

GE Subcommittee Agenda

2:30-4:00pm

Thursday, April 30, 2015

KL 324

I. Announcements (5 minutes)

- A. GE Team Report, GESC corrections memo, sent April 20 (*pp. 2-3*)
- B. GE Retreat invitations, sent April 20 (*p. 4*)

II. GESC Revised Charge (5 minutes) (p. 5)

Action: Approve revised charge/membership and forward to UGC for review and approval.

III. Discussion (15 minutes)

- A. Faculty Responses to Retreat Synthesis (2014), with Professor Schnier
 - GESC has received feedback from: Anthropology, Cognitive Science, Economics, English, History, Psychology, Sociology, Spanish (*pp. 6-28*)
 - Professor Schnier's synthesis (*pp. 29-32*)
 - Report from Professor Bhat on Applied Math, Earth System Science, Molecular Cell & Biology, Chemistry, and Physics
 - Reminders were sent to SOE¹ and Political Science
- B. Student Success Summary with Interim VCSA Nies

IV. Program Review, First Stage (10 minutes)

- A. PROC updates, Dr. Lwin and Dr. Martin
- B. UGC meets May 6 with further feedback about priorities
- C. Creating an action plan from April to November, with September check-in with PROC
**Retreat objectives should inform identifying areas of consensus and creating an action plan*

V. GE Retreat (45 minutes)

- A. Review confirmed participation and continued steps to involve all academic programs and representative staff (*list of confirmed participants will be distributed separately*)
- B. Feedback from Program Chairs about input opportunity - **VPDUE Whitt (p. 33)**
- C. Discuss retreat draft agenda (*draft will be distributed at the meeting*)

VI. Upcoming Business

GESC convenes again around May 13-15 to (1) review external team report priorities from PROC and UGC and (2) confirm retreat agenda. Interim VPF Camfield will be invited to attend the May meeting.

VII. Executive Session – Voting Members only, please (10 minutes)

¹ Curriculum Committee Chair responded that SOE faculty have been asked to provide feedback but no one responded



20 April 2015

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PROC Co-Chairs Peterson and Ricci

Re: GE Team Report, Corrections

Dear Provost Peterson and Senate Vice Chair Ricci,

According to our academic review [policy](#), the General Education subcommittee of Undergraduate Council has the opportunity to review the report for factual errors or misperceptions until 20 April 2015.

We appreciate how the GE Review Team has provided such a comprehensive and thoughtful report, with identifying strengths and weaknesses of UCM's current GE program to inform future planning. Of particular note are the detailed descriptions of relevant GE programs from more established campuses; these models will likely prove as informative with developing a complete and high-impact GE program.

In providing suggested foci for review, faculty workload and program resources were part of the intended focus. We appreciate the review team report's suggestions and offer two related clarifications, which are largely specific to our institutional context and historical moment. Situating faculty workload is very important in planning a GE program's implementation and resources and thus benefits the most from clarification. The following clarifications are intended to address potential misperceptions about UCM faculty workload to strengthen the meaning and application of these related summaries.

Page 3, para 4 { **Although different workload measures are used, this has led to lower teaching workloads than on most other UCs.** }: Teaching workload for UCM Senate faculty is noted in the self study; however, it is to emphasize intensive teaching and service responsibilities with developing a new campus and associated academic programs. During the site visit, varied perspectives on workload from either program or previous experiences were likely shared, which we understand this statement summarizes. However, to clarify, the team did not have access to campus or program-based workload policies that govern faculty time. Also, our campus does not have a formal study of workload. At this point, there is variation across disciplines regarding teaching and services workloads that continue to be part of campus planning. To our knowledge, a reduction in teaching workload to account for service, at least at the institutional level, would be inaccurate to conclude and would benefit from study.

Page 4, para 1 { Now that many of the **majors have been established, it is an opportune time to re-direct faculty attention to teaching the GEs and bridging the disciplines, even though it may mean adjusting both the allocation of time and workload expectations** }: Compared to 2005, we have expanded undergraduate major programs from fewer than 10 to over 20. Unlike other campuses, though, our new and relatively established undergraduate majors are still in development and are in initial phases of implementation and assessment. Re-directing attention

to GE will need to be balanced with these efforts, as a clarification. While we see consistency in vision about bridging disciplines as part of GE planning, associated time and workload with developing a GE program will benefit from heightened recognition, planning, and resourcing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne Zanzucchi". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Anne" and last name "Zanzucchi" clearly distinguishable.

Anne Zanzucchi, GE Subcommittee Chair

Cc: PROC Members and analyst
UGC Members
GESG Members

GE Retreat Invitation – April 20, 2015

On behalf of Dr. Anne Zanzucchi, Chair of the General Education Subcommittee:

We invite you to the **2015 General Education Retreat scheduled for Wednesday, June 10 through Thursday, June 11** (9am-5pm) in the Crescent Arch conference room.

Last year's GE Retreat was a significant milestone for our campus and continues to be a critical part of campus and program planning. At the [2014 GE Retreat](#), we defined the hallmarks of an undergraduate degree at UC Merced which has been reviewed and endorsed by Senate committees, academic programs, and undergraduates. These hallmarks and recommendations for a GE program served as a framework for our recent program review, which the external review team similarly endorsed with further feedback on ways to **prioritize and expand efforts to develop a comprehensive GE program.**

Please join us this year for this next phase of planning, which involves responding to the external team's recommendations. If you anticipate travel plans or fundamental scheduling conflicts during this time, please suggest a colleague who may be invited in your stead. **With prioritizing planning phases and re-designing of GE curriculum requirements, it is very important that all undergraduate programs are represented in these planning discussions.**

This year's retreat will be equally productive and foundational to the [GE Subcommittee](#) of Undergraduate Council's shared efforts to plan GE, particularly in making the most of the recommendations from external review. A complete agenda will be available in late May. Looking forward to your involvement in this next phase of GE program development!

Please rsvp to Fatima Paul by Monday, April 27th.

Charge for the General Education Subcommittee of UGC

Revised Proposal (April 2015)

Membership:

The General Education Subcommittee of the Undergraduate Council (UGC) consists of no fewer than five and no greater than eight voting members, with a minimum of two who also serve on UGC. The Chair of the Subcommittee is appointed by the Committee on Committees to serve a one-year term beginning the first day of Fall semester. The Vice Chair of the Subcommittee will normally succeed to the position of Chair the following year. The Committee on Committees will appoint a new Vice Chair for each academic year. Among these voting members, each school should be represented.

Up to two non-voting members include non-senate teaching faculty representative(s) who have regular GE course assignments, ideally in a range of instructional formats.

Ex-officio members include the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, the Coordinator of Institutional Assessment, and a representative of a required GE course (*unless otherwise represented among the faculty committee members).

Charge:

Broadly conceived, the Subcommittee is responsible for strategic planning for general education, with an emphasis on sustainable curricula and integrated assessment planning in support of intended general education learning outcomes. In particular, the General Education Subcommittee is charged to:

- Provide recommendations to UGC on criteria for approving undergraduate general education courses;
- Oversee and coordinate activities relating to the assessment of general education, including the use of results to inform curricula, practices, and processes in support of intended student learning;
- Advise on staffing and resource needs associated with supporting general education courses, programs, and related assessment; and
- Review and, as necessary, suggest changes in general education principles and policies, to UGC for final consideration and approval.



