

An Ohlone Story

General Education Improvements

Submitted by the General Education Committee

A permanent General Education subcommittee of the College Curriculum Committee was established in Fall 2002. A major goal of this Committee was to dialog on the purpose, outcomes, and structure of the General Education requirements for the AS/AA degree. Initially State definitions were reviewed, made public and used as a basis for beginning discussions which included campus wide dialog. The current GE pattern was reviewed and revised in coordination with the development of a procedure for adding and deleting courses to/from the General Education Plan. Additionally the GE Committee and Counseling Department worked together to clarify and reformat the way general education and transfer information was presented in the catalog. As a result of that dialog, the General Education Graduation requirements were expanded to include three options: Plan A: Ohlone College; Plan B, CSU; Plan C, IGETC).

During 2003-04, Area II Social Sciences, which had included only History and Political Science courses, was expanded to include other Social Science courses. Courses were added or deleted to other GE areas following the procedural guidelines which were incorporated into CurricUNET. In Spring the committee reviewed the Tech Tools requirement. Information Competency was retained as a graduation requirement while the word processing and spreadsheet requirements were imbedded into other courses.

In 2004-2005, the primary goal of the committee was to write a general education philosophy and write student learning outcomes for each of the seven areas of Ohlone's general education plan. During this process, the committee and the faculty of Ohlone College began thinking more critically about an Ohlone College AA/AS degree and what it meant and what courses should be included.

During this process, several areas of the GE Plan A added or deleted approved courses to the GE list including the exclusion of lab only courses for the Natural Science Area and a higher-level Math requirement. At the end of 2004, the committee reviewed the merits of keeping the Humanities and Fine Arts areas of GE as separate and equally important parts of the Ohlone College General Education Plan A.

In 2005-2006, the GE committee finalized and approved student learning outcomes for each of the seven areas of GE Plan A and devised an evaluative rubric for measuring or assessing GE courses using Bloom's Learning Taxonomy. The committee continued to think about what constituted an AA/AS degree and Ohlone College and approved a change to require that student earn at least a "C" grade in ENGL 101A, MATH 155, and all courses approved for Analytical Thinking (Area IVB). Finally, a new assessment strategy (locally developed matrix tool), was devised for helping faculty assess their courses as appropriate courses for specific areas of Plan A GE.

In 2006-2007, the main thrust of the GE committee was to collect the SLO adherence status of all GE courses for Ohlone plan A. This first stage in the SLO/Assessment process was designed

to also begin a dialog among instructors, which brought to light the fact that their GE courses now include new SLO's (set by the committee last year), and at what Bloom Taxonomy level they are being addressed. The results of the SLO matrix rubrics are found here.

[FineArts](#)

[Humanities](#)

[Natural Science](#)

[Social Science](#)

[Language/Rationality A](#)

[Language/Rationality B](#)

[Language/Rationality C](#)

[Physical Ed](#)

[Wellness](#)

[Cultural Diversity](#)

[Information Competency](#)

Relation to the Ohlone College Values & Goals

We promote diversity, inclusiveness, and openness to differing viewpoints.

This value is present in the GE Committee's decision to include all major areas of social sciences not just political science and history in Area II. This expansion of Area II was a major change as it had been limited to a government course since the beginning of the college. The change involved significant faculty dialogue and ended up with considerable support.

We promote teamwork and open communication.

The process of asking faculty to write, approve and assess student learning outcomes for their general education approved courses as opposed to one group on campus making all the decisions about what is appropriate for general education demonstrated our value of teamwork and open communication.

As we gather SLO matrix information from the instructors, we are also collecting their comments on the procedure and suggestions for improved SLO statements for the different GE areas.

We maintain high standards in our constant pursuit of excellence.

Requiring a minimum of a "C" grade in the golden three areas of Communication and Analytical Thinking demonstrates the value that Ohlone College is committed to by helping our students reach higher standards for their future success.

The goal of the GE committee is to put in place an assessment system which, while satisfying the State's mandate, is meaningful to the instructor and improve the classroom experience for the student.

Promote appreciation for and understanding of diverse races and cultures by expanding the diversity of college personnel, international education offerings and exchanges, cross-curricula, and ethnic/cultural events.

