Report of the General Education Assessment Task Force
Submitted to the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee
March 28, 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In April 2015, the University Senate Executive Committee (SEC) charged the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee (SCC) with conducting an in-depth assessment of the University's current General Education system. SEC observed that it is the responsibility of the General Education Oversight Committee, a subcommittee of SCC, to:

- Review the University-wide General Education program to ensure that its goals are being met and recommend changes to the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee when appropriate (May 2003).

Since 1985, the goals of General Education at UConn have been expressed by the following statement (Ad Hoc Committee on General Education of 1985; endorsed in the Task Force on General Education Report of 2000, and in the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee Report of May 2001):

- The purpose of general education is to ensure that all University of Connecticut undergraduate students become articulate and acquire intellectual breadth and versatility, critical judgment, moral sensitivity, awareness of their era and society, consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience, and a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge. It is vital to the accomplishment of the University's mission that a balance between professional and general education be established and maintained in which each is complementary to and compatible with the other.

SEC specifically asked SCC to address the following questions:

- To what degree are the goals of the General Education program being met?
- What is the long term impact of the General Education requirements?
- Are the current goals for General Education requirements appropriate for the 21st century university? Are revisions in goals needed?
- Do the content areas as currently constructed meet the needs of our evolving society? Are there content areas within GER which need to be revised, deleted and/or content areas to be added?

The Senate Curricula and Courses committee then convened this General Education Assessment Task Force to conduct the assessment. The Senate Nominating Committee assembled the membership of the task force. The membership includes faculty from all schools and colleges involved with undergraduate education, two directors of advising, and a student member. The membership of the task force was finalized in early November 2015.

Methods
- *Regular Meetings and Discussion.* The task force met every other week from early November to the end of the 2015 fall semester, and then every week in the 2016 spring semester until mid-March when the preliminary report was due to SCC.
- *Review of GEOC Reports.* To determine whether the goals of the General Education program were being met, the task force began by reviewing all available annual reports and occasional assessment reports produced by GEOC.
- *Review of Peer and Aspirant General Education Requirements.* Then, the task force conducted a review of the general education goals and requirements of the universities on the Provost's list of peer and aspirant institutions.
- *Focus Groups.* The task force conducted 13 focus groups: 6 for faculty (n=38), 6 for students (n=65) and 1 for staff advisors (n=22). The focus group questions addressed participants' familiarity with and opinions of the goals of the current system. They also sought suggestions for changes.
- *Online Surveys.* The task force conducted online surveys of faculty (n=303), students (n=756) and alumni (n=683) through the University's Qualtrics account. The surveys asked more specific questions which were motivated by the feedback obtained through focus groups.

Results Summary
- *GEOC Reports.* From the review of GEOC reports, the task force learned that GEOC had endorsed a four phase plan for assessing student learning in the four content areas. The committee also found that the plan had not been carried to completion for any of the content areas.
- *Peer and Aspirant Review.* The task force found that UConn's general education requirements are largely in line with the requirements of peer and aspirant institutions. The task force did identify a small number of requirements that many peer and aspirants has that UConn does not, and noted a trend in naming general education differently.
- *Focus groups.* The focus groups provided the task force with valuable, specific information about faculty and student familiarity with the goals, opinions about the success of the current general education system, and suggestions for changes to goals and requirements.
- *Online surveys.* The online surveys identified clear areas of concern for students, faculty and alumni, while highlighting differences of opinion among the groups. Certain suggestions for changes, taken for the focus groups, emerged as clear favorites.

Recommendations
The task force recommends that the University:

1. Do a better job of communicating the values and the importance of general education to all constituencies involved, including students, faculty and advisors. A single landing site webpage devoted to general education is recommended.
2. Establish a governing body for assessment at the university level. This body must coordinate the assessment activities of many different units across campus, including the

assessment of general education. The body should be faculty led, but include the Office of the Provost, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the Registrar, the General Education Oversight Committee, the University Director of Advising, and USG Academic Affairs. Assessment information, expertise and resources should be shared among these groups.

3. Restate the broad goals of general education with clearer and more forceful language. Consider consequences for requirements.
4. Offer additional support to faculty that teach general education courses, including TA support for large lectures and resources on how to teach general education courses.
5. Investigate further the possibility of changing the general education requirements. Our findings suggest looking into a strengthened communication requirement that would include oral presentations as well as possible training in respectful communication.
6. Continue to find ways to address students' desire for training in life skills, while clearly distinguishing such training from the mission of general education.

Discussion

Contents:

I.   Box-Checking

A persistent problem with the system of general education requirements at UConn is the perception that is it simply a box-checking exercise, or a chore for students and faculty alike that everyone wants to "get out of the way." The 2000 Report of the General Education Task Force noted concerning the previous general education system that many felt the general education requirement to be "simply a series of hurdles to be overcome, rather than an important and coherent segment of an undergraduate education." In the process of evaluating the current general education system, the task force sought to identify forces that may contribute to that perception. We believe that each of the following plays a part in this problem.

1. **Communication of goals.** Students are largely unfamiliar with stated goals of general education.
2. **Course availability.** Students cannot choose a meaningful set of courses to fulfill the general education requirement if the courses they plan to take are not offered or fill quickly. See Figure 9 through Figure 12 below.

3. **Quality of teaching.** Student perceptions about general education instruction quality may drive them to select courses with instructors rated highly on popular websites. See student focus group question 7 in appendix 2.
4. **Advising.** Advisors greatly influence students' perceptions and paths. Too many advising relationships get off on the wrong foot when advisors say they went to help students 'get through' their Gen Eds.
5. **Nature of instruction.** Many students and faculty feel that large lecture courses, especially without discussion sections, fail to live up to ideals of general education. For faculty see Figure 7.
6. **Selection of courses**. Students are confused why courses that clearly meet the goals of general education do not count toward fulfilling the requirements. Faculty and students sense politics and funding drive choices, not goals of general education. See Figure 9.
7. **Large number of requirements.** Some students need to take 49 credits to fulfill general education courses. This encourages students to seek strategies ('double-dipping') rather than formulate meaningful educational goals for themselves. See Figure 9.

II.   Assessment

The task force is not in a position to answer definitively to what degree the goals of the general education program are being met. Much more direct assessment of student outcomes would be required to give such an answer. It is part of the charge to GEOC that it "review the University-wide General Education program to ensure that its goals are being met and recommend changes to the Senate Curricula and Course Committee when appropriate." In 2009, GEOC endorsed a four-phase plan for the assessment of the general education content areas (see Appendix 1). The task force reviewed all of the assessment reports that GEOC has produced. The table below indicates the progress that has been made toward the assessment of each content area.

	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
Content Area I	Yes (2013)			
Content Area II	Yes (2010)			
Content Area III	Yes (2008)	Yes (2009)	Yes (2010)	
Content Area IV	Yes (2009)	Yes (2010)		

Table 1. Phases of the 2009 GEOC plan for assessment of content areas completed with year that the latest phase was completed.

The writing competency requirement, by contrast, has been subject to more rigorous evaluation. Samples of student writing have been collected and independently evaluated against rubrics based on the goals of the writing competency; see the 2010 Summary Report on the Assessment of Academic Writing at the University of Connecticut. There is reason to believe that current writing requirements are meeting students' needs; see the 2011 report of the W Task Force.

It is necessary that the direct assessment of student learning outcomes in the content areas be restarted and completed. Assessment is a complex and difficult task, especially within the

domain of general education. The effort, however, is necessary. The 2011 reaccreditation letter from NEASC to UConn requires that "self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2016 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in […] continuing to implement a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning with emphasis on the assessment of general education…" Furthermore, the 2016 NEASC standards require that the general education requirement "informs the design of all general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation, including the assessment of what students learn."

The task force recommends that there be a standing committee or council at the University dedicated to assessment, including the assessment of general education. The standing committee should be faculty-led and should include, at minimum, members from the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the Office of the Provost, the Registrar, the University Director of Advising, Student Affairs and the General Education Oversight Committee, as well as students including the USG Academic Affairs Chair.

Assessment of the content areas is crucial to understanding whether the general education system is meeting its broad goals. As will be discussed in Section V below, the exact relevance of such assessment depends on a clear understanding of how the requirements, including content areas, relate to the broader goals. Lacking access to direct evaluations of student outcomes in general education, this task force pursued indirect means of assessing the current state of general education at UConn. These methods included comparison with peer and aspirant systems of general education, the review of OIRE surveys of recent alumni and department head reports on learning goals of majors, focus groups of students and faculty and online surveys of faculty, students and alumni who enrolled after the current general education requirements were put into place in 2005.

III.   Peer and aspirant review

The task force evaluated the general education requirement for aspirant, accountability and competitor peer institutions. Following this intensive review, three primary concepts were evident. First, many peers used the term "core curriculum" or "core competencies" instead of general education to describe their requirements. This is especially true of peer institutions that the Provost's office identifies as "competitors." Although it may seem trivial, both branding and titles are essential in providing students, parents and faculty with a better understanding of the rationale for these core educational components. Second, there is a focus on purposeful course integration that enables students to understand the broad scope of the general education component. Third, many of our peer institutions require an oral competency. Coupled with the focus group and online survey findings, it would appear that the ability to communicate both in the written and oral form is essential to an educated individual.

