

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 30, 2004
TO: Rosario Diaz-Greenberg, Secretary
Academic Senate
FROM: Karen S. Haynes *KSH*
President

Robert Sheath *Bob Sheath*
Provost

SUBJECT: GEC 261-03, Resolution on Definition of Upper-Division Education

We have reviewed the CSUSM Resolution entitled "Definition of Upper-Division Education" (GEC 261-03, copy attached). The resolution is well-reasoned. We concur with the Academic Senate's analysis and findings and accept the resolution.

Please extend our thanks and appreciation to the members of the GEC for their thoughtful examination of the campus' UDGE structure and comparison to other CSU campus' structure, and for preparing and presenting the aforementioned resolution to the Academic Senate.

KSH/RS/mab

Attachment

cc: Jackie Trischman, Chair, Academic Senate (04-05)
Staci Beavers, Chair, GEC (04-05)
John R. "Dick" Montanari, Chair, Academic Senate (03-04)
Michael Schmidt, Chair, GEC (03-04)
✓ David Barsky, Associate Vice President for Academic Programs

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Definition of Upper-Division Education

Background

In 1999, the Academic Senate, upon recommendations of the General Education Committee (GEC), passed the following definition for Upper-Division General Education (UDGE):

Upper Division General Education provides an opportunity for students to learn about areas of study outside their academic major. Upper Division General Education courses assume satisfaction of Lower Division General Education Requirements and develop upper division skills. Courses should not require discipline-specific prerequisites. Designed for non-majors, these courses make explicit the basic assumptions, principles and methods of the disciplinary or interdisciplinary area of study. This conceptual framework and the applicability of these principles and methods should be emphasized throughout the course.

Upper Division General Education courses should help students see how disciplines, ideas, issues and knowledge are often interrelated, intersecting and interconnected. These courses should also provide students with a classroom environment that fosters independent, active, engaged learning and a genuine curiosity about the subject matter.

This definition did not specify the number of units for an UDGE course, as all previous submissions for UDGE credit had been three units.

The CSU requirement for UDGE, specified in Title V and Executive Order 595, is a total of nine units. Executive Order 595 authorizes each campus to make "reasonable adjustments" in the number of units, but warns that the adjusted requirements "will not unduly exceed any of the prescribed credit minima."

California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) has further required that the 9 units be specified to include 3 units each in Mathematics and Physical or Biological Science (Area BB), 3 units in Arts and Humanities (Area CC), and 3 units in the Social Sciences (Area DD).

In the 2003-2004 academic year, several courses previously approved for UDGE credit were changed to 4 unit courses, and several new 4-unit courses were proposed for UDGE credit. The approval of 4-unit courses has several possible consequences:

- (1) 3-unit UDGE courses may be unavailable for a student in a given area if (a) no 3-unit courses are offered in the area, (b) all the 3-unit courses in the area fill up prior to a student's registration time, or (c) available 3-unit courses in a given area conflict with other aspects of a student's schedule.

(2) If a student has to take a 4-unit course instead of a 3-unit course for any of the reasons outlined in (1), that student's fees may increase if (a) the student was planning on taking two 3-unit courses and instead has to take one 4-unit course and one 3-unit course in regular session, or (b) the student is taking the 4-unit course in special session.

(3) Standard schedule times for 4-unit courses do not mesh well with standard schedule times for 3-unit courses, so a student majoring in a discipline with many 3-unit courses may have a hard time scheduling a 4-unit GE courses to fit his or her schedule, if there are no open 3-unit UDGE courses available.

In examining the UDGE programs of other CSU campuses, the GEC discovered that some 4 unit courses have been approved for UDGE credit; however, in the vast majority of cases, these courses carry 3 or 4 units of credit, with 4 units being required for majors in the department where the course is being offered and optional for nonmajor and general education students. The GEC would be willing to consider approving such a structure for UDGE courses at CSUSM after consultation with academic departments and with the office of the Vice-President for Academic Programs about its effect on class scheduling and other practical issues concerning the delivery of the curriculum.

Therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the following paragraph be appended to the Definition of Upper-Division General Education:

Upper Division General Education courses shall be three-unit courses, or shall provide a 3-unit option to students seeking GE credit, so that three such courses will exactly correspond with the 9-unit Upper Division General Education requirement of the CSU.

And be it further

RESOLVED, that the UDGE-BB, UDGE-CC, and UDGE-DD forms be amended to reflect this change in the definition of Upper Division General Education.