suggested rethinking needs to take into account other features of these students' circumstances. Most work; many are older; many take several years to complete college. This means that students' loose connections to the campus and its requirements are integral to the advising context. Advising should be structured in ways that helps students periodically reassess and recommit to the framework in which they are pursuing their education.

Helping students recommit to the framework means, in turn, creating processes that identify connections between what the institution values and the students' own goals and objectives. CSUSB has not imposed its GE program arbitrarily. The GE program reflects considered faculty judgment about the kinds of learning that matter in society, in professional roles and in personal life. Advising should seek to help students make the

connections between what they are studying and competence in external arenas. Ideally, students should be able to say both what the institution values educationally and why those priorities are intrinsically valuable.

There are many ways to help students comprehend what they are expected to learn, why they are expected to learn it and how these expectations can advance their own personal and professional interests. CSUSB should consider, for example:

- I. developing collective as well as individualized forms of advising;
- II. creating orientation workshops geared to first year students;
- III. providing different orientation workshops geared to students who transfer in with lower-division GE certified;
- IV. providing yet another set of workshops for students who transfer in without certification; and
- V. lastly, providing specific advising regarding upper-division General Education requirements.

These differentially targeted workshops can be put on-line; they can be made available in audio cassettes; they can incorporate self-assessment workbooks for students. Many programs that focus exclusively on adults utilize learning contracts; CSUSB should consider helping students use the workshops to devise and repeatedly modify their own learning contracts.

Leaders in these advising workshops ought to include recent graduates, members of the professional community, and others who can testify that the kinds of skills and knowledge cultivated at CSUSB have lasting value in the years beyond college.

The first year and transfer student seminars can then reinforce these orientation workshops by building a deeper understanding of the ideas and educational purposes emphasized in CSUSB's general education program.

CSUSB should render obsolete the idea that GE is a matter of checking off arbitrary items on a long list. But to do that, faculty, administration and staff need to break the old advising mold and replace it with an emphasis on educational planning that emphasizes dialogue, self-reflection and the development of purposeful directions over time. GE can never meet its goals as long as the students don't understand its central purposes. In all of the advising workshops, and in all informational materials developed to explain General Education, the University must also stress the interrelationship between General Education and the degree major. General Education should not be looked upon as an element separable from the degree major. Major degree departments will also have to stress this as well in all their advising relative to the major.

**2) Fewer and fewer students actually take the GE program at CSUSB.** This compounds the advising problem since the program's requirements and interpretation are now presented to students on check-off lists at feeder community colleges. Representatives from the community colleges gave CSUSB high marks for its competence and flexibility in negotiating transfer channels. But ease of transfer aside, it was clear from our conversations with the community college advisors that they, while supporting GE in principle, inadvertently help perpetuate the idea that the program is an arbitrary obstacle course in practice. Community college students are given transfer

sheets that are bare summaries of what the student needs to take for transfer certification. **NOTHING** on those sheets conveys educational purpose or rationale. Nothing in the process would help students connect their own plans and goals to the requirements on the certification sheets.

Recognizing this fact of life should lead CSUSB to develop pre-transfer materials -- on-line; on cassette; workbooks; workshops -- all designed to help students think through the goals of higher education and the role of GE in achieving them. These pre-transfer materials should be connected to the subject matter of the advising workshops proposed above so that the institution communicates, coherently, recurrently, before matriculation and afterwards, what it values for its students and why.

The university should also consider that its enrollment management policies place greater focus on the recruitment of first and second year students. This would make the mix of students such that GE lower-division course work could play a more important role in the CSUSB curriculum. Faculty could exercise a greater authority in the assurance of student acquisition of both writing and computational skills.

**3) The cynicism of the present capstone course structure.** On paper, the capstone courses are presented as integrative, advanced experiences in the various liberal arts domains. According to the criteria, the capstone courses are supposed to provide culminating experiences employing a higher level of analysis in each of the broad domains of study. Interdisciplinary work is encouraged and complex, intersecting perspectives prescribed. As noted above, these are commendable goals and many other institutions are now describing proposals for advanced general education in comparable ways.

Unfortunately, CSUSB made a crucial decision in planning its GE program that fundamentally undercuts the potential effectiveness of its capstone course design. The language authorizing the capstone courses states that these courses will be offered in large-lecture format. The catalog rather awkwardly defends this decision by suggesting that students need less attention in their advanced courses. In fact, this decision to teach the capstone courses in groups of 250 is the Achilles heel of the requirement. Faculty repeatedly explained to us that, given the size of these classes, they often give multiple choice examinations and are unable to assign or supervise research papers or other complex projects that might enable the students to undertake integrative learning. This is to say that they judge it structurally impossible to require advanced level assignments in what are supposed to be advanced, integrative courses.