This goal is apparent in the decision to include all the major social sciences in GE Plan A Area II. Additionally, Ohlone College has a Cultural Diversity requirement (Area VI) for an Ohlone AA/AS degree.

Develop across the curriculum the Learning College Model, utilizing methods and technologies that hold the most promise for improving course and program completion and success rates.

This goal is being addressed at each General Education meeting because we are always thinking about what an Ohlone AA/AS should be and how best to help our students complete their degrees and be successful. The collection of SLO rubric levels is helping GE instructors focus on the particular GE requirements of their classes.

Promote and maintain an accessible, clean, safe, and healthy college environment through continuous engagement of students and college personnel in campus preparedness, wellness, beautification, universal design, and environmental sustainability.

This goal is present in the inclusion of the Environmental Studies classes into the GE Plan A Natural Sciences classes. Inclusion of a Physical Education/Wellness course requirement for an Ohlone AA/AS degree demonstrates this goal for wellness.

Demonstration of Compliance with WSCA Accreditation Standards

Standard IIA. 3.a.b.c.

The institution requires of all academic and vocational degree programs a component of general education based on a carefully considered philosophy that is clearly stated in its catalog. The institution, relying on the expertise of its faculty, determines the appropriateness of each course for inclusion in the general education curriculum by examining the stated learning outcomes for the course.

General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it, including the following:

- a. An understanding of the basic content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge: areas include the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.*
- b. A capability to be a productive individual and life long learner: skills include oral communication and written communication, information competency, computer literacy, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis/logical thinking, and the ability to acquire knowledge through a variety of means.*
- c. A recognition of what it means to be an ethical human being and effective citizen: qualities include an appreciation of ethical principles; civility and interpersonal skills; respect for cultural diversity; historical aesthetic sensitivity; and the willingness to assume civic, political, and social responsibilities locally, nationally, and globally.*

In meeting these WASC accreditation standards Ohlone College has demonstrated its commitment to these areas of general knowledge in our General Education philosophy and requirements as evidenced in our catalog. Section (a) and (b) above are major areas of our Plan A GE pattern again as evidenced in our catalog. With regards to all aspects of section (c), they are less explicitly stated in our Plan A GE areas and student learning outcomes, but can be found at the course level. In the future, the General Education committee would like to make civic and ethical responsibility a more explicit requirement in our Plan A GE requirements.

(NOTE: We also need more expansion on “ethics”. This is included in our GE philosophy, however we need to develop one or more GE Outcomes on this topic.)

The development of the General Education Philosophy and the resulting statements of student learning outcomes was a faculty driven process. The Ohlone faculty have demonstrated commitment to high standards in General Education while offering students a variety of options to meet their General Education requirements.

Accreditation Themes

Institutional Commitment

Prior to the previous accreditation site visit, the General Education pattern at Ohlone had only been reviewed a few times since the college was established in 1967. There was also very little oversight in approving courses to be included in the General Education pattern. Since the last site visit in 2001, the Faculty Senate, through the Curriculum Committee, has established a standing General Education Committee. This very active committee has established a comprehensive philosophy of General Education, created guidelines for approving a course to meet General Education requirements, added options for students to complete their General Education pattern, articulated student learning outcomes for General Education, and is currently developing assessment strategies for those outcomes. These faculty driven improvements in General Education demonstrates strong institutional commitment to General Education as a core of the Ohlone curriculum.

Student Learning Outcomes

The GE Committee has made understanding, writing and the adoption of student learning outcomes a central focus for the past two years. The GE Committee has stressed that SLO's are about assessment and improvement of our curriculum and the learning process. Faculty of Ohlone College should be asking themselves on an ongoing basis what an Ohlone College degree should mean and what it should include as far as general knowledge is concerned.

Dialogue

The establishment of a permanent GE Committee has demonstrated a commitment to continued dialogue about general education requirements and degree requirements and how we might improve this plan for overall student success. Several members of the GE Committee have commented on the importance of having this open forum for discussion so as to improve the process of deciding what constitutes GE degree requirements and how SLO's help us to assess

this curriculum and improve the learning process. Again the GE Committee continues to monitor the effectiveness of its general education requirements by looking at the number of degrees that are granted each year and which of the three GE plans are being used most and also by listening to comments from our students, counselors, degree evaluators, faculty, and articulation officer.