IV.   The goals of General Education

The goals of general education at UConn have been expressed by the following statement since it was penned in 1985. Part of the charge to this task force is to determine whether the current

general education requirements support these goals and whether these goals are appropriate for a 21st century university.

> **The Goals of General Education**
>
> The purpose of general education is to ensure that all University of Connecticut undergraduate students
>   a.   become articulate, and acquire
>   b.   intellectual breadth and versatility,
>   c.   critical judgment,
>   d.   moral sensitivity,
>   e.   awareness of their era and society,
>   f.   consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience, and
>   g.   a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge.
>
> It is vital to the accomplishment of the University's mission that a balance between professional and general education be established and maintained in which each is complementary to and compatible with the other.

The task force sought the opinions of faculty, students and alumni both on the appropriateness of these goals and the apparent success of the general education in helping students to achieve them. Opinions were solicited both through focus groups and online surveys. The results are discussed below.

First, faculty, students and alumni were asked how familiar they were with these goals. In focus groups for faculty and students, it was clear that very few were directly acquainted with the goals as stated. In the online survey, 36% of faculty reported being 'very familiar' with the goals, but only 9% of students and only 7% of alumni reported they were 'very familiar' with the goals. In fact, 41% of students and 59% of alumni reported being 'not at all' familiar with the goals. These results point to a large problem with the visibility of these goals at the university and to a possible source of student frustration: they do not know why they are being asked to fulfill the general education requirements.

The online surveys of faculty students and alumni also included a question asking about the importance of each of these goals. The chart below gives the mean responses of each group in Figure 1.
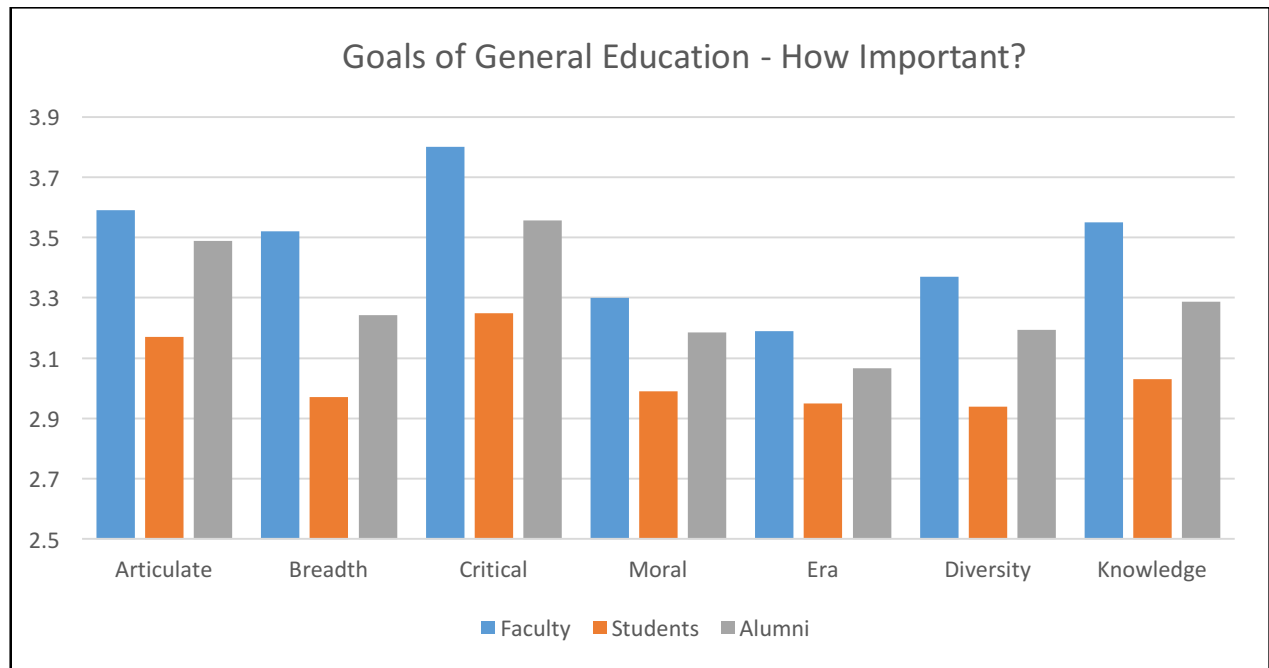
Figure 1. Faculty, Student and alumni ratings of the importance of each of the goals of general education. [Question text: In your opinion, how important is it that a UConn student achieve each of these goals? Options: 4= Extremely important, 3= Very important, 2 = Somewhat important, 1=Slightly important, 0=Not at all important]

Despite differences in rating levels between groups, the trend is the same in all groups. All groups rated 'acquiring critical judgment' as the most important of the goals of general education followed closely by 'becoming articulate.' These were followed by 'acquiring intellectual breadth and versatility' and 'acquiring a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge.' The goals of acquiring 'moral sensitivity', 'awareness of era and society' and 'consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience' were rated the least important. The lower ratings of these last three raise an important question. It is important to investigate further and determine whether these ratings are a reflection of the values of the university community, or whether the lower ratings may be a reflection of uncertainty of what the goals stand for as stated. There is some reason to believe that the latter explanation may be correct and that more clearly and forcefully stated goals would enjoy greater approval, see the comments on specific goals below.

Comments on specific goals:

Becoming Articulate
Despite being considered 'extremely important', the goal of 'becoming articulate' still occasioned comment and criticism from some faculty and students. The notion of being articulate is broad and is thought by many to encompass oral communication skills as well as writing skills. Rewording this goal could make it clear whether UConn wants its students to focus on writing or whether UConn wants to commit to helping students develop skills of oral presentation. In the online survey, there was an open-ended question seeking suggestions for new content areas and competencies. 'Public speaking' was among the three most popular write-in responses for faculty, students and alumni.

Critical Judgment
Acquiring critical judgment was considered to be the most important goal by all three groups. Discussion in focus groups, particularly among faculty, raised some questions about the proper formulation of this goal. A general concern was raised that the emphasis of the goals of general education is too 'passive' or 'receptive.' The goals state that students will gain 'awareness,' 'consciousness,' 'understanding' and 'sensitivity,' but do not say what students will be able to do. Several faculty suggested that critical judgment or critical thinking should be linked to the more active processes of problem solving or decision making. For this reason, problem solving was included as a possible addition to the goals in the online surveys, see Figure 2.

Moral Sensitivity
The requirement that students acquire 'moral sensitivity' caused much discussion in focus groups and comment in online surveys. Many students, faculty and alumni feel uncertain about what the students should be learning that will give them moral sensitivity. Faculty do not know if they are expected to teach particular morals, comparative morality or, perhaps, professional ethics. The task force recommends that the intent of this goal be clarified.

Awareness of their Era and Society
This goal received low ratings of importance from all three groups. Some faculty observed that this goal appears to leave out any requirement that students have an understanding of history, which may be crucial to understanding the present era. A popular suggestion for an added requirement was understanding of contemporary politics and the political process. Clarifying and rewording this goal may help students and faculty to see its importance.

Consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience
This goal also drew discussion in focus groups on the point of its passive formulation. Some faculty and students worry that consciousness of diversity may not be an adequate goal. The problems that face our campus community and nation may require of informed citizens a more active engagement with issues surrounding diversity. The 2015 report of the UConn Diversity Task Force noted that there are academic units at UConn "constantly struggling to understand power, identify discrimination, and support equity." This goal may need to better reflect those struggles.

At this point it is instructive to compare the current goals of general education with passages from the 2014 Academic Vision that deals with undergraduate education:

> "We have done well, but we must continue to create an even more outstanding undergraduate experience for talented students to foster **creativity**, **critical thinking**, **problem solving** and **reasoning**, **appreciation for diversity and cultural perspectives**, and **strong communication and leadership skills**.
> […]
> • Ensure an undergraduate educational experience that prepares our students for lives of impact and leadership in an increasingly diverse, globalized world by emphasizing problem solving and the capacity to translate knowledge and skills into action;
> • Adapt educational practices to provide more interdisciplinary knowledge and increase opportunities for education in areas of pressing need and interest;"

The language in this statement from the Academic Vision is more active and vigorous and could serve as a model for revised goals of general education.