Students, in their turn, explained their conviction that the obvious (and only) point of these requirements is to extract additional tuition money and time from them at a point in their education when they are anxious to graduate. No student suggested that these courses provided powerful integrative experiences. How could they? At a point in their studies where students should be doing their own work and taking considerable responsibility for their own questions and analyses, they are sitting in large lecture GE lecture classes where the faculty speak, where they take notes and where many of the examinations are short-answers and multiple choice questions.

Faculty members who framed the capstone course requirement for GE explained that a major purpose of the capstone lecture courses is to maintain sufficient numbers of registration in the humanities, social sciences and sciences despite the ongoing melt-

down of the first year class. But this rationale, while understandable, is not sustainable. The students' cynicism about the purpose of these classes meshes perfectly with the faculty members' extreme pragmatism in designing these courses as large lectures.

The CSUSB faculty need to rethink the purpose and process of these advanced courses. (Suggestions for this rethinking are offered in Part III.) But whatever faculty members decide about the purposes of these courses, CSUSB needs to find ways of offering advanced general education courses in smaller classes. The faculty group charged to lead this rethinking should be assisted by staff with the competence to model the financial implications of alternative models for general education. The goal should be a shifting of resources to support genuinely advanced work taken at the advanced level. In general this will mean more small classes; or at least sections, with qualified section leaders, for large classes.

The real key to advanced work is not the level at which the faculty profess; it is the level of the assignments and projects that students attempt and complete on their own. Assignments in advanced courses should elicit advanced work: work that requires students to frame their own problems (alone or in groups), seek and evaluate information related to those problems, develop and defend analyses that take into account competing points of view. To be worthy of their name and aspiration, the capstone courses need to be reconceived so that they require and support this level of advanced student work.

**4) The lack of a clear leadership structure for GE.** As outsiders, we were struck by the fact that CSUSB benefits from several clusters of faculty members who have given, over a period of many years, serious and devoted attention to some particular aspect of general education: writing, multicultural education, interdisciplinary courses, and the like. Yet these particular clusters appeared to be largely autonomous; self-sustained (or not), lacking any clear relationship to the GE committee that supervises general education or to one another. There was, for example, no evidence that the writing and critical thinking groups had ever collaborated although these competencies are integrally connected to one another. Thus, while CSUSB benefits from many faculty members who are sophisticated about GE purposes and practices and take it seriously, the program's effectiveness is undercut by the lack of clear, coherent, and integrative leadership.

The situation in critical thinking illustrates the point. Critical thinking is an integral part of this GE program. Originally taught only in the philosophy department, critical thinking courses are now offered in a range of disciplines, including psychology and mathematics. When the decision was made to offer critical thinking through a range of departments, the Faculty Senate set up a coordinating mechanism to assure some commonalties in course materials and examinations across different fields. Beset by financial and personal difficulties, this coordinating group no longer meets. This is both unfortunate in itself and symptomatic of the lack of clarity about who is accountable to whom for GE monitoring and coordination.

We make three general proposals for clarifying leadership and accountability for the General Education Program:

**FIRST: the GE Committee needs to receive a stronger mandate.** Currently, the Committee conscientiously reviews faculty courses to judge the congruence between

course requirements and the criteria for general education courses. But the Committee does not have the power to enforce its own judgments. There needs to be an agreed-upon procedure for the Committee to enforce criteria, to review courses for ongoing appropriateness, and to decertify courses that do not meet the criteria.

This review procedure should address the quality and level of task assignments given students as well as the content of the course. The review procedure should ask whether, for example, students are actively doing social science inquiry or humanistic analyses in their courses and should have the clout to insist that students engage in hands-on learning in all their courses. Its mandate should include attention to the work students undertake in advanced level and capstone GE courses.

**SECOND: There should be a series of faculty subcommittees—or colloquies—that provide leadership for particular aspects of the GE program: critical thinking, writing, multicultural and gender perspectives, advanced integrative (cross-disciplinary) courses and the like.** Proposals offered in part III would similarly require leadership by a faculty subcommittee. The leaders of these groups should be part of the GE committee and the subcommittees should report clearly and periodically to it.