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24 November 2014

Feedback on GE Retreat Synthesis

Due by 1 February 2015

What is General Education? The [Association of American Colleges & Universities](#) defines [General Education](#) as “providing broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forming the basis for developing essential intellectual, civic, and practical capacities. General education can take many forms, and increasingly includes introductory, advanced, and integrative forms of learning.” GE is the coursework and co-curricular experiences that contribute to an undergraduate’s major and entire baccalaureate education.

At UC Merced, General Education currently includes, Core 1, a required foundational course “designed to introduce students to UC Merced’s faculty and research, with an emphasis on writing, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and understanding events in their historical and cultural contexts” (AY [2013-2014 Course Catalog](#)). Additional requirements include lower-division courses in communication and quantitative reasoning, consistent with [UC system-wide GE](#) priorities, as well as school-based upper-division breadth requirements.

Where are we now? A two-day General Education retreat was held in May 2014, with 32 campus representatives. Ladder-rank and lecturing faculty representing most disciplines, as well as administrators, and academic advisors from across the schools, collaboratively addressed the following questions. The expectation is that answers to these questions would form a much needed foundation for any re-design of GE.

- 1) What is the meaning and what are the hallmarks of the baccalaureate degree at UC Merced¹?
- 2) Given the meaning and hallmarks, what should General Education contribute to the baccalaureate degree of every UC Merced student?

The concepts and recommendations that emerged from the retreat are summarized in the attached synthesis.

What do we need from you? As a faculty, please review the attached GE Retreat Synthesis, responding to the questions below. Your response could take the form of a list or more extensive narrative. As you think about these questions, you may find it productive to cross-reference these ideas with the catalog description of your major and/or minor and your program’s PLOs.

Your responses to these ideas will help inform development and revisions to UC Merced’s GE program, both in terms of responding to recommendations stemming from the program review process this coming spring and over the long term as the campus moves forward with 2020 planning. *These GE program revisions will relate to the delivery and quality of programs, as GE affects the ability of your discipline to educate a wider audience of students in the skills and ways of thinking important to your field.*

¹ Identify goals, aims, aspirations, expectations and hallmarks of our baccalaureate graduates in the context of our institutional mission.

- (1) Please review Part I of the Retreat Synthesis, which includes a description of the distinctive institutional context and hallmarks of baccalaureate degrees at UCM. What you do find important to the BA/BS for all students? From your major field perspective, what makes a degree from UC Merced distinctive? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?
- (2) Please review Part II of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes what retreat participants thought General Education should contribute to the baccalaureate degree of every UC Merced student in light of the aforementioned hallmarks of the baccalaureate degree. What resonates with your faculty? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?
- (3) Please review Part III of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes the experiences GE might include in light of the role of GE in an undergraduate degree in UC Merced. What resonates with your faculty? What you would want to see emphasized? What might be added to these descriptions? What might your program contribute to this vision? And/or how might your major and/or minor play a role in GE at our campus?

Anthropology Feedback:

- (1) Please review Part I of the Retreat Synthesis, which includes a description of the distinctive institutional context and hallmarks of baccalaureate degrees at UCM. What you do find important to the BA/BS for all students? From your major field perspective, what makes a degree from UC Merced distinctive? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?

The summary in Part I is thorough and captures all elements important to an undergraduate degree. Many of these elements (e.g., basic knowledge; historical context of disciplinary thought; critical assessment of theory; method, and results; ethical practice; methodological skill; communication skill) are also included in ANTH PLOs, while cultural awareness is fundamental to anthropological thought and practice. Since nearly all ANTH classes are also identified as GE classes, this alignment is not unexpected. As the campus continues to grow (and has grown), it may prove difficult to maintain some of the distinctive features of undergraduate education at UCM (e.g., research experiences). On the other hand, some small programs such as ours may be better positioned to offer more undergraduate research opportunities as our faculty grows to the point that we are no longer teetering below critical mass (e.g., faculty leave/sabbaticals severely challenge our delivery of the undergraduate major, and so, decrease our ability to offer more one-on-one research experiences through Independent Study courses). The ANTH degree at UCM stands out from that of our sister campuses (and most other programs at peer institutions) in our focus on the link between theory and method, thereby offering an education that provides practical knowledge, skills, and abilities that are generally applicable rather than specific to a particular region, time period, or even limited to anthropology. To this end, we are committed to methods courses that require relatively small class size (e.g., no more than 35 students in lecture-based methods courses; no more the 18 students in lab-based methods courses) and directed group research experiences through Independent Study (IS) courses. As noted above, however, it is a challenge to deliver this curriculum with such a small faculty, and we must prioritize ANTH majors and minors in methods and IS courses, often excluding undergraduates who might benefit from such experience as part of GE.

It seems that the issue of emphasis would be more productively framed by considering emphases of majors/minors versus emphases with respect to GE. That is, majors/minors will always emphasize #1 (Depth and Breadth) and #5 (Interpersonal Skills), but will vary considerably with respect to issues such as Cultural Sensitivity (#2), Community Engagement (#3), and Self-awareness (#4). Since these latter elements are important, however, this seems to be the place where GE can step in to fill the gap. Merced as a “crossroads” (or the concept of crossroads, in general) might be a useful jumping off point for thinking about this gap.

- (2) Please review Part II of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes what retreat participants thought General Education should contribute to the baccalaureate degree of every UC Merced student in light of the aforementioned hallmarks of the baccalaureate degree. What resonates with your faculty? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?

Once again, the list is very comprehensive (although the omission of the role of foreign languages and cross-cultural competencies is significant), which may be both a good and bad thing. It is a good thing in the sense that the elements are important; it is a bad thing in that accomplishing all these goals may be challenging

through GE (and note that “Essential Education” rather than “General Education” is an intriguing approach). Point #1 (supporting the research mission), #4 (risk-taking/creativity), #5 (communities of scholarship), and #7 (knowledge, skills, and abilities) sit equally well within a major/minor and are certainly highlighted in ANTH PLOs. Thus, point #2 (broad exposure), #3 (interdisciplinarity), and #6 (transcends/contextualizes major) may be areas particular appropriate for emphasis in GE. One element we would like to see more strongly emphasized and supported through GE is writing proficiency.

(3) Please review Part III of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes the experiences GE might include in light of the role of GE in an undergraduate degree in UC Merced. What resonates with your faculty? What you would want to see emphasized? What might be added to these descriptions? What might your program contribute to this vision? And/or how might your major and/or minor play a role in GE at our campus?

Part III is especially ambitious, and many recommendations may be destined to die on the vine because they do not reflect the resource reality of UCM (i.e., any redefined GE should be properly resourced) and the local context in which co-curricular experiences are rare or challenging (e.g., lack of museums, performance venues, distance from different biotic communities, etc.). We support the grounding of GE in ladder-rank faculty because the link to (disciplinary, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary) research is important/fundamental, and we would like to see the balance between ladder- and non-ladder rank faculty in GE (and across campus) shift toward greater representation of the former. We also think it would be productive to think about alternatives (such as freshman seminars and learning communities) to large, lower-division lecture courses as a way to introduce, and maintain the interest of, students to diverse disciplines, and we support the return to incentives for faculty to teach freshman seminars (as was the case in the early days of UCM) since these are effectively overloads. Early on in the development of ANTH at UCM we looked into learning communities for our major (e.g., specific WRI 10 sections for ANTH majors, residence life programs), but we didn’t have the critical mass of students to make this a reality. Common intellectual experiences also seem like a good idea (and perhaps two-year themes), although it would be interesting to know how students feel about CORE 1 (i.e., is it meeting goals with respect to GE?). We also think that such common intellectual experiences might be more productive if handled by one or two ladder rank faculty rather than being handled by a rotating roster of guest lecturers (as per CORE 1).