The online surveys included an item seeking faculty, student and alumni input on potential changes to the broad goals of general education. The choices offered were selected from themes that emerged in focus group discussion and from the goals for undergraduate education in the 2014 Academic Vision given above.
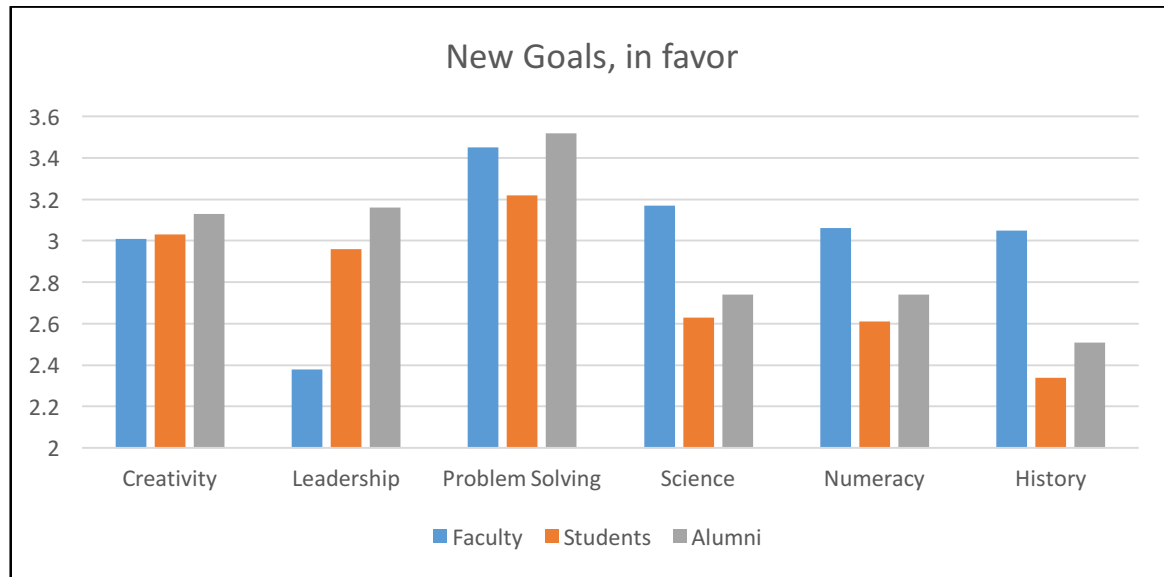

Figure 2. *Faculty, Student and Alumni favorability towards including each in revised goals of general education.* [*Question text*: *If UConn changed its broad goals for general education, would you be in favor of including any of the following as goals?* *Items*: *"Creativity/Innovation," "Leadership," "Problem solving," "Understanding methods of science," "Reasoning with numbers," "Knowledge of history."* *Options*: *4=completely in favor, 3=somewhat in favor, 2=neutral, 1=somewhat opposed, 0=totally opposed.*]

All groups favor the inclusion of problem solving as a goal of general education and show moderate support for including creativity and innovation. Faculty differ with students and alumni on the remaining four options, with students and alumni favoring leadership as a goal while faculty support scientific literacy, numeracy and knowledge of history. The shared preference for problem-solving and creativity fits well with the desire for more active goals for general education.

V.   Connecting goals and requirements

Overall, in focus groups and online surveys, faculty and students express support for the broad goals of general education. They agree that these express – more or less – the properties that a 'well-rounded' university graduate should have. What is less clear to many is how the general education requirements are meant to achieve these goals. In some cases, the connections between goals and requirements are clear. The writing requirements directly address the goal of

becoming articulate; the Content Area 4 requirement addresses the goal of acquiring consciousness of diversity. The development of intellectual breadth is well served by the content areas and requirement that the courses that students use to fulfill the content area requirements must be drawn from six different subject areas.

It is less clear how other goals are meant to be accomplished. Consider the case of critical judgment. Do all general education courses teach it or only some? If the latter, are all students required to take at least one such course? The general education system at UConn could benefit from making the connections between goals and requirements more transparent. This applies equally to any changes that might be recommended to the goals and requirements. The two must go hand in hand.

VI.   The General Education Requirements

The online surveys explored the connections between requirements and goals by asking faculty, students and alumni whether the former truly support the achievement of the latter.
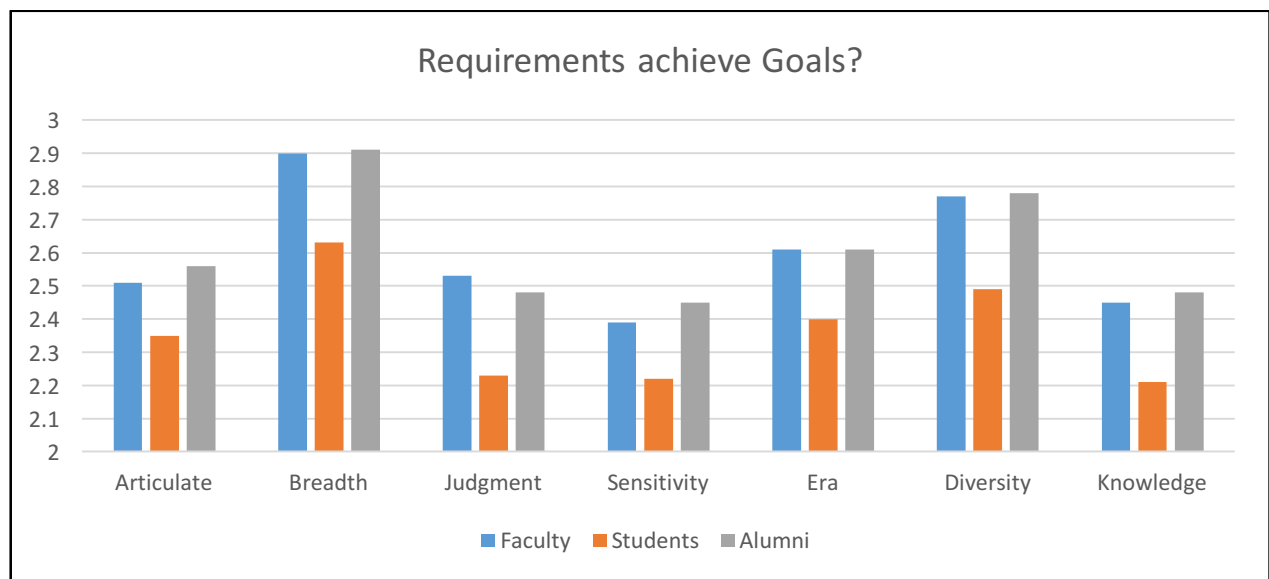
Figure 3. Faculty, Student and Alumni opinions on whether general education requirements help students achieve broad goals of general education. [Question text: 'Do you agree that fulfilling these Gen Ed requirements helps students to achieve each of the following goals?' Options: 4=strongly agree, 3=agree somewhat, 2=neutral, 1=disagree somewhat, 0=strongly disagree.]

The results were mixed. On the one hand, all three constituencies were relatively positive about the way that the requirements support the development of intellectual breadth and consciousness of diversity. On the other hand, most seem skeptical about the role of the requirements in promoting moral sensitivity and critical judgment. There may be many reasons for the disparities. One possibility is that breadth and diversity have clear correlates in the requirements while critical judgment and moral sensitivity do not, as discussed in the previous section. The goal of becoming articulate has a clear correlate in the requirements and is considered quite important, but few think that the requirements support its achievement.

In this context, we asked each group if they would favor including new requirements if the system were changed. Again, the choices of new requirements were drawn from common suggestions in the focus groups.
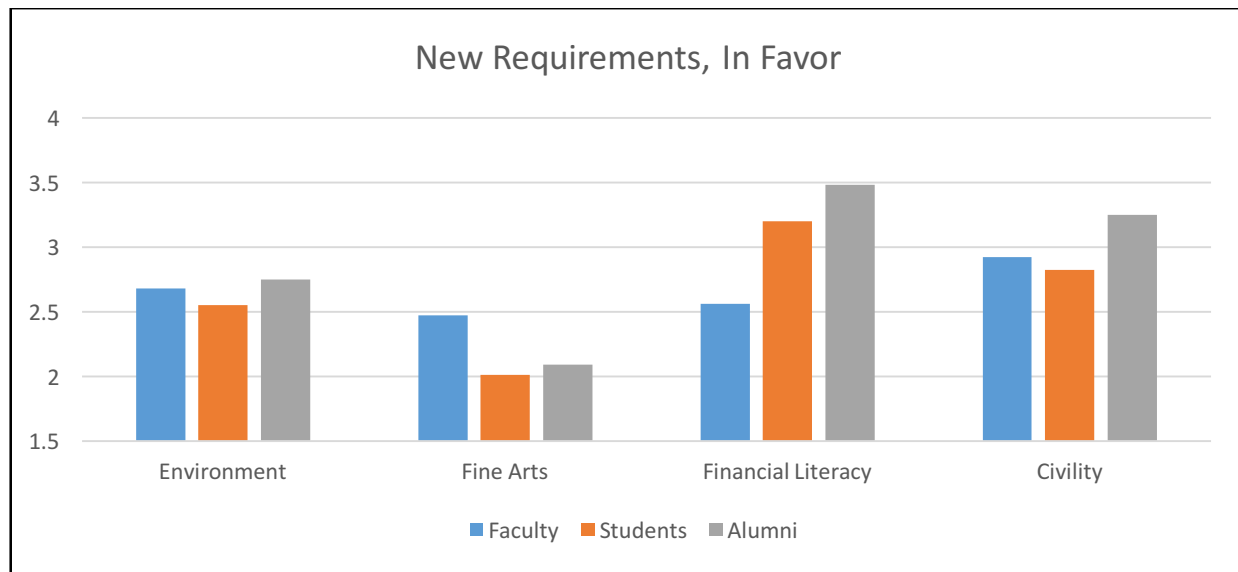

Figure 4. Faculty, student and alumni favorability towards including each in revised general education requirements. [Question text: 'If UConn changed its requirements for general education, would you be in favor of including any of the following as content areas or competencies?' Items: 'Environment and Sustainability,' 'Fine Arts,' 'Financial Literacy,' and 'Ability to communicate clearly and respectfully about divisive issues.' Options: 4=completely in favor, 3=somewhat in favor, 2=neutral, 1=somewhat opposed, 0=totally opposed]

Students and alumni strongly favor inclusion of a financial literacy requirement. Such a requirement was suggested both in student and faculty focus groups. It was clear in the open-ended responses in the online surveys that many students and alumni equate such a requirement with acquiring 'life skills.' This may partially explain the lower rating of this requirement by faculty. One could imagine an academically rigorous course that teaches students about the state of the economy and the place of recent college graduates in it; but students may be seeking a different kind of instruction that is not consistent with the awarding of academic credit.