These subcommittees should create an ongoing dialogue about what each of these requirements is trying to achieve and what faculty members are learning about how to match achievements to expectations. For example, faculty members working on critical thinking might develop an annual summer retreat, providing a way for faculty members to teach one another and for the community to mentor new faculty just beginning to teach to a requirement. This group's purview should not be limited to the critical thinking course; it should address critical thinking across-the-curriculum and the connections between the initial critical thinking course and the reinforcement of critical thinking as a practice throughout each student's educational experience.

Faculty members working on the multicultural and gender issues might discuss the role of divergent and dissenting voices in such courses. Some faculty members interviewed for this report argued that it is appropriate to teach a specific point of view on, for example, gender, just as, they said, economics teaches the superiority of the free market. Others contended that courses should acknowledge a range of perspectives on issues and teach the conflicts. Without prejudging the outcome of such discussions, there seems to be a need for faculty dialogue about and a negotiated understanding concerning the place of disparate perspectives in courses that prepare students for diversity. Student concerns in this area should also serve as an element in this discussion.

The goal for all such colloquies is to create a culture of reflective exchange about both purposes and practices that will deepen the ties of community and commitment among all those involved in teaching GE courses. A culture of reflective exchange takes time, so rewards need to be provided for those who take leadership in these efforts. The rewards might include enhanced salary; banked time for one's own research; or a new category of faculty title and stipend for those who provide leadership in the GE committee and subcommittees, e.g. rotating University Professorships linked to leadership for the various Committees and subcommittees.

**THIRD: There needs to be a tighter alliance between the GE Committee and**

**subcommittees and a clearly defined academic administrator(s).** The designated academic administrator(s) should provide administrative support for implementing GE committee decisions and for sustaining the faculty colloquies about different parts of the GE program. The administrative budget should include resources for recognizing and rewarding faculty leadership in the GE committee and subcommittees.

Ideally, responsibility for advising and for assessment ought to be in this same administrative domain, so that there is a clear administrative link between the educational judgments established by the faculty responsible for GE and the administrative systems that implement GE and provide information about its effectiveness. In sum, if CSUSB wants to sustain a strong and distinctive GE program, it needs to rethink the administrative arrangements, including the culture of faculty dialogue about what works that impart intentionality and vitality to any program. Resources, both time and money, should be assigned to meeting this goal.

The enhancements suggested thus far are proposals for strengthening the leadership, implementation and connections among the various parts of the GE program. With the possible exception of a new advising ethos, they can all be accomplished in the near term. For the reader's convenience, the recommendations are summarized here. The first four recommendations are given in an order for action. The fifth recommendation should not, however, be seen as the last in priority or urgency. If CSUSB does nothing else with its GE program, it should begin immediately to act on the fifth recommendation.

### **Near Term Recommendations:**

1. Reaffirm the centrality of a strong GE program to the mission and vitality of CSUSB and integral relationship of GE to the major degree program.
2. Clarify and strengthen GE leadership, detailing the complementary responsibilities of both faculty and administration.
3. Strengthening faculty leadership means giving the GE committee power to act on evaluative decisions; it also means creating clear and vibrant ties between the GE Committee and faculty subcommittees working on ways to fulfill the goals of particular parts of the program. Faculty subcommittees should be supported as faculty colloquies, integral parts of a culture that values teaching and learning and makes it interesting and rewarding to focus on both.
4. Strengthening administrative leadership means providing administrative support to the various subcommittees and creating a close link between assessment findings elicited over time and the faculty subcommittees assigned to particular GE goals. It also means implementing a student advising system that recognizes and helps enact the goals of the GE program.
3. Rethink and reinvent the advising system from stem to stern, transforming it into support systems for students' educational planning and recurrent re-planning in relation to the goals and expectations of CSUSB and the major degree programs. These support systems should begin with materials designed for the community colleges and should be differentiated for specific groups of students: native students; transfers already certified for GE; transfers still fulfilling GE; and the

- upper-division GE program and its rationale. The support systems should include group workshops and, eventually, on-line self-assessment resources. The goal is student recognition not only of what is required but also of why the requirements are valuable and how they relate to and advance the students' own priorities.
4. Connect the first year seminars and the seminars for transfer students to both the advising system and to core dimensions of GE: critical thinking, writing, multicultural and gender perspectives and the like. Use the seminars to build understanding of CSUSB goals for learning and hands-on practice.
  5. Reconceive the capstone courses so that students will routinely do advanced level work within these courses.

