

# POSSIBLE SCHEMES FOR GENERAL EDUCATION AT KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

*General Education Steering Committee  
December 1, 2004*

Before listing several possible future approaches to general education at K-State, we have three brief comments. First, because we were not charged with evaluating alternate schemes, the order of the schemes and commentary on them do not reflect any preferences by this committee. Secondly, most any of these schemes could be combined with another to produce still more alternatives. Finally, these were the schemes included in the faculty survey.

## **1. A continuation of our current system, UGE**

UGE can be considered to have both pedagogical and curriculum components. In this possible future scheme, UGE would be continued, along with efforts to improve it -- for instance, to encourage more UGE courses at the 300-level and above. An alternative to the direct continuation of UGE would be to keep the basic UGE structure but to eliminate the pedagogical component.

## **2. A scheme that emphasizes pedagogy**

In this approach, pedagogy (for instance, active learning or alternative pedagogical criteria) would be emphasized and few restrictions would be placed on which courses a student could take, as long as the courses met the pedagogical criteria. This scheme would be based on the assumption that active learning is a key component of students' learning, including learning to think.

## **3. A scheme that emphasizes curriculum**

Here, a set of general education courses would be identified that would promote breadth in a student's program of study. Students would be required to take a specified number of hours from this set of courses. This would be similar to the alternative mentioned under Scheme 1. Scheme 3 might have the advantage of being a fresh start. An issue to consider in either Scheme 1 or 3 is whether basic-skills courses (such as English composition or mathematics) should be part of the general education system.

## **4. A scheme that uses special, university-wide courses**

The idea here is to devise a set of university-wide courses that all students would take and that would emphasize the general education goals of the university. A benefit of such a scheme would be that all students would have some common experiences in their general education courses, experiences shaped by faculty members from across the university.

## **5. A combination of schemes 3 and 4**

In this approach there would be just one university-wide course, for first-year students. There would also be breadth requirements (as in option 3). This scheme would be based on the assumption that the first year in college can be a particularly formative time in a student's progress towards a general education.

## **6. A scheme that emphasizes a student's free selection of courses**

Here, all courses in the university could be available as general education courses for students, excluding those courses offered by their own major departments or academic programs. This scheme would recognize that many programs are geared to the acquisition of career skills, with many hours required in the major. The general education course sequence would be seen as serving purposes other than its own. For instance it would have the flexibility to contribute toward a student's pursuit of a minor emphasis or learning a language to fluency.

## **7. A scheme that emphasizes assessment of student learning outcomes**

In this approach, results from assessment of SLOs (student learning outcomes) that relate to goals of general education would be analyzed and recommendations made by which the programs might better meet their undergraduates' general education needs. This scheme would allow more flexibility and less prescription than our current scheme (UGE), but would establish greater scrutiny of the results of general education.

## **8. The null scheme**

Here we would not worry about general education at the university level. We included this in our options on the faculty survey as a measure of cynicism about general education (or about its institutionalization). We were encouraged to see that this was the least frequently selected scheme among the seven that we presented in the survey.