The table below lists the top three additional suggestions of faculty, students and alumni for new requirements in the general education system.

	Faculty	Students	Alumni
1	Public speaking (11)	Life Skills (55)	Life Skills (60)
2	Statistics (6)	Politics/Civics (15)	Improved Computer Skills (19)
3	Politics/Civics (5)	Public speaking (11)	Public Speaking (17)

Table 2. Faculty, student and alumni suggestions for revised competencies or content areas, top three for each, followed by number of individuals suggesting it. [Question text: 'What other knowledge or skills do you think should be included in UConn's general education requirements as content areas or competencies?']

Students and alumni both list 'life skills' as a top priority. The fact that so many students and alumni think that life skills are intellectual work appropriate for college credit and that this kind of work would fall under the rubric of 'general education' suggest that the University has not appropriately, forcefully, or effectively communicated what general education is meant to do for our students and community. Or, and perhaps more troubling, this represents a dissonance between what kind of intellectual work professors and administrators imagine should be the core of the university experience and what the public imagines that to be. To speak more plainly, if we (faculty and administrators) imagine students should take, for example, a biology lab, or a language, to help them think and learn differently, but they (students/ public) are frustrated because they think they should be learning how to read a credit card statement for credit, that frustration will only get worse.

There is relatively broad support for including some form of civility training in the general education system. The issue is a complex one. Many who supported its inclusion saw the difficulties that faculty would face in teaching it. In many ways, the issues resemble those in teaching moral sensitivity. The Content Area 4 subcommittee of GEOC issued a report on how civility could be incorporated into the general education requirements, responding to the report of the Civility Task Force. They concluded that the issue was an important one, but one that could best be handled by adjusting the learning outcomes of existing Content Areas and competencies. GEOC accepted, but did not endorse the report. Note that on the advice of several faculty, we did not use the term 'civility' in the survey, but instead asked about 'the ability to communicate clearly and respectfully about divisive issues.'

Though many faculty and students spoke passionately about the need for all students to understand the state of the environment and the need for sustainable practices, the idea of a requirement in the area received limited support. In focus groups, faculty questioned whether such a narrow topic would be appropriate as a general education requirement and how we could justify singling out the environment from a number of other pressing issues.

Competencies
The online surveys also asked about the importance of each of the competencies. All received relatively strong support with the exception of the second language requirement, see Figure 5.
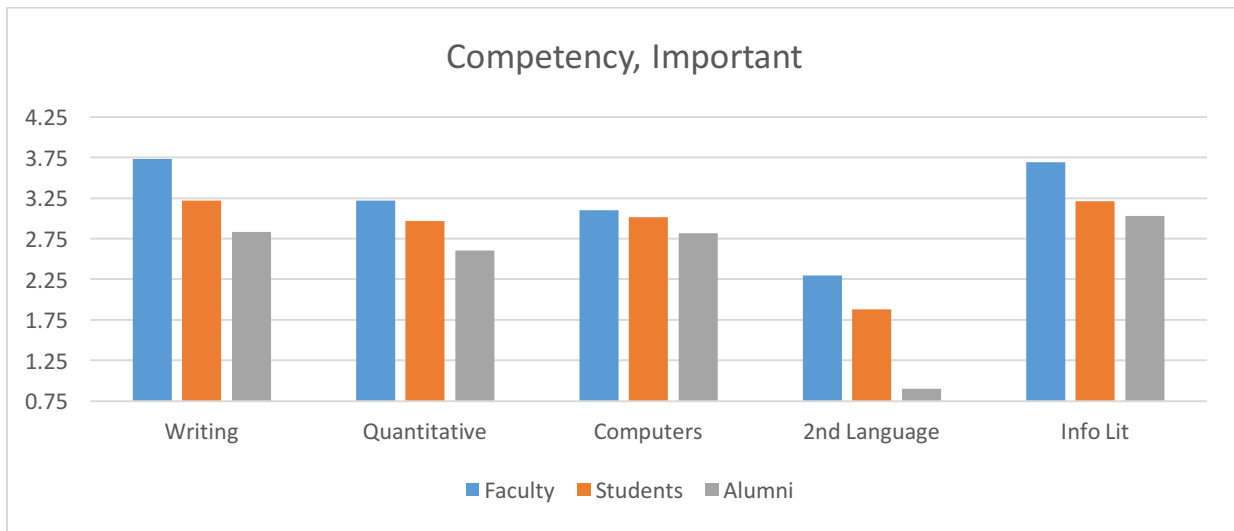
Figure 5. Faculty, Student and Alumni ratings of the importance of each of the current competency requirements. [Question text: How important is it for every UConn student to acquire each of the following competencies? Options: 4= Extremely important, 3= Very important, 2 = Somewhat important, 1=Slightly important, 0=Not at all important)

When asked whether or not students are successful in achieving these competencies, student and faculty show some differences. Faculty are concerned that students are not acquiring adequate skills in writing and quantitative thinking. Students and alumni do not think that they are as successful in acquiring computer skills as faculty think they are. As shown in Table 2 above, an improved Computer Skills competency was high on the list of suggestions by alumni. Many alumni complained that their education did not prepare them to work with software that is common in the workplace, such as Excel. All groups are in relative agreement that students are not achieving competence in a second language.
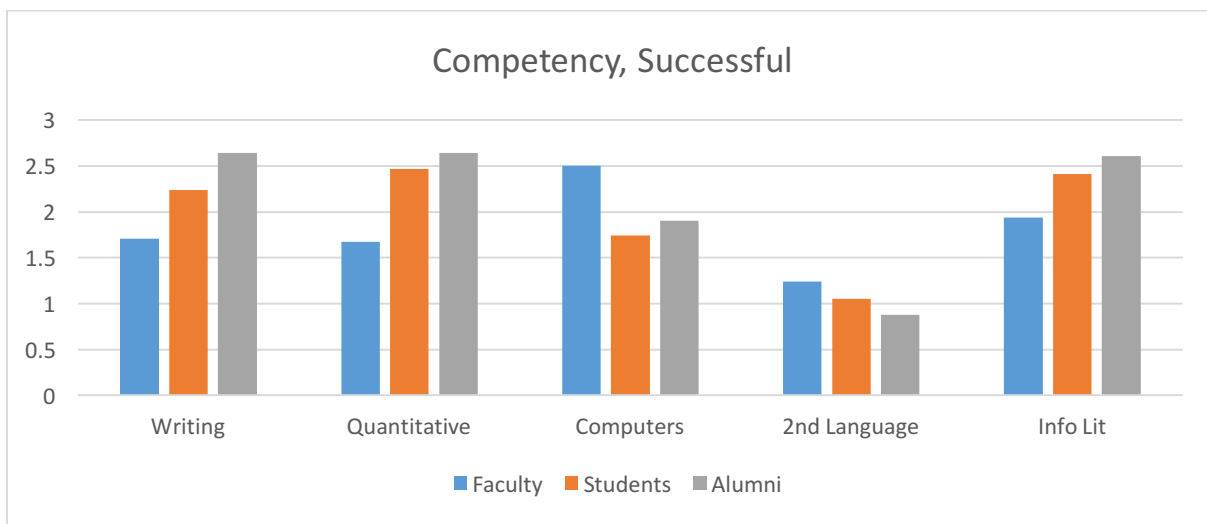
Figure 6. Faculty, Student and Alumni ratings of how successful students are in acquiring each of the competencies. [Question text: In your opinion, how successful are students in achieving each of these by the time they graduate? Options: 4= Completely Successful, 3= Very successful, 2 = Somewhat successful, 1=Slightly successful, 0=Not at all successful]