We are concerned, however, about undergraduate research skills/experiences—not because this isn’t an admirable goal that we support, but because such experiences can severely strain resources and may be difficult to scale up (not unlike the old CORE 100). Building GE experiences into lower division courses may also be a bit problematic, unless specific lower division GE-only (i.e., CORE 1) courses are maintained. It should also be borne in mind that lower division interdisciplinary GE units directly impact lower division courses in the disciplines, which are necessary to take upper division courses in a discipline for GE (i.e., you can’t have interdisciplinary lower GE and expect students to have access to upper division disciplinary GE; programs are not sufficiently large—nor it is a good thing to “dumb-down” disciplinary offerings for GE if the goals of Part I and Part II are genuine—to offer non-major upper division [or even lower division] GE courses). Thus, the interdiscipline- versus discipline-based approaches to GE are somewhat at odds with each other, and to a commitment to one or the other may be necessary.

Rather than (or in addition to) a general “research skills” goals of GE, we strongly support greater investment in and support for developing student writing skills as an element of GE. We are dismayed by how poorly UCM students are able to communicate in writing, and our program assessments indicate this is not for lack of feedback from and attention to this skill by our faculty. We are simply unable to overcome the writing challenges of our student body on our own, and even suggest that an exit writing requirement should be considered for UCM.

Finally, the role of advising in making GE a success is a significant omission from the document. Academic advisors should not only know the requirements of the majors/minors they serve, but also understand the courses/types of courses that would best complement specific majors/minors (or subfields therein) so GE is more meaningful. This means starting students thinking about GE from Day 1, as they need to take lower division courses that are pre-requisites for upper division courses that will actually achieve the goals of GE. It often appears that neither students nor advisors have a good sense of what GE can/should do, so they make course selections based on schedules, etc., rather than learning opportunities and integrating/contextualizing

their major. GE courses should not be something tacked onto the end of student's time at UCM (as, it seems, is true especially in front-loaded majors like Engineering), but should be integrated throughout the years on campus.



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January 30, 2015

To: General Education Subcommittee

From: Cognitive and Information Sciences Faculty

Dear Colleagues,

On Monday, January 26, 2015, the faculty of the Cognitive and Information Sciences (CIS) Bylaw 55 Unit in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts (SSHA) met to discuss the General Education Retreat Synthesis Document. The goal of this conversation was to produce a consensus response from the CIS Unit to this document, as requested of all UC Merced Bylaw 55 Units. This brief letter is intended to communicate our unit's views on the Retreat Synthesis Document.

The CIS faculty recognize the importance of a well-designed general education program at UCM, and we sympathize with the goals of the Retreat Synthesis Document. Many of the educational principles expressed in the document correspond well to those that have guided the formation of the curricula for our own unit's majors and minors. While the principles are well stated in the Retreat Synthesis Document, we worry that much of the content of this document is overly schematic, so as to leave the concrete implementations and deliverables somewhat vague. Some of the questions raised in this document, directed at the faculty representing the academic units of UC Merced, are quite general and unfocused. We worry that the goals, aims, and aspirations for undergraduate education, as currently expressed in the Retreat Synthesis Document, may not provide much in the way of clear guidance for the design of programs, curricula, and other activities. In hopes of assisting with the process of shaping the future of essential education at UC Merced, we have done our best to produce some constructive feedback. In this response, we describe some specific ways in which CIS contributes or might contribute to the goals outlined in the Retreat Synthesis Document, along with pointers toward concrete examples of curriculum items that could be included in a rejuvenated program of essential education at UCM.

There are many qualities that make an undergraduate education at UC Merced different, at least to some degree, from that provided by other institutions. Some of these qualities, such as the wealth of undergraduate research opportunities, may not easily be implemented as components of essential education programs, but they still serve to make our undergraduate education experience distinctive. The relative youth of our campus has given both students and faculty significant freedom and opportunities to pursue interdisciplinary scholarship. An educational atmosphere that embraces interdisciplinary approaches is one hallmark of UC Merced. Our university is also distinguished by its living commitment to diversity. UC Merced also stands out with regard to its community engagement efforts. These include community-based research and scholarship, but also worthy of note are the many ways in which UC Merced engages the community in dialogues concerning the blossoming products of academic science, engineering, and humanities scholarship. By exposure to these outreach activities, undergraduate

students may benefit from participation in them and be dissuaded from an “ivory tower” view of the academy.

The CIS faculty are confident that the majors and minors we support contribute directly to these distinctive properties of UC Merced. Cognitive Science is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing on perspectives and methods from psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, artificial intelligence, and other fields. Thus, the Cognitive Science major and minor programs immerse students in the distinctive mindset of interdisciplinary scholarship. The CIS group also contributes to community engagement through its scientific communication efforts, including the longest running talk series at UC Merced - the Mind, Technology, and Society (MTS) seminar series, the public lectures delivered by the annual recipients of our Distinguished Cognitive Scientist Award, special workshops, including the recent Bilingualism Workshop (Fall, 2014), and the interdisciplinary outreach activities of the UC Merced Center for Climate Communication, including a talk series and workshops with local stakeholders.

In addition, the material taught by CIS faculty is seen as having value to undergraduate students regardless of their choice of major or career aspirations. For example, Cognitive Science courses provide key insights for those studying biology, anthropology, management, psychology, computer science, and other domains. (Some of our early undergraduates are now working in a wide range of professions. Alumni include attorneys, K-12 teachers, computer software developers, IT managers, park rangers, and social workers. Some have gone on to graduate programs in cognitive science, psychology, law, medicine, and management.) All of UC Merced’s Philosophy courses, taught by CIS faculty, contribute to the university’s general education program, as currently structured. Some other concrete ways our programs contribute to the vision outlined in the Retreat Synthesis Document include:

- Our undergraduate majors and minors have an explicitly interdisciplinary and applied curriculum. Cognitive Science majors are required to take a laboratory course in BIO, CHEM or PHYS, must take specific PSY and MATH courses, and can choose introductory courses from ECON, PHIL and PSY. Philosophy minors are encouraged to take non-philosophy courses, for example ENG 100, as part of their coursework. Conversely, COGS and PHIL courses are included in the curricula of several other programs on campus, including BIO.
- Our faculty teach courses listed or cross-listed in areas outside of their own areas. CIS faculty have taught or co-taught courses in WCH, ECON, MATH, and QSB, among others. This direct engagement with other faculty supports the GE Subcommittee’s interest in promoting “interdisciplinary thinking which could include appreciating different approaches to problem solving, informed by an understanding of humanities, arts, STEM, social sciences.”

Beyond being useful to a broad undergraduate audience, the CIS faculty see Cognitive Science as offering some key insights that are essential for understanding the world and humanity’s place in it. Some of these insights include: (1) much of human cognition is not accessible to consciousness, (2) human behavior can be driven by primitive processes and irrational biases without awareness, (3) cognitive performance arises at many scales - from neural circuits in the brain to dynamic interactions between the brain, the body, and the environment - from communication, cooperation, and competition between people to systems that incorporate both humans and information processing technologies, and (4) human cognition is shaped by a complex interaction of genetic inheritance, developmental processes, experiential learning, and embodied contact with the physical and social environment. The CIS faculty

hold that an understanding of basic insights like these are an essential component of a complete undergraduate education. These insights are important for understanding one's own behavior and the behavior of others, for thinking about crime and punishment, for recognizing obstacles to critical thinking, for shaping an understanding of identity, for analyzing the role of technology in society, and for appreciating the influences of differences in culture and life experience across individuals.