### **PART III**

#### **Long Term Directions for General Education**

The recommendations proposed above are designed to strengthen the program as it currently exists. But the curriculum is never static; it refracts and expresses societal directions. In a rapidly evolving intellectual and external environment, CSUSB is due for a fresh review of its general education program. Such reviews take time, first to clarify needed directions, then to negotiate faculty assent and finally to implement parts of the plan. The proposals made in this section are not made as recommendations, therefore. Rather, this section highlights long-term issues that require and deserve faculty attention and judgment:

**The Multicultural and Gender Requirements Category.** The current framing of this requirement has the advantage that all students necessarily take a course in this category at CSUSB. Given the demography of California and the significance of diversity both nationally and globally, this is a real strength. But the requirement deserves a second look. Recent national discourse about diversity emphasizes the importance of studying both American pluralism and world cultures, as well as the relations between them. Knowledge of world cultures is recognizable as a job skill; knowledge of American diversity is both a job skill and a basis for civic competence. CSUSB graduates should have both. CSUSB already has American History and Civilization, American government and world studies requirements in place. It is not clear, however, that these courses routinely address the diversity inherent in all these topics. When queried on this subject, faculty members said some courses do and some don't.

Faculty members should review the criteria for these earlier courses in relation to the criteria for the advanced Multicultural and Gender course. This review should clarify the overarching goals for diversity as a dimension of American and world societies and explain how attention to diversity in the advanced course is expected to build on learning developed through the earlier set of American history, government and world cultures courses. The review should question the current content of the Multicultural and Gender requirement. In particular, does the present framing of the requirement exoticize both women and cultures in relation to an envisioned mainstream West?

If earlier courses in history, government and world cultures appropriately incorporate attention to the numerous facets of diversity in their content, as they should,

then it may no longer make sense for an advanced course to introduce the subject. Its role rather should be to complicate the subject and to challenge students to reach deeper analyses. The review should address these issues in ways appropriate to CSUSB's mission, faculty resources and its range of student views and experiences. The goal is to ensure that the advanced work does, in fact, build on earlier work, deepening students' real understanding of the topics entailed in the current requirement.

In making this proposal, we are operating on the premise that all studies now desirably include attention to diversity or multiplicity and relationships across difference. This is especially (but not exclusively) important for courses that seek to re-present culture and society. The required courses in American history and government and in world studies should introduce students to the multiplicity of experiences and interpretations that comprise history or culture or government. The question then becomes: How do these several course experiences complement one another in building knowledge of and competence for the public sphere? How does an advanced GE course in diversity enhance knowledge and capacity fostered in the earlier courses? Is one advanced course enough? Should students take both an introductory and an advanced course in world studies? Should an advanced course address connections between the United States and world societies? Recent curriculum guidelines established by the American Historical Association for both World Civilization and United States history courses may prove useful in this review.

There is also reason to consider whether the Multicultural and Gender requirements ought to be reframed to recommend each student's exploration of his or her own sources of identity and affiliation. Discussions with both faculty and students left us persuaded that many CSUSB students think that culture, gender and race belong to a general category of "Other." Perhaps the requirements should be recast to ensure that all students develop an understanding of their own cultural identities, and that the courses serve as a basis for advanced study and learning. Optimally, since many students are probably taking the lower-division requirements at a community college, discussion of these matters should include community college and CSUSB faculty. Ideally, it would be part of a system-wide review that rethinks both the civic and the cultural objectives for students' diversity learning, in relation to one another.

As suggested in Part II, a fresh review should also debate and reach negotiated faculty understanding about the role of engaging competing perspectives in courses that educate students for the diversity of the contemporary world. The review should clarify competencies that students need in a society characterized by both diversity and patterned inequities. Since many CSUSB students take one course that simultaneously meets the capstone and the Multicultural and Gender requirements, the caveats offered concerning the capstone courses apply here as well. An advanced course that explores topics in their diversity and societal complexity must require that students do advanced assignments. Lectures with short-answer examinations defeat at the outset the sustained engagement with complexity that ought to be basic to an upper level course on multicultural and gender issues.

**The Basic Skills Category:** Societal understanding of the essential skills developed by higher education is evolving. In this context, CSUSB is ripe for a fresh look at its core skills requirements. This review should address both the definition of essential skills and

the way essential skills are cultivated across-the-curriculum. Initial skills courses should lay a foundation for further development. Such skills courses should not be the last experience the student has with the competencies in question. Looking over the CSUSB listing of basic skills in the context of national trends, the following questions seem worth discussion:

- 1) Does critical thinking require a separate course? Or should it be cultivated in all the foundations courses (e.g., humanities, social sciences, sciences) as well as in all the courses required for every major?
- 2) If the introduction to critical thinking requires a separate course, should not that course be the first writing course?
- 3) What long-term learning does the mathematics requirement address? Does it provide functional knowledge of the way mathematical arguments are made in particular domains, such as public policy or business analysis? Should it lay a foundation for quantitative analysis that will be routinely used in all students' majors, or, if they select "non-quantitative" majors, in advanced GE courses? What quantitative literacies are requisite for the modern world? Does the current requirement develop those literacies?
- 4) Most employers regard cooperative learning and problem-solving as a base-line job skill. Should collaborative learning and real world experiences (internships) be part of the GE program?
- 5) CSUSB has already laid a foundation for students' societal knowledge of technology in its requirements. Does the current curricular structure ensure that all students learn how to use technology as a resource for knowledge acquisition and problem-solving? Should it?
- 6) Are students adequately prepared for the contemporary world if they speak only a single language? Should there be entrance requirements for basic competence in a second language which, if not met, add additional time to students' study in college? Is the CSU language requirement that presumes some pre-admission level of competence developed in high school being enforced?

Many of these questions are also questions about the responsibility of the major to cultivate skills deemed important in the larger society. We return to this topic in the final pages of this report.

**The Purposes of Advanced General Education:** In reviewing the curriculum as presently constructed, and in discussions with faculty, we came to believe that the educational purposes of advanced general education should be rethought at CSUSB. Institutionally, at CSUSB and throughout the CSU system, establishing upper level requirements for humanities, social sciences and science education ensures that all students will take liberal arts courses and perspectives at the university level. This has the desirable effect of seeing that students study with CSUSB faculty beyond their chosen area of specialization as well as within it. But to students, this kind of a breadth requirement can look like an injunction primarily to take courses in which "I am not interested," as one remarked incisively.

General education as currently defined at CSUSB and in the CSU system

occupies its own intellectual territory, a territory firmly divided from that of the major. The separation seems just as absolute between advanced general education and the major as it is between introductory general education and the major. These divisions are especially enforced for students who select preprofessional majors such as business or education. All of their capstone courses must be selected from the humanities, social sciences and sciences as conventionally defined. The preprofessional studies are not seen as social sciences and, therefore, students cannot select advanced courses in business or education, no matter how broadly they are conceived, to meet upper-division general education requirements.

But the argument can be made that truly general education is generalizing education, that is, the kind of learning that is possible only after one comes to know particular things well. In this view of general education, it emerges out of the major (AAC, *The Challenge of Connecting Learning*, 1991). Or, as Ernest Boyer has proposed, general education can be seen as part of an extended major, a set of studies that provide historical and normative perspective on as well as critical dialogue with the student's own particular interests (*College*, 1987). With a liberal arts mission, and with more and more CSUSB students taking only their advanced general education courses at the University, CSUSB has a strong self-interest in providing both a compelling educational rationale for advanced GE and an equally compelling experience of the studies that comprise advanced GE.

Questioning the historic divide between general education and the major may be the first step in developing a compelling rationale for and experience of advanced general education. Currently, at CSUSB as elsewhere, GE requirements emerge from one set of considerations; requirements for majors from another. An alternative approach articulates a rationale for advanced GE in which GE enhances, expands and queries the boundaries of the major. At CSUSB, for example, every major might require students to create an interdisciplinary concentration of advanced courses designed to broaden their knowledge of the contexts and issues important to their field. The choice of courses would have to have an articulated rationale; that rationale could include, by requirement, attention to diversity issues and critical thinking skills. The concentration would be formed of courses outside the student's field but selected in relation to the student's interests. Or, students might have an option of putting together an interdisciplinary minor which would have its own integrity, linked or not linked to the major as the student judges desirable. Or, students might take a set of advanced disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses that contextualize their understanding of their field. The design possibilities are many. The important point for discussion is whether upper-division general education should engage and enlarge the students' interests as reflected in the major or remain separate from them. Regardless of the outcome of this discussion, students must understand the integral part GE plays (at both the lower and upper-division levels) with the major.

If there is a strong preference for sustaining advanced GE as a separate domain at CSUSB, there nonetheless remains a need to articulate an educational purpose for advanced GE courses beyond capping earlier breadth studies in the humanities, social sciences and sciences. Many institutions have developed a vertical model for general education, usually organized around a set of societal and/or cultural studies. Typically, world history and/or American pluralism are introduced in the first two years;

comparative cultural studies at a later stage; contemporary problems and issues in the final year. A number of institutions tie ethical analysis and decision-making to these advanced courses. Some institutions, for example, Auburn University or Trenton State, include studies in science, technology and society as part of this societal studies curriculum. The State University of New York at Buffalo has designed an upper level science inquiry requirement that presupposes completion of earlier, laboratory courses in a particular science. Close by, at Cal Poly, Pomona, an institution that has grappled with these same issues confronting CSUSB, upper-division general education has been clustered into thematic packages. While this has produced mixed results, GE planners at CSUSB could very well profit from that campus's experiences.

CSUSB has all the pieces in place to create such a vertical core of societal studies, including science, technology and society. But it needs to do some hard work on the relations between introductory and advanced work to turn the pieces into a compelling educational program. And any such program is subject to all the challenges of advising described in Part II of this report.

**Essential Skills, The Major, and Assessment:** The previous section proposes that CSUSB rethink the educational purposes of advanced GE courses and that it do so in dialogue with, rather than opposition to, the work of the major. But there is another set of links between GE and the major that needs articulation and nurture across-the-curriculum. Such articulation would make it easier to assess student learning in relation to GE objectives. The connections to be made relate Basic Skills to study in the Major.

Attached to this report is a paper by a faculty member at the College of Charleston who took part recently in an especially fruitful review of her departmental major. As the reader will see, the educational goals for this re-formed major address critical thinking and writing just as much as they address the content of history.

Such basic skills as writing, critical thinking, oral competence and quantitative reasoning (and other basic skills like collaborative problem-solving and technological literacy) ought to be cultivated and used in students' advanced studies, not only in general education courses. If the skill is essential, then it is essential that it be developed over time. This means in advanced work, not solely in foundational courses.

Reconceiving the relationship between general skills and learning in the major has fruitful potential for assessment, which, on all campuses, is proving such a conundrum for faculty members. If each department is asked to explain its goals and strategies for developing the basic skills foregrounded in general education requirements, then the skills can be assessed by the department in conjunction with its assessment of student learning in the major.

Thinking about general education skills as skills that are used in context relieves the faculty of trying to devise ways of assessing a general competence that is somehow separate from the particular learning which most students undertake in the last years of college. It also enhances the likelihood that faculty members will actually use the findings of an assessment in changing their teaching. When general skills are assessed generically, faculty members in departments see the results as separate from their own responsibilities. When critical thinking means the forms of argumentation and analysis used in a field, faculty members are far more likely to view assessment results—good or bad—as significant.

CSUSB has already made this linkage between general skills and their contextual application in its writing program. Advanced writing courses are taught in the schools—and are thus tied to the domains of argument which the students have selected for themselves. The same principle usefully applies to other skills as well. This need not mean that each major must offer an oral persuasion course, or a critical thinking course, or a collaborative problem-solving course. Rather, it proposes that departments discuss how these capacities are cultivated in the major and identify milestone courses in which students' developed abilities can be assessed.

Identifying, highlighting and emphasizing the connections between basic skills and learning in the major is a productive, efficient and persuasive way to think about both developing and assessing educational skills and competencies. It is productive because it is more likely to produce results. It is efficient because it consolidates assessments, eliminating the need for generic assessments and substituting instead contextual, i.e., program-based evaluation of students' capacities. Finally, it is persuasive because it directs students' attention to the connections between their earlier general studies, wherever they occurred, and their major, which for most students is the primary point of higher education. Linking general education and the major gives students a real stake in their own success with general education. And that, ultimately, is the point.

## CONCLUSION

The recommendations offered in Part II are priorities for campus action. The vitality and integrity of the program are tied to more effective advising, leadership, and faculty oversight. Student cynicism about the capstone courses cannot be simply dismissed. The suggestions provided in Part III, by contrast, are opportunities for CSUSB. The campus already has a robustly conceived, if imperfectly implemented, advanced GE program. The purposes and practices that define advanced GE are everywhere under review, in part because transfer is everywhere on the rise. With California students being steered to the community colleges for general studies, CSUSB and the entire CSU state system have an opportunity to offer important leadership in reconceiving advanced general education. In part, such a reconception can provide new guidance and new clarity to the community colleges. But the reconception can also forge a more educationally productive understanding of the relations between general requirements for all students' learning and the specialized focus of the major.