VII.   Additional Concerns

Based on concerns raised in focus groups, the online surveys polled faculty, students and alumni on what they perceived to be the biggest problems with general education at UConn. Different issues were relevant for faculty and students, so their options were different.
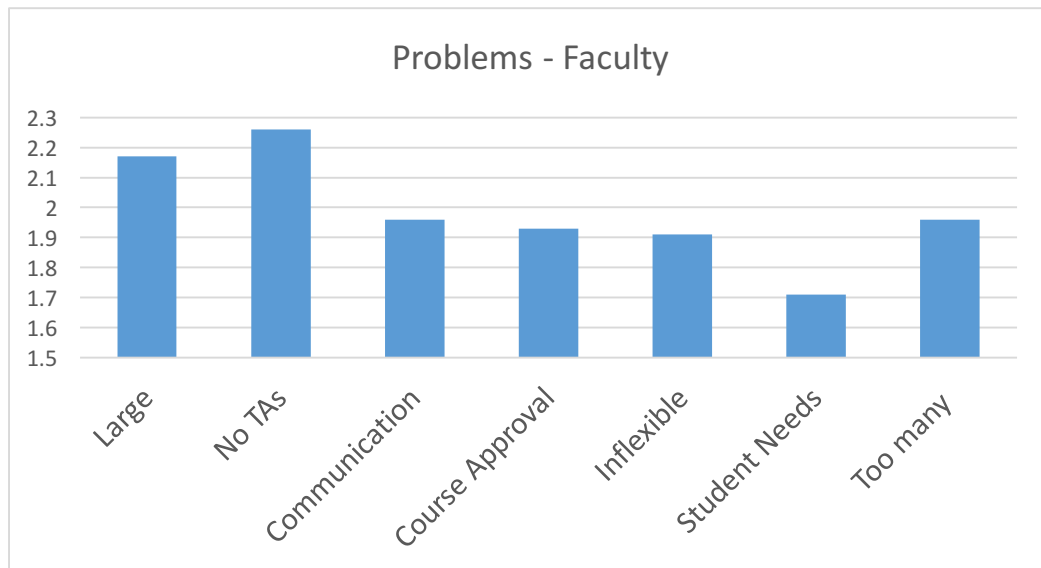

Figure 7. Faculty opinions about problems with current general education system. [Question text: 'In your opinion, how big of a problem is each of the following for general education at UConn?' Items: 'Gen Ed classes are too large,' 'Large Gen Ed classes do not receive adequate TA support,' 'The reason for Gen Eds is not communicated effectively,' 'The process of getting a new Gen Ed course approved is too long and difficult,' 'The Gen Ed system is too inflexible,' 'The current goals of Gen Ed do not address student needs,' and 'Students are required to take too many Gen Ed courses.' Options: 4=A very big problem, 3=A significant problem, 2=Somewhat of a problem, 1=A slight problem, 0=Not a problem at all.]

For faculty, the biggest problems relate to class size. Many faculty consider large lectures to be incompatible with achieving the stated goals of general education. According to many, the problems are exacerbated when there is not adequate teaching assistant support for large general education courses, which are consequently taught without discussion sections. Figure 8 below summarizes the relative frequency of large lecture content area courses taught with and without discussion sections (on the Storrs campus during Fall and Spring semesters). On average between a quarter and a third of all content area courses enroll over 100 students in a semester. Of those, roughly twenty percent are taught without discussion sections.
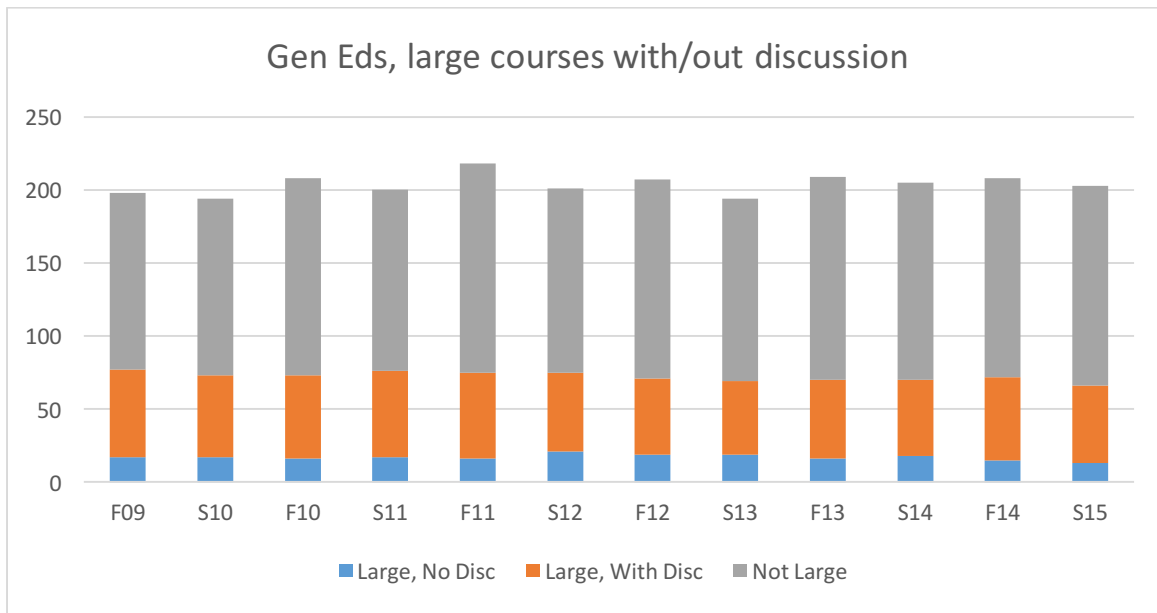
Figure 8. Proportion of general education courses offered with large enrollment (≥100) with and without discussion sections. The height of the columns gives the total number of general education courses offered during the indicated semester on the Storrs campus.

The online survey showed that students have a different set of concerns, see Figure 9. The size of general education courses does not appear to be a major concern for students. Instead, students overwhelmingly find the biggest problem to be that they are required to take too many general education courses. Under the current system, the worst case scenario is that a student would have to take 49 credits of courses to fulfill all their general education requirements. This can be reduced by 'double-dipping;' however, this loophole creates an incentive for students to seek out courses that fulfill multiple requirements – not out of intellectual curiosity, but merely to reduce workload. This may contribute substantially to the feeling that general education is a box-checking exercise. The overall number of credits required could be reduced, but current NEASC standards require that students must get at least 40 credits of general education, see the NEASC Commission on Institutions of Higher Education 2016 Standards for Accreditation, Standard 4.18.

Another problem that emerged in the student focus groups and in the online surveys is the frustration that students feel when they take a course that meets the goals of general education but fails to count toward fulfilling the requirements. Students wonder why they should be forced to take a superficial lower-level large lecture class to fulfill a requirement when they might have already taken an in-depth upper-level discussion based class that deals with the same issues in a much more intellectually engaging way. Alumni report similar concerns.
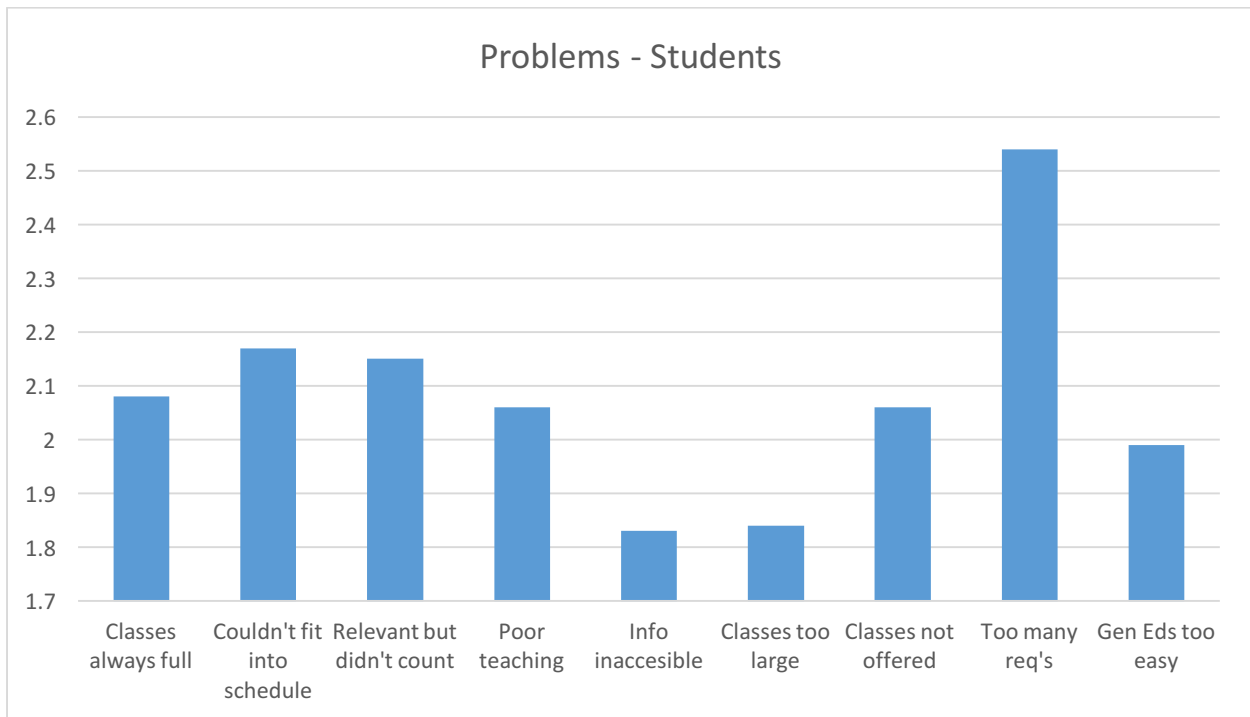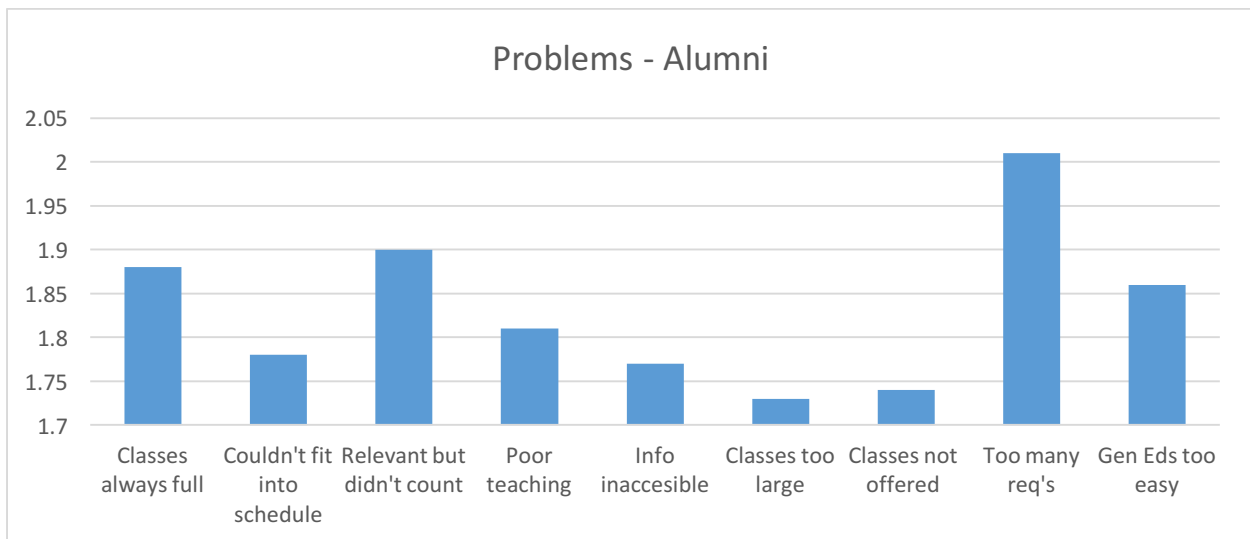
Figure 9. Student opinions about problems with current general education system. [Question text: 'In your opinion, how big of a problem is each of the following for general education at UConn?' Items: 'The courses I wanted to take were always full,' 'I didn't have room in my schedule for Gen Eds,' 'I took courses that fulfilled the goals of Gen Ed, but they didn't count towards the requirement,' 'The quality of teaching in Gen Ed courses was not always good,' 'I didn't know where to get good information about Gen Eds,' 'Gen Ed classes were too large,' 'The courses I wanted to take were not offered,' 'Students are required to take too many Gen Ed courses,' and 'Gen Ed courses were too easy and not worth my time.' Options: 4=A very big problem, 3=A significant problem, 2=Somewhat of a problem, 1=A slight problem, 0=Not a problem at all.]