There are many ways that the foundational insights of Cognitive Science could be communicated to the broad range of undergraduate students at UC Merced. One suggestion that arose during the CIS faculty discussion involved the development of a CORE 1 module on human decision making, perhaps focusing on "rationality and irrationality" or some other broad aspect of human cognition. Our faculty are eager to translate this abstract conversation into specific guidance for the design of curricula and student activities.

In closing, the CIS faculty welcome further opportunities to contribute to the design of the essential education of UC Merced undergraduate students. We look forward to approaching this effort with an eye on the formulation of actionable guidance, rather than remaining at the level of broad and abstract principles. Thank you for offering this chance to provide feedback.



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February 1, 2015

To: GE Subcommittee

From: Kurt Schnier, AP Chair SSM

Subject: Comments regarding GE

Members of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee within the SSM Bylaw Unit met to discuss the documents forwarded by the GE Subcommittee regarding feedback on the GE Retreat Synthesis. List below are our responses to your inquiries (in bullet form):

(1) Please review Part I of the Retreat Synthesis, which includes a description of the distinctive institutional context and hallmarks of baccalaureate degrees at UCM. What you do find important to the BA/BS for all students? From your major field perspective, what makes a degree from UC Merced distinctive? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?

- Point 1: It would be nice to see some discussion of developing a foundation for quantitative reasoning.
- Point 1: fully engage with the discovery process at UCM by interacting with graduate student TAs in discussion sections of GE courses.
- Point 4: A discussion of developing a strong sense of self-identity and purpose would be beneficial.

(2) Please review Part II of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes what retreat participants thought General Education should contribute to the baccalaureate degree of every UC Merced student in light of the aforementioned hallmarks of the baccalaureate degree. What resonates with your faculty? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?

- If research is in the middle shouldn't there be a clear statement that we want our students to develop research skills that will allow them to find current knowledge and critically analyze it?
- The statement "Supports, enhances, and prepares students to engage in the research mission of the university " indicates that research and discovery are core elements of UC Merced.

- Graduate students are the embodiment of the discovery aspect of a research university, thus GE programming should strive to engage undergraduate with graduate students through the use of TAs and discussion sections in GE courses.
- A criteria for a GE course should be engaging with UCM discovery by interacting with graduate students in course discussion sections to better understand how the course material connects to new knowledge.

(3) Please review Part III of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes the experiences GE might include in light of the role of GE in an undergraduate degree in UC Merced. What resonates with your faculty? What you would want to see emphasized? What might be added to these descriptions? What might your program contribute to this vision? And/or how might your major and/or minor play a role in GE at our campus?

- The research connection and training students to critically think about the world around them resonates with our faculty. We really want GE to facilitate students being able to develop the skills needed for independent learning so that they can excel after they leave UC Merced.
- To bring UCM discoveries into GE we need to have graduate students (TAs) staff discussion sections of GE course. That way the GE program is fully aligned with the research mission of the campus and undergraduate student learning is enhanced.
- Our faculty are interested in being more involved with GE at UC Merced and expanding our course offerings to better meet the needs of our institution. We are currently developing some new lower division courses that we would like to see added to the GE offerings and are excited about the opportunity to contribute more to the GE curriculum.
- Our faculty believe that a number of our upper division courses could serve the GE curriculum well and are interested in adding them to the upper division GE offerings.

Other general comments:

- One unique feature of UC Merced is that we are interested in getting students involved in conducting research as an undergraduate. This could be better leveraged by expanding involvement of our graduate programs in our GE courses. For instance we could have our graduate students serve as TAs, which would illustrate to our undergraduates at a very early point in time the opportunities that exist. This can be further expanded within the other GE offerings as well.

Feedback regarding General Education from the English faculty

On January 20th, 2015, the English teaching faculty—Drs. Gregg Camfield, Jan Goggans, Matthew Kaiser, Nigel Hatton, Katherine Brokaw, and Taryn Hakala—met to discuss the GE retreat synthesis document and our hopes for general education. We were in agreement about the following points:

- We would like to see articulations of GE move beyond the language of “skills” to language that addresses the different ways of thinking that are acquired through engaging in different disciplinary perspectives.
- We believe that these ways of thinking do something different from skills (which feed into the language of employability): encountering different ways of thinking builds global citizenship.
- We noted the academy’s bias towards teaching cognition, but we think (feel?) that we in literature also teach affective skills: we teach wise emotions, aesthetics, ethical awareness, and empathy. While the GE Retreat Synthesis document addresses ethics in the fourth point of the 5th Hallmark, we think that the language of “proficiency” and “reasoning” in this articulation undermines the way that affective, ethical, and emotional engagement often transcends cognition and reasoning.
- We are in unanimous agreement that the new GE program should have a Literature requirement, which could be fulfilled by a course in English, Spanish, or another language’s literature once we have expanded UCM’s literature&language departments. Literature classes teach specific ways of thinking and feeling. These ways of thinking and feeling include emotional and aesthetic awareness; understanding historical, geographic, and culture contexts and developing empathy for the different times, places, and cultures; close reading and rhetorical analysis, including an understanding of how writing is understood differently by different audiences and readers; parsing and accepting the complexity and ambiguity of texts; understanding authorial positions and their effect on verbal communication; understanding how and why meaning is made through language; and enhanced oral and written communication skills on the part of the student. While some of these ways of thinking and feeling (and skills) are common to other humanities classes, we think that many of them are unique to literature courses, and teach a kind of engagement that is crucial for ALL students, regardless of discipline. Traditionally, the baccalaureate degree was one of Arts and Letters—we want to retain the “Letters” part of that!
- We are also unanimously agreed that a general education program at a top-tier institution that is training its students for a globalized world needs to have requirements of 2 semesters of foreign language or a demonstration of equal foreign language proficiency.
- In addition to the skills and ways of thinking and feeling taught in literature and foreign language courses, we feel that history, anthropology, and Global Arts Studies teach unique ways of thinking that should be part of a general education, and not subsumed under one “humanities” requirement.

- We noted that most top-tier universities are requiring an increased engagement with the arts and humanities in their science and engineering programs. As the first research university of the 21st century, not the last of the 20th, we submit that a top-notch scientist or engineer needs to be thoroughly engaged with the ways of thinking taught by the humanities; and conversely, of course, humanists (and social scientists) should have scientific literacy. Dialogues between humanists, social scientists, artists, engineers, scientists, and entrepreneurs should be encouraged not only among our faculty and graduate students, but among our undergraduates; a more interdisciplinary GE program will enable this.

- Our faculty was curious as to how these changes will be implemented. Will the entire faculty have a vote in the final general education curriculum?



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Response to the GE Retreat/Synthesis
History Faculty

- (1) Please review Part I of the Retreat Synthesis, which includes a description of the distinctive institutional context and hallmarks of baccalaureate degrees at UCM. What you do find important to the BA/BS for all students? From your major field perspective, what makes a degree from UC Merced distinctive? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?**

History faculty agree that our small size and our fortuitous location at a global crossroads give us a rich opportunity to cultivate global citizenship and a sense of curiosity and discovery that transcends traditional educational boundaries. From our perspective, the opportunity to become steeped in the contours of global citizenship and a broad cultural awareness (including community, economy, and discipline) will continue to make a degree from UCM distinctive, and these components (however they are operationalized) should be emphasized. In particular, sub-part 2 (from the retreat synthesis) regarding cultural awareness is especially important to the work of History as an undergraduate major, and to the work of the University. Equipping students with the tools to navigate boundaries and embrace diversity form important aspects of our curriculum. Our classes and objectives similarly emphasize a community engagement, self-awareness, and the importance of interpersonal skill development. All of these harmonize with our major's existing Program Learning Outcomes.

One specific area we would like to see considered for addition revolves around language learning. One potential node of distinction for our undergraduates would be a sincere language-learning requirement. We have a chance to emphasize the centrality of language to the kinds of global citizenship expressed in Part I and the capacity to learn, engage, and take risks encompassed in Part 2. One reason for our excitement about language learning is that so many of our students arrive speaking two languages, which gives them previous experience as language learners and an opportunity to become trilingual, an incredible talent to bring to future research and work.

- (2) Please review Part II of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes what retreat participants thought General Education should contribute to the baccalaureate degree of every UC Merced student in light of the aforementioned hallmarks of the baccalaureate degree. What resonates with your faculty? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?**

The bullet points outlined in Part II resonate strongly with our faculty, as does the image schema created by one group. As one point of emphasis, we strongly suggest creating structures that enhance students' global sensibilities by requiring them to take courses in the Humanities, Arts, and Languages, with a special emphasis on language. We would like to see greater specificity about the importance of leading students to confront diversity in classes with both a global and local foci. In this way we both promote the kinds of awareness and curiosity that occupy some of the bullet points, and facilitate the development of knowledge and skills discussed in others.

We would also like to suggest an additional element not mentioned thus far: the ability to estimate, confront, and adapt to thinking about "contingency"—considered historically as change over time, or considered dynamically as contemporary moments. Doing so would radically enhance the bullet for this question ("Facilitates development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for lives of engaged learning and citizenship beyond college.").

(3) Please review Part III of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes the experiences GE might include in light of the role of GE in an undergraduate degree in UC Merced. What resonates with your faculty? What you would want to see emphasized? What might be added to these descriptions? What might your program contribute to this vision? And/or how might your major and/or minor play a role in GE at our campus?

The majority of the items in Part III resonate with the history faculty. We agree that it is essential for ladder-rank faculty to teach GE courses. In all of our teaching, we emphasize research and research experience and embrace the inclusion of research in the GE requirements, and we have several faculty who are interested in the community-engaged elements under the bullet point on connecting courses and experiences. We would add to these descriptions the centrality of training in writing. Research acumen without the technical ability to share results—be they from a laboratory experiment, archival research, or fieldwork in the community—would leave students with only half of a skill set necessary for success within the University and in all lines of work beyond. Once again, we also want to stress that successfully delivering on the pedagogical aims outlined in the five bullet-pointed items also requires 1. Language learning; 2. Global awareness; and 3. Immersion in local, state, and national questions related to diversity.

From our major field perspective, we feel privileged to be able to contribute to the mission of providing a rich, connected General Education that fosters and enhances the distinctiveness of a UC Merced Baccalaureate degree. Our curriculum in history is already based on the idea of “the world at home; at home in the world.” We have a World History emphasis including a required 2-course sequence in World History that we would be delighted and capable (in terms of ladder rank faculty and GSIs) to make part of a revised GE pathway. We also strongly support the addition of a U.S.-based diversity requirement for all students. Seven UC campuses already have this requirement. We currently have four ladder rank faculty members who teach classes that would serve this requirement. We would be delighted to see this requirement framed to include (and possibly emphasize) social justice as a theme locally, nationally, and internationally *over time*.

As we recommend above, one key element we see missing is the question of contingency. We believe that including this principle—which is essential to all research and work with members of communities—would enhance the distinctiveness of a degree from UC Merced. As historians, we deal with the questions of contingency (decision making, causal hierarchies, etc.) in our work and would contribute to delivering courses that meet that requirement.

To summarize, our strongest categorical suggestions are:

1. Maintain the existing emphases on global learning, community awareness, research, and engagement.
2. Add language learning, contingency, and a strong diversity/social justice component.

We thank the Committee and our colleagues for their work and for inviting our participation in this important discussion.

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March 31, 2015

Feedback on GE Retreat Synthesis

Dear Anne-

The Psychological Sciences unit (PS) has reviewed the GE retreat summary. It appears that many good things came out of the retreat.

As per your memo of March 6th, the PS unit wanted to provide you with some feedback based on what was included in the retreat summary. There are several general points we would like to make:

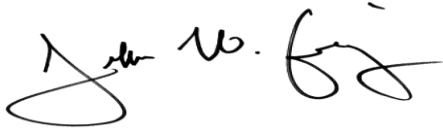
1. We have little to add to Part 1 other than suggesting that the university strategic plan and its themes be woven into this discussion once the plan is finalized. We might also want to better stress the intimate nature of this small campus and the opportunities it provides for positive professor-student contact. We also noted that the items in Part 1 were referred to as "hallmarks". Is this meant to be synonymous with "goals" or "benchmarks"? If so, there are many items in Part 1 that will not readily lend themselves to evaluation or assessment of progress.
2. Similarly many of the items in Part 2 are not operationally defined so that assessment/evaluation would be possible. We also wondered how the assessments mentioned in Part 2 would be accomplished. For example, it will be important that assessments of GE are consistent across programs/schools and that they are tied somehow to curriculum. This will be a resource-intensive process at the many levels. Therefore, who will do these assessments and how will they be integrated into the curriculum or other UCM mechanisms?
3. Part 3 highlights the needs for resources all the more. First, GE is not an isolated aspect of a BA program. It will effect enrollments in upper division and lower division courses (especially if some of the GE classes are prerequisites for other classes), major requirements, demands on faculty, and the make-up of classroom audiences. For example, if the requirements to be a GE course are modified such that PS GE courses must incorporate specific curriculum or objectives, PS will have to revise a large number of courses and may encounter problems (we now have xxx courses that satisfy the GE requirement) covering both the topical content as well as new GE objectives.

Admittedly, however, PS has had prior discussions about the difficulties that can arise when a course designed for majors includes nonmajor GE students. Developmental Psychology (PSY 130) is one such course and it typically has a significant number of nonmajor enrollees. One way we could improve GE options may be for PS to provide some courses for nonmajors (e.g., developmental psychology). This way, the prerequisites and content for the major and nonmajor forms of the course could be designed to suit the needs of different groups of students better than they currently do.

Finally, the PS undergraduate major produces the highest number of credit hours on campus and with only 13 ladder rank faculty we rely a great deal on lecturers. In our recent undergraduate program review, the credit hour production and lecturer-to-ladder rank ratio was commented on as a “less than desirable situation”. As PS now stands, we do not have the resources to cover capstone courses or courses with a large community engagement obligation, and expanding our lecturer pool or acquiring a sufficient number of new FTEs to do so is not likely in the near future. No doubt that similar problems exist for other programs on campus (e.g., writing, bio). That said, we might start conversations at the university level to address the needs for community engagement and other labor-intensive student experiences and how we might access the needed resources and/or establish a system in the review of faculty that rewards/acknowledges them for this work.

In closing, PS supports a broad GE experience at UCM and we look forward to future discussions on this topic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey W. Gilger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

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Sociology Faculty Response to the General Education Retreat Synthesis

Part I: What are the hallmarks of a baccalaureate degree from UCM? From your major field perspective, what makes a degree from UC Merced distinctive?

Sociology is an ideal field to teach students to "bring a critical, evaluative lens to problems, questions, situations" as sociology classes teach students to question their assumptions about social trends, as well as to develop tools to analyze those trends.

Sociology classes provide students with the tools to "Evaluate facts, knowledge and information," as empirical data is the foundation of our discipline. The research skills offered by sociology are relevant to any career. Social data are used in a large range of occupations, and the ability to evaluate and analyze data are very valuable skills.

Sociology courses address issues of power and inequality that are relevant to every possible occupation. By taking sociology courses, students with other majors gain an understanding of how political, economic, and social factors influence the structure of society, the structure of any organization, as well as our individual lives.

Sociology is the study of society, including the various diverse groups that make up a particular society. We teach about differences between the groups, and how structures create or maintain those differences. Doing so addresses stereotypes and thus helps students to learn to respect and value diversity. Our students develop cultural understandings that will make them especially well suited to face the future.

Sociology at UCM often includes discussions where students can share experiences and learn from others – allowing them to recognize similarities and differences across racial/ethnic, class, gender, sexual statuses, etc.

Part II: What should General Education contribute to the baccalaureate degree of every UC Merced student?

All students need good critical thinking as well as writing skills. When students have a good foundation in critical thinking and writing, sociology classes allow them to build on that base.

The ability to analyze problems, critically evaluate information, and develop evidence-based solutions is important for all students. These skills will be valuable throughout their lives, as they encounter different problems in a variety of arenas.

Aspects of society are inter-related. We are confronted with information from a range of disciplines on an almost daily basis. Having taken coursework in a range of disciplines makes us better able to understand the information we encounter, as well as gives us tools to evaluate the quality of the information.

Knowledge about different topics and disciplines makes us more well rounded as individuals. We have more in common with more people, and can connect with people very different from ourselves more easily.

Part III: What should GE at UC Merced look like? What should be emphasized?

Sociology faculty especially like the emphasis on research skills and experiences. As noted above, these are invaluable throughout an individual's life, in almost all occupations but also in day to day living.

We also like the idea of connecting courses and experiences -- many sociology courses do this, for example, by helping students see the relationship between social structures and their individual experience.

Finally, connections between different courses are very worthwhile. Disciplines approach problems and situations differently, and having taken courses with related content provides students with the ability to approach problems in a broad and nuanced way that is appropriate for the complexity of the social (and natural) world.

A few concerns:

We have heard discussion of adding a language requirement for all students. While in the long run we think this would be a very positive addition, we are very concerned that the campus does not have enough resources to do this right now, while majors and graduate programs are severely under-staffed. Adding this requirement would require that the campus focus all of its resources for hiring faculty on language faculty, and this would be a big problem for programs like ours, which do not have enough faculty to offer our undergraduate or graduate curriculum. Basic needs must be taken care of first.

One caution about requiring community based learning: When we engage with the local community, we have to be very careful that we do so in a respectful way, ensuring that the

students we send into local organizations are well trained and supervised. The sociology faculty are very enthusiastic about community engagement, however, to send hundreds (or thousands) of under-prepared undergraduates into community organizations would be disrespectful of the community and would do more harm than good.

The campus might want to develop some short term and long term GE goals. Some goals might only be feasible once we are a more mature campus, with current undergraduate majors fully staffed. For example, sociology would love to add a Senior capstone class to our major, but we do not have the faculty right now to do that. We also plans on offering intensive research practicum courses more often, but need additional faculty before we can do so.

GE Faculty Survey 2014 -Spanish.

All members of the Spanish faculty were asked to complete the Retreat Synthesis questionnaire. Below there are the individual comments from those that replayed.

Comments from Virginia Adán-Lifante, Caroline Kreide, Ignacio López-Calvo, Yolanda Pineda-Vargas, and Elinor Torda.

Virginia Adán-Lifante, Senior Lecturer SOE.

I was a participant in the May retreat, so I agree with the information in the Retreat Synthesis. Anyway, I would like to take this opportunity to share ideas related to the Spanish and Foreign Languages programs and their contribution to GE at UC Merced as well as my preoccupation for the lack of interest at UC Merced to make the study of Foreign Languages part of the education of our students:

- (1) Please review Part I of the Retreat Synthesis, which includes a description of the distinctive institutional context and hallmarks of baccalaureate degrees at UCM. What you do find important to the BA/BS for all students? From your major field perspective, what makes a degree from UC Merced distinctive? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?

The Spanish major and minor responds to many of the hallmarks of the baccalaureate degree at UC Merced summarized in the Retreat Synthesis. As expressed in some of our PLOS we consider important all the hallmarks mentioned in the retreat synthesis, but for me cultural awareness, sensitivity, and responsiveness are especially relevant. Students should have opportunities to appreciate and embrace their own culture as well as others, so GE should include different perspectives and provide students with the opportunity to learn other cultures. For this reason, I would like to see a major relevance of the study of Foreign Languages as part of a UC Merced baccalaureate degree and General Education.

- (2) Please review Part II of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes what retreat participants thought General Education should contribute to the baccalaureate degree of every UC Merced student in light of the aforementioned hallmarks of the baccalaureate degree. What resonates with your faculty? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?

I agree with the way GE should contribute to the baccalaureate degree of every UC Merced student. I would like to emphasize that equal importance should be given to the sciences and social sciences as to the humanities. It is generally thought that UC Merced is all about the sciences, and that is the reason that a lot of emphasis is placed on problem solving. I think our graduates should also demonstrate a strong understanding of the humanities. There are problems in our society that the sciences cannot solve and are better understood from a humanistic perspective, for this reason I think students should have opportunities in their degrees to explore the humanities.

- (3) Please review Part III of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes the experiences GE might include in light of the role of GE in an undergraduate degree in UC Merced. What resonates with your faculty? What you would want to see emphasized? What might be added to these descriptions? What might your program contribute to this vision? And/or how might your major and/or minor play a role in GE at our campus?

Several instructors in our program are always looking for ways to facilitate service learning opportunities for our students. Our goal is that students use the content of the courses and their own linguistic abilities in more than one language to get involved with the Merced community. Other instructors have research projects open to students' collaboration. In addition, I think that our courses also provide students with the opportunity to pursue research and teach them how to find sources of information. They also emphasize oral and written communication and some courses provide students with opportunities to work collaboratively as members of a team. Our courses are also interdisciplinary, which help students understand the need of to consider facts and events from different perspectives. I also consider that our Spanish minor and major, as well as the courses in other foreign languages UC Merced offers, contribute to students's better understanding of other cultures, while helping them to appreciate their own culture. We encourage study abroad and several students are motivated to go abroad after they have learned in our courses about linguistic and cultural issues regarding a specific foreign country in our courses. I consider that the Spanish Program, as well as the Foreign Languages Program, plays an important role in GE on our campus. I just hope, that our Foreign Languages Program receive the support it deserves by making it part of our General Education .

Caroline Kreider, Lecturer

Questions 1 and 2:

Overall, I agree with the summary and do not find major problems from my limited viewpoint.

Below a few considerations:

I find the interweaving of a "strong disciplinary foundation" with "interdisciplinary thinking" of great importance in the proposed BA/BS GE structure, not only for the sake of providing a large palette of areas of knowledge to the student, but also to avoid the development of single-minded technocrats, which is a danger in the current overvaluation of majors in the natural sciences. In that vein, it would be helpful to clarify that the heavy emphasis that is being put on self-identifying as a "research university" is meant to be understood in the widest of terms, namely a university that fosters inquiry in all areas of knowledge, and that GE values all disciplines and considers them equals. Personally, I would welcome a statement that points out that each area of knowledge plays a role in forming the educated person. (My view is coloured by the two Span 01 classes I just taught, full of majors in the natural sciences, who had a minimal interest in Spanish).

An area that should be emphasized more is #2 "Cultural awareness, sensitivity and responsiveness...". This point might require more fleshing out to underline its importance. It could be elaborated that respect for other cultures will lead to understanding and harmonious interaction and thus be a great tool for the peaceful coexistence with others. It would make the

more sense since our student body in itself is quite diverse and would be natural candidates for tolerant, accepting attitudes towards otherness. Apart from that, I can anecdotally say that the geographical knowledge of the students I have taught so far at UCM is very poor. Again, I believe that this area deserves more detail and fleshing out.

Another area that might benefit from more detail is #5, Interpersonal Skills. There should be a statement to include good manners, general etiquette and civility.

What does the study of Spanish contribute to the GE pattern?

Listed under Part II, the 7th bullet point encapsulates well what the introductory Spanish courses at UCM attempt to achieve: they facilitate “development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for lives of engaged learning and citizenship beyond college. Examples include: critical thinking, effective written and oral communication, problem-solving, teamwork, cross- and inter-cultural understanding and experience, ethical practices, and responsibility for one’s own learning.”

The introductory courses in the Spanish program at UCM (the only ones I can comment on) are intellectually demanding and produce students who are engaged on all of those levels as listed above. Particularly “effective written and oral communication” with its emphasis on the development of writing are stand-outs of the program.

Part III: What should GE look like?

Since the Spanish courses encapsulate the above point so well, a language requirement of two semester’s length should be considered.

Likewise, to honor the cultural awareness mandate listed in Part I, study abroad should be advanced as a primary tool for acquiring a broadbased education in record time. Study abroad are mind-opening experiences that provide education in a concentrated fashion since they educate the student not only inside of the classroom, but also experientially outside of it.

Ignacio López-Calvo, Full Professor

Prof. Ignacio López-Calvo thinks that the ideas on the Retreat Synthesis cover most of the important aspects to consider. But from the perspective of the Spanish Program he considers important to add these ideas to any of the three questions.

- Learning to respect and appreciate cultural diversity
- Developing a thirst for intercultural communication, for learning about other languages, literatures, cultures, histories, and geographies.
- Developing critical thinking and a capacity to tolerate and appreciate different opinions
- Becoming comfortable with active learning in the classroom
- Developing at least a basic knowledge of the foundational or canonical texts in the humanities
- Encouraging collaboration skills and becoming comfortable with learning communities

- Learning basic research techniques in the humanities and becoming familiarized with the integration of the appropriate technologies

Yolanda Pineda-Vargas, Lecturer

Yolanda Pineda-Vargas also think that the ideas on the Retreat Synthesis are pertinent. She just would like to emphasize the importance of student involvement with the community as a way to use what is being learned in class while learning about the community.

Elinor Torda, Lecturer

(1) Please review Part I of the Retreat Synthesis, which includes a description of the distinctive institutional context and hallmarks of baccalaureate degrees at UCM.

What you do (do you?) find important to the BA/BS for all students?

As part of a global community, we are closely connected to other people and nations of the world, economically, socially and politically speaking. Since these relationships are interdependent, I believe that a B.A. in Spanish has greater value than ever. The ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning “Preparing for the 21st century” were developed to “...educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American study and abroad” (ACTFL). Our Foreign Language Program espouses this vision as well as the Five C’s of Foreign Language Education (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, communities). The B.A. in Spanish helps prepare them to develop and strengthen their communication skills, which will be essential throughout their lifetime, both professionally and personally. Also, it is of utmost importance that our students gain not only a cultural awareness, but learn to respect those of diverse cultures. These two highly intertwined areas are at the forefront of our program. Furthermore, by making connections, our students reinforce their knowledge of other disciplines and they broaden their viewpoints by studying a foreign language and different culture, which fits into the goal of preparing our students to be active and fruitful members in multilingual and multicultural environments, both in the United States and in other countries.

From your major field perspective, what makes a degree from UC Merced distinctive?

One of the major benefits of obtaining a B.A. in Spanish from UC Merced is the fact that our campus is still relatively young and our program is still growing. Therefore, the student-faculty ratio continues to be lower than on other campuses, which lends itself to a more personalized educational experience for our students. As our campus grows, however, it is clear that it will be difficult to maintain the amount of individual attention provided to the students in our program. Over time, perhaps we can adapt our program to continue this frequent one-on-one interaction between faculty and students. Another reason that a B.A. degree in Spanish from UC Merced is distinctive is due to its location and demographics. Since Merced is a smaller than those cities where other UC campuses are located, it is easier to become involved. As mentioned above, community engagement is an area that we encourage our students to embrace. There are ample opportunities in Merced for them to contribute their local community, utilizing their knowledge of the Spanish and sometimes their personal cultural and familial experiences. By doing so, they not only make connections and give back to those in need, but it will help them develop their self-esteem and to grow as an individual.

What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?

I do not have any additional information to contribute to these descriptions.



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From: Kurt Schnier

To: GESC Members

All of the units within UC Merced were asked to respond to three questions regarding the Retreat Synthesis document that was circulated by GESC. Five units (Anthropology, Cognitive and Information Sciences, Economics, English, Spanish) responded to the GESC inquiry. A general synthesis of the feedback is:

General Synthesis

- Add more focus on cultural awareness and community engagement
- Add a language requirement
- Add more writing requirements
- Provide more continuity in GE execution (hire ladder-rank faculty)
- GE should develop fundamental research skills
- GE should be interdisciplinary
- Focus on the elements of GE that the student will not be acquiring in their major/minor
- The objectives of GE and how they are achieved should be concrete and measurable
- Expansion of CORE 1 to include human decision making
- Stronger integration of graduate and undergraduate studies through research exposure
- Find ways to incorporate graduate students in GE (i.e., TAs) to facilitate student learning and exposure to research discovery
- A stronger emphasis on training students about different ways of “thinking” should be a hallmark of GE at UC Merced
- GE should take a balanced approach and weigh equally the sciences, social sciences and humanities.

Listed below is a summary of the responses that were received broken down by the three questions used as prompts for feedback. In the case that the unit did not partition their responses by the questions I have taken an educated guess on its appropriate placement. All comments are paraphrased and cited by the sources should the other members of GESC wish to read through the comments more thoroughly.

- (1) Please review Part I of the Retreat Synthesis, which includes a description of the distinctive institutional context and hallmarks of baccalaureate degrees at UCM. What you do find important to the BA/BS for all students? From your major field perspective, what makes a

degree from UC Merced distinctive? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?

- (Anthropology): Part 1 captures all elements important to GE. The elements of basic knowledge; historical context of disciplinary thought; critical assessment of theory; method, and results; ethical practice; methodological skill; communication skill are included in ANTH PLOs, while cultural awareness is fundamental to anthropological thought and practice. As the campus grows it will be challenging to meet the focus on research in GE at UC Merced. Courses within a student's major are more likely to focus on Depth and Breadth (#1) as well as Interpersonal Skills (#5). Therefore, a good place for GE is to focus on Cultural Sensitivity (#2), Community Engagement (#3), and Self-awareness (#4).
- (Cognitive and Information Sciences (CIS)): An educational atmosphere that embraces interdisciplinary approaches is one hallmark of UC Merced. Our university is also distinguished by its living commitment to diversity. UC Merced also stands out with regard to its community engagement efforts. The principals of GE outlined are well defined, but they lack concrete deliverables and are vague. What are the clear next steps that need to be taken to ensure that future program design and other activities fulfill the objectives of GE?
- (Economics): It would be nice to see the development of quantitative reasoning skills be more concretely integrated into GE. Engaging students in the discovery process at UCM could be expanded by integrating graduate students into the execution of GE (i.e., TAs). More focus on the development of a strong sense of self-identity and purpose would be beneficial.
- (English): We would like to see articulations of GE move beyond the language of "skills" to language that addresses the different ways of thinking that are acquired through engaging in different disciplinary perspectives. The academy is biased towards teaching cognition. A top-tier GE program should require each student to have a literature requirement as well as 2 semesters of foreign language or a demonstration of equal foreign language proficiency.
- (Spanish): Key elements of GE should include cultural awareness, sensitivity, responsiveness and the development of interpersonal skills. Students should have opportunities to appreciate and embrace their own culture as well as others, so GE should include different perspectives and provide students with the opportunity to learn other cultures. For this reason, I would like to see a major relevance of the study of Foreign Languages as part of a UC Merced baccalaureate degree and General Education.

(2) Please review Part II of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes what retreat participants thought General Education should contribute to the baccalaureate degree of every UC Merced student in light of the aforementioned hallmarks of the baccalaureate degree. What resonates with your faculty? What would you want to see emphasized or added to these descriptions?

- (Anthropology): The list is very comprehensive but the omission of foreign languages and cross-cultural competency is noted. A number of points fit in tightly with the

PLOs of the ANTH major/minor, but additional focus on broad exposure (#3), interdisciplinarity (#4) and transcends and contextualizes major (#5) may be beneficial.

- (CIS): The interdisciplinarity of UC Merced is a hallmark of the baccalaureate degree. The CIS faculty recommend the development of a CORE 1 module on human decision making, perhaps focusing on “rationality and irrationality” or some broad aspect of human cognition.
- (Economics): With research at the center shouldn't there be a clear statement of how we want students to develop research skills? Research and discovery are a core element of education at UC Merced and this should be a component of GE. Undergraduates should have more of a connection with the graduate students; having graduate students TA GE courses would help achieve this connection.
- (English): Top-tier universities have increasingly engaged the arts and humanities into their science and engineering programs. As the first university of 21st century we should do the same and create an interdisciplinary dialogue. Focusing on teaching students ways of thinking is critical to GE. Although many of the humanities courses focus on this, it should be part of GE in general so everyone has those skills. The disciplines well suited to teaching different ways of thinking are literature, foreign languages, history, anthropology and Global Arts studies.
- (Spanish): Equal importance should be given to the sciences, humanities and social sciences in GE. UC Merced currently is focused on sciences and more focus should be on the humanities and languages.

(3) Please review Part III of the Retreat Synthesis, which describes the experiences GE might include in light of the role of GE in an undergraduate degree in UC Merced. What resonates with your faculty? What you would want to see emphasized? What might be added to these descriptions? What might your program contribute to this vision? And/or how might your major and/or minor play a role in GE at our campus?

- (Anthropology): Part III is ambitious. ANTH would like to see more of a balance between ladder-rank and non-ladder rank faculty teaching GE. Would like to see the reintroduction of seminars with sufficient faculty compensation to ensure participation (i.e., address the overload aspect of the old seminars). Furthermore, providing continuity in CORE 1 would be great and hiring one or two ladder-rank faculty who are responsible for the course versus rotating lecturers may enhance the experience. Within the GE curriculum a stronger emphasis on writing would be great. Lastly, the role and importance of GE should be integrated from day one by strengthening its role in student academic advising.
- (CIS): CIS is a strongly interdisciplinary discipline. The courses offered by CIS strengthen this and expose the students to many different perspectives. The CIS courses provide key insights into many of the other disciplines taught at UC Merced. CIS students take courses (or cross-listed courses) in many other disciplines across campus. CIS provides key insights that are essential for understanding the world and humanity's place within it.
- (Economics): Training student to critical thinkers in an important component of GE. Getting graduate students involved in GE (i.e., TAs) will help align the research

mission of the campus with the goals of undergraduate student learning. The Economics faculty is interested in increasing their involvement with GE and is currently working on course offerings to better serve GE at UC Merced.

- (English): The faculty see themselves are extremely vested in the future of GE at UC Merced. The faculty would like to see a stronger emphasis on training students in different ways of thinking. This would be achieved by making literature, languages, history, anthropology and Global Arts studies an integral component of GE.
- (Spanish): Learning another language helps individuals be more engaged in the community and the Spanish faculty can help facilitate this engagement. The courses taught by the Spanish faculty emphasize oral and written communication and opportunities to work collaboratively. The courses are also interdisciplinary and help students approach topics from different perspectives. I consider that the Spanish Program, as well as the Foreign Languages Program, plays an important role in GE on our campus. I just hope, that our Foreign Languages Program receive the support it deserves by making it part of our General Education.

Gen Ed retreat

Anne Zanzucchi <azanzucchi@ucmerced.edu>

Fri, Apr 24, 2015 at 1:43 PM

To: Nella Van Dyke <nvandyke@ucmerced.edu>

Cc: Elizabeth Whitt <ewhitt@ucmerced.edu>, Jack Vevea <jvevea@ucmerced.edu>

Hello Nella,

Thank you for writing. We appreciate the Sociology program's interest in participating in GE planning and understand these concerns.

If it is helpful to know, these noted options were considered in planning the retreat date. To summarize some background, we found that May options were overlapping with instruction / grading or conference travel. For GESOC members (who will facilitate sessions), June 10-11 was our most inclusive option. Delaying the retreat to early fall would present other challenges, so establishing this retreat date was a necessary step in what will be a multifaceted, ongoing process of review and consultation. From initial confirmations, this June date seems to work for many participants.

To clarify overall planning, this retreat is only one step on a long road that must include numerous opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to have significant input into the process and outcomes for GE planning. The topics to be addressed at the June retreat – GE principles, outcomes – will continue to be discussed widely, as was the case with last year's retreat synthesis.

In addition to structured opportunities to provide input, the GESOC maintains an open door policy for anyone who has ideas or concerns about the shaping of general education. If there are any priorities or suggestions that your program's faculty wish to share, please know that there will be many opportunities to provide input on retreat outcomes and related GE planning.

All the best,

Anne

On Wed, Apr 22, 2015 at 2:40 PM, Nella Van Dyke <nvandyke@ucmerced.edu> wrote:

> Hi Anne-

>

> I am writing because I am very concerned that a General Education retreat has been scheduled for June 10th and 11th. I think it is a serious problem to schedule a retreat that should include broad faculty participation at a time when faculty are not on duty, and as a practical matter, are not available. I know that it is very hard to find a time when faculty from across the campus are available, however, there are options other than in the middle of the summer. For example, good times might be during exam week, or, the week prior to the start of classes in August. Sociology is very interested in general education and we teach a lot of general education classes. However, there is not a single sociology faculty member available in the middle of June to attend the retreat. I suspect that the same is true for many other groups on campus as well. And ultimately, important meetings like this just should not be scheduled when faculty are off duty.

>

> I urge the Gen Ed committee to reconsider the timing of the retreat. Thank you for all of the work you are doing.

>

> Best,

> Nella