Figure 10. Alumni opinions about problems with current general education system. [Question text: 'In your opinion, how big of a problem is each of the following for general education at UConn?' Items: 'The courses I wanted to take were always full,' 'I didn't have room in my schedule for Gen Eds,' 'I took courses that fulfilled the goals of Gen Ed, but they didn't count towards the requirement,' 'The quality of teaching in Gen Ed courses was not always good,' 'I didn't know where to get good information about Gen Eds,' 'Gen Ed classes were too large,' 'The courses I wanted to take were not offered,' 'Students are required to take too many Gen Ed courses,' and 'Gen Ed courses were too easy and not worth my time.' Options: 4=A very big problem, 3=A significant problem, 2=Somewhat of a problem, 1=A slight problem, 0=Not a problem at all.]

Finally students report that they have difficulty getting into the general education courses they want and that many of the general education courses that they want to take are not offered when they want to take them. Figure 11 below counts the number of courses that were offered 0 to 8 times over the course of 8 semesters. It is worth observing that nearly a quarter of the general education courses listed in the catalog are offered with a frequency of less than once per year. This may contribute to the sense that many general education courses that students want to take are not offered.
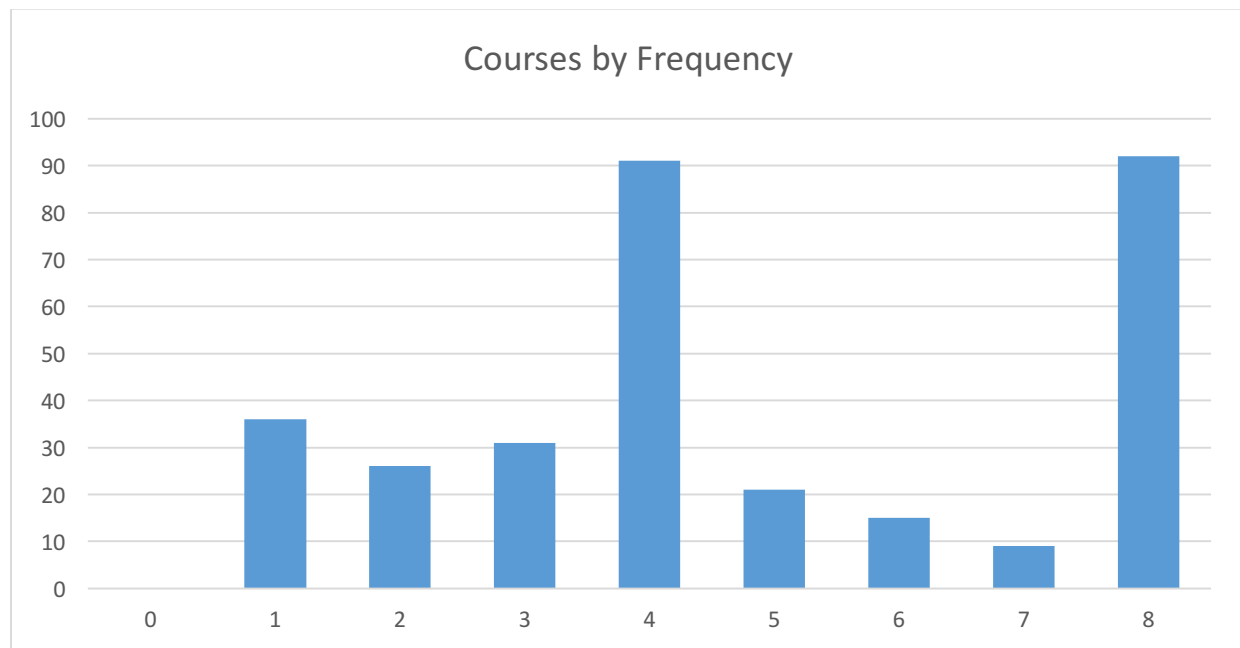
Figure 11. Number of approved general education Content Area courses offered 0 to 8 times over the eight semesters from Fall 2011 to Spring 2015 on the Storrs campus. Includes only the 324 courses listed as approved Content Area course continuously from Fall 2011 to Spring 2015.

The histogram below in Figure 12 shows the number of courses with enrollments of the specified number of students over the eight semesters surveyed. Notice that there are about a dozen courses that enrolled between 2500 and 5000 over eight semesters, and half a dozen that enrolled between 5,000 and 10,500.

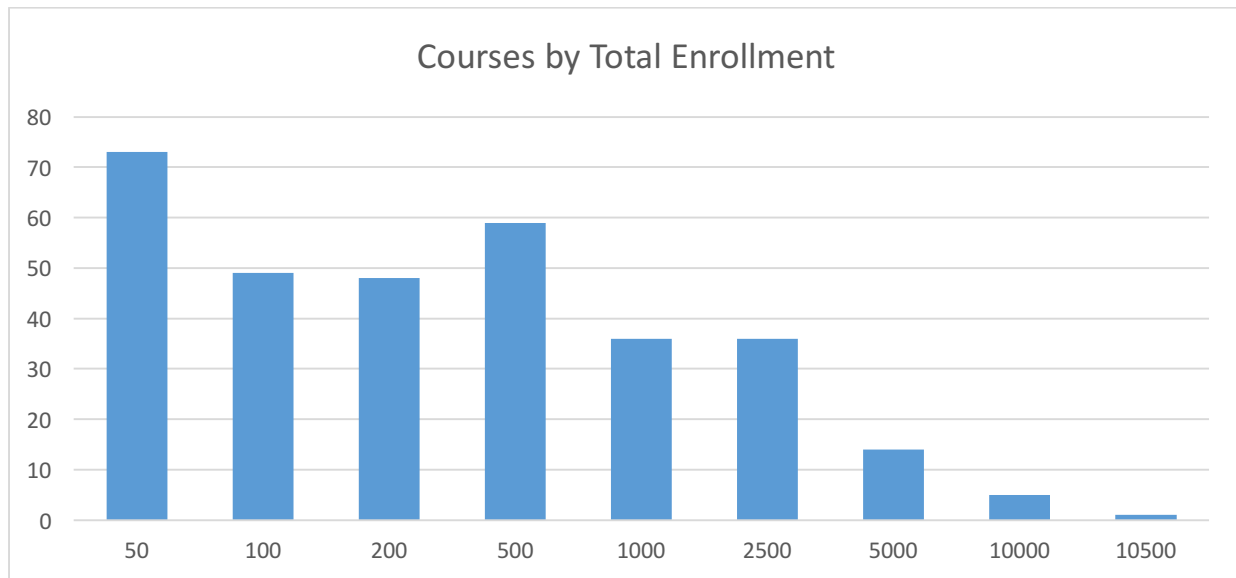## Courses by Total Enrollment

Figure 12. Histogram showing the number of courses that enrolled the indicated number of students from Fall 2011 to 2015 on the Storrs campus. Includes only the 324 courses listed as approved Content Area courses continuously from Fall 2011 to Spring 2015.

When enrollments are totaled, an important fact emerges. Of these 324 courses, the top 27 most highly subscribed courses enrolled more students between Fall 2011 and Spring 2015 than the lower 294 courses. Therefore, a student looking for a seat in the lower 294 courses might well have a problem enrolling and perceive that general education classes fill up quickly.

VIII.   Communication

Many of the issues discussed in the previous section point to the following conclusion - if the University truly believes in general education, then it must take responsibility for advocating for it with all affected parties, including students, parents, faculty, advisors, and the public. Most people agree with the goals. They want to be convinced that the requirements are connected to the goals and that they work. Curricular clarification can help with the former and improved assessment with the latter. Further assessment should be carried out and the results should be communicated widely.

An important point of communication in general education is the student advisor relationship. It is very important that advisors support the mission of general education and convey that commitment to their advisees. Students need to receive positive messages about general education from the very beginning at their orientation advising meetings. Familiarity with the goals of general education should be an objective at all relevant advising meetings. Advisors should have the information they need to help students make meaningful choices about general education. This effort must include not only staff advisors, but faculty as well.

There should be a single landing site webpage at the University for general education. At this point GEOC's page is the only such site. GEOC's site is useful and informative but is designed for those involved in the oversight of general education. There is a need for a site that can answer the questions of all stakeholders, including current and prospective students, parents,

advisors, instructors and the public at large. The webpage could be linked to by the catalog, advising websites, school and college websites, admissions websites and many more.

To end on a positive note. When asked about the relationship between majors and general education requirements, current students report that they do not want to work outside of their major requirements. Alumni, by contrast, have a different attitude: the majority say that they valued the opportunity that general education gave them to explore outside their major. The matured understanding of alumni should not be overlooked. It is critical to communicate this fact to the current students.
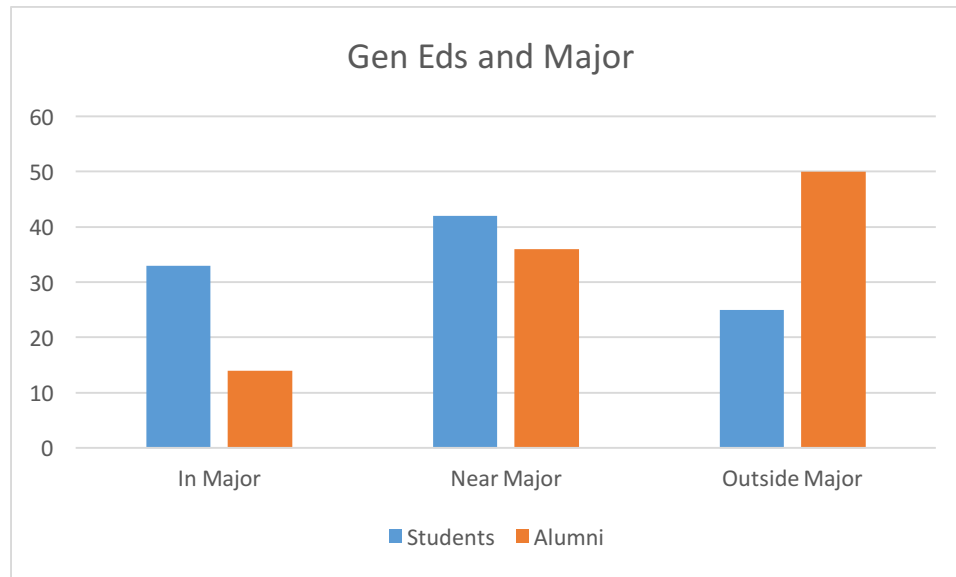
Figure 13. Students and alumni attitudes towards general education and major. Percentage of total for each response[Question text: What best describes your attitude toward the relationship of Gen Eds to your major? Options: 'I would prefer not to have to take Gen Ed classes outside my major,' 'I wish it were easier to find and take Gen Eds outside of, but related to my major,' 'I value the opportunity Gen Ed give me to take courses outside of my major.']

In summary, following extensive evaluation of the UCONN General Education requirements, greater clarification and communication of goals is necessary. In addition, the re-establishment of the GEOC course assessment plan is critical in determining the congruence between program goals and student outcomes.

Appendices

Appendix 1: GEOC plan for assessment from Annual Report 2009-2010

Assessment in the Content Areas [GEOC Annual Report 2009-2010]
Using the model developed for the CA3 assessment by Hedley Freake (2007-08) and Annelie Skoog (2008-09), the GEOC Assessment Subcommittee has recommended that assessment in the other Content Areas follow a similarly staggered and sample approach which in each case needs to be adjusted to the given Content Area and specific findings and recommendations:

- *Phase I*: Inquiry into the extent to which courses *address* and *assess* student learning outcomes as specified for the given Content Area; identification of key courses; interviews with instructors; analysis of course materials; evaluation of resulting data and sharing of results with participating faculty; recommendations to GEOC about how to proceed.
- *Phase II:* Depending on the recommendations resulting from Phase I:
  - *Phase IIa*: Revisiting and revising student learning outcomes based on faculty input gathered at   faculty forums and/or in focus groups; recommendations to the GEOC. Or:
  - *Phase IIb:* Development, application, and evaluation of an appropriate student self-efficacy instrument, student surveys, and/or student focus groups pertaining to the given Content Area; dissemination of results of Phase I and II in panels or workshops; preparation of the assessment of actual student learning in the given Content Area.
- *Phase III*:
  - Development, application, and evaluation of direct assessment tools that are embedded in writing assignments, exams, reports, or alike;
  - Measuring student learning based on actual student artifacts;
  - Recommendations to instructors and GEOC how to improve student learning based on the results of the data collection and their evaluation;
  - Further dissemination (e.g., written or in workshops or panels) of the results of Phase I, II, and III.
- *Phase IV+*:
  - Development, application, and evaluation of direct assessment tool templates, e.g., question structures to be used in the respective CA courses and to be distributed through HuskyCT;
  - If needed, refining of the student self-efficacy instrument and new application;
  - If needed, specific assessment foci, e.g., lab courses, TA-led discussion sections, or alike
  - Recommendations of improvements in teaching courses in the CA in question;
  - Dissemination of assessment results to CA-specific instructors and GEOC.

APPENDIX 2: Summary of responses to focus group questions for faculty and students.

FACULTY FOCUS GROUPS

Six focus groups were conducted for faculty with a total of thirty eight participants:

- College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources: one focus group (03/02/16), twelve participants. Moderator: Sandra Bushmich
- College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: two focus groups (02/16/16; 02/24/16), nine total participants. Moderator: Jon Gajewski
- School of Business: one focus group (02/26/16), six participants. Moderator: Mark De Angelis.
- School of Fine Arts: one focus group (02/28/16), five participants. Moderators: Alexis Boylan and Tom Scheinfeldt.
- School of Pharmacy: one focus group (02/17/16), six participants. Moderator: Jennifer Girotto.

Brief summary of discussions:

1. How familiar are you with these as the goals of General Education at UConn?

Faculty were mixed in their familiarity with the broad goals of general education at UConn. Many had encountered them in work for GEOC, college curriculum committees or departmental assessments/curriculum proposals. There was general agreement that these goals should be made more visible.

2. If you teach Gen Ed classes, do you orient your courses towards these goals? Why or why not?

Most faculty felt that even if they were not aware of these stated goals they do orient their teaching to most of them. Some noted moral sensitivity as a possible exception.

3. What is your opinion of these as goals for UConn graduates?

Faculty were generally positive about the broad goals, agreeing that these largely express faculty's implicit assumptions about what students should get out of their education. Some noted UConn's responsibility as a state university in helping students to develop skills to engage in a time of particular social and political divisiveness.

Many are confused by 'moral sensitivity.' What are faculty expected to convey to students in this domain? There are many ways that this goal could be clarified. Faculty suggested a few possibilities: students will develop their own sense of morals and ethics; students will come to understand that other people may have different morals; students will learn the professional ethical standards of their field.

4. Do you think these goals should be changed? What should be added/removed?

Faculty noted the importance of a balance across disciplines for student exposure to a breadth of topics and skills, and thought that some things were missing from these goals. Though science, math – or STEM more broadly – and history are included in Content Areas, several thought that each is important enough to be mentioned specifically in the general goals.

A number of faculty felt that the language of the broad goals is too passive or receptive: requiring only "awareness", "consciousness", and "understanding." Some suggest that 'critical judgment' could be related to activities such as decision making or problem solving. Specifically, faculty noted that the goals lacked higher levels of thinking to foster critical and creative thinking. Also, mere consciousness of diversity may not be enough; perhaps students should be required to 'engage with', 'appreciate' or 'embrace' diversity. Finally, there could be an overall shift in emphasis to creativity or the generation of new knowledge.

Some faculty wondered if 'becoming articulate' is intended to or should be understood to include oral communication.

5. Do the current General Education requirements succeed in helping students to achieve these goals?

Many felt that it is hard to tell. First, the relationship between the general goals and the requirements is unclear. Consciousness of diversity matches to Content Area 4, but what about critical judgment? If possible, the connections should be made clearer. Second, faculty don't know exactly what students are taking away. The university doesn't have a complete picture of information on learning outcomes.

There was overall concern for students' communication abilities. The amount of writing instruction may not be adequate to prepare students for career needs.

Some were also concerned about students' information literacy skills: many do not know how to use a library, or even how to use Google judiciously.

Pursuant to this matter, faculty discussed the difficulty in assessing the efficacy of the requirements, as there is no mechanism to measure students' "acquisition" of the goals.

6. If you teach General Education courses, have you encountered any special difficulties? If so, please describe.

Many faculty expressed the concern that large lecture classes, especially those that do not have TA support, are not adequate to help students achieve the goals of general education. Discussion is important, but impossible in many large general education classes.

Another obstacle is a common student attitude that Gen Eds are a chore, as well as the expectation that general education courses should not 'hurt their GPA.'

Some faculty complained that the approval process for new Gen Ed courses is much too long and onerous.

Many faculty do not feel confident to advise students about Gen Eds. Large departments have advising support staff. It was suggested that a group of small departments could be given a dedicated advisor.

There are many logistical barriers to teaching general education courses. These include difficulties with locating classrooms for large lectures, clunky management of enrollment in Peoplesoft, and the challenge of teaching increasing numbers of ESL students.

7. If you do not teach General Education courses, why not?

Few faculty reported having a choice in this matter. Teaching duties are largely determined by School/College and department need.

Many pointed to the burdensome Gen Ed course approval/oversight process as a reason not to bother with teaching general education courses.

8. If the General Education requirements were changed, what themes, competencies, skills etc. would you like to see added/removed?

The environment and sustainability were brought up many times as a possible new requirement that the University has considered for many years.

A few faculty spoke passionately in favor of a requirement to help raise the level of public discourse. Students need training in communicating respectfully about divisive issues. This is related to the report of the Civility task force, although some faculty resisted the term 'civility'.

Much concern was expressed about the second language requirement and what students get out of it.

Many opposed the imposition of additional requirements. Many believe that students need more flexibility and fewer course requirements, still recognizing that (i) different students come in with different competencies and experiences and, thus, have different needs, and (ii) that it is important to foster student engagement.

Many faculty feel there is a need to reform the Information Literacy and Computer Skills competencies, in particular to update and strengthen Information Literacy and combine it with more modern Computer Skills.

Some faculty feel that we must recognize that our students are graduating into a difficult economic situation. They need financial literacy to understand job markets, interest and student loans, and saving for retirement in a career during which they are likely to change jobs frequently.

Several faculty argued that it is of great importance that our students graduate with an understanding of the world's environmental problems and how sustainable practices can address them.

STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

Six focus groups were conducted for students with a total of sixty five participants. Each group contained a mixture of school/colleges, majors and standings:

- Student group 1, 02/22/16, 12 participants. Moderator: Jim Hill.
- Student group 2, 02/23/16, 11 participants. Moderator: Katrina Higgins.
- Student group 3, 03/01/16, 12 participants. Moderator: Jim Hill.
- Student group 4, 03/01/16, 12 participants. Moderator: Jim Hill.
- Engaged students, 02/25/16, 11 participants. Moderator: Fahima Dirir.
- Military veteran students, 03/02/16, 7 participants. Moderator: Jim Hill.

Brief summary of discussions:

1. How familiar are you with these as the goals of General Education at UConn? If familiar, how did you hear about them?

Students were overwhelmingly unfamiliar with these goals though many assumed that these were behind General Education. Some recalled encountering them at orientation or in course syllabi.

Students want better access to information about General Education. It would be helpful to understand why they have to fulfill General Education Requirements.

2. What is your opinion of these as goals for UConn graduates?

Students broadly agree that these are reasonable goals for General Education. Many feel, however, that 'moral sensitivity' cannot be taught. A change to 'professional ethics' would be an improvement.

3.Has your UConn education helped you to achieve these goals? If so, in what ways?

Students are in favor of these goals, but skeptical that the Gen Ed system helps to achieve them.

Many of these students expressed the view that extra- and co-curricular activities may be more helpful with meeting these goals. In their opinion, the Gen Ed system should allow these activities to fulfill requirements.

4. Do you think these goals should be changed? What should be added/removed?

Creativity was frequently raised as a possible addition.

5. Do the current General Education requirements succeed in helping students to achieve these goals? If so, in what ways?

Many students think that the requirements are fine, but the quality of teaching does not support the achievement of these goals.

Some students expressed the view that the requirements do not help at all. Large classes do not involve the kind of discussion that would help to achieve these goals.

6. Have you faced any difficulties in meeting the General Education requirements? If so, please describe.

Students say that classes fill up quickly, and underclassmen can't get into classes they want. Some students put off Gen Eds until their last year so they can get the courses they want.

Many say that lectures are too large. Discussion is crucial. Smaller courses provide a better General Education experience.

Students complain that the catalog lists many Gen Ed classes that are not offered. This makes planning difficult.

Students wonder why schools/colleges other than CLAS do not offer Gen Ed courses. General education courses in engineering, business and nursing would be popular.

Many students get frustrated when they take courses that meet goals of Gen Ed but do not count for fulfilling requirements. Many suggested a system where all courses are coded for Gen Ed content and students could be free to select whichever meet requirements.

An opposing view is that we need to reduce the number of Gen Ed courses and devote resources to making them the highest quality possible.

Many students are not aware of the substitution procedure that allows some flexibility.

7. How have you decided which courses to take to fulfill the Gen Ed requirements?

Students often make decisions on double-dipping and schedule rather than interest level. For many students, quality of the teacher is more important than any other factor. Students turn to peers and rating websites to find good teachers.

They also expressed concern about the potential impact on their GPA as they balance choosing courses for interest against the likelihood of achieving a good grade.

8. Where do you get information/advising about Gen Ed requirements?

Students report primarily getting information from word of mouth, Ratemyprofessor.com and the course catalog.

Many students expressed the wish that advising about Gen Eds was better. Advising is better in departments that have a professional advisor. Faculty are not always informed about general education.

9. If the General Education requirements were changed, what themes, competencies, skills etc. would you like to see added/removed?

Several students suggested changes to the Content Area 4 requirement, include more upper division Africana courses.

Environment and sustainability.

Many students want Gen Eds to be tailored to majors. Perhaps have majors develop courses within other categories, so students do not have to take Gen Ed course outside major. Others observed that in a system like this, if you change majors, you are in a big trouble.

Students are desperate for practical, life skills courses. Students want to understand repercussions of student loans on their future. A financial literacy course could help.

Many students say that they get little out of second language courses.

Students want to be able to fulfill general education requirements with upper division courses; these are often smaller and promote the goals of general education better.

Students want the number of Gen Ed courses required to be reduced, more Advanced Placement courses to count, and more flexibility of courses that transfer in. Education is very expensive; 40-45 credits is too many.

STAFF ADVISOR FOCUS GROUP

Staff advisor focus group, 2/26/16, 22 participants, Moderator: Julie Lynch

Broad goals of Gen Ed at UConn:

1.How familiar are you with the goals of General Education at UConn? Follow-up: How did you become familiar with them?"
Many had a vague familiarity but could not necessarily have recited them all. Most learned of these goals in training for advising.

2. How familiar do you think students are with the goals of gen ed?
Most believe that students are not familiar with these goals unless they remember a quick primer from orientation.

3. Do you discuss the goals of gen. ed. when you are meeting with your students?

These goals are discussed at orientation, but little afterwards. There is too little time in advising meetings, advisors must focus on practical considerations, "getting students through." Maybe the university could create some videos showing students discussing what they got out of gen eds.

4. What is your opinion of these as goals for UConn graduates?
These are good goals, but students need to be convinced that they are worthwhile. Center for Career Development uses the term 'career capital' for these and other skills that help students get jobs, outside of the knowledge base of their discipline.

5. Do you think these goals should be changed? What should be added/removed?
'Become articulate' should be clarified to say 'effective communication skills' – including writing and public speaking.

Current Gen Ed requirements (competencies, skills):

1. Do you think that the current General Education requirements succeed in helping students to achieve these goals?
Gen eds are a good start, but not enough. Majors and co-curricular activities fill in the blanks.

2. What do you think are some barriers to teaching gen ed courses effectively? [eg class sizes quality of teaching etc.]
Faculty are intimidated by the process of proposing new Gen Eds. Class size and lack of TA resources are also problems. Combining development of Gen Eds and PTR is too difficult for junior faculty. There is not enough training on how to teach a Gen Ed, especially at regionals.

3. What are students saying about gen. ed? What do they like, what do they dislike?
Students are frustrated that only certain courses count even though others may more than sufficiently cover the requirements/aims of gen ed.
There is an explanation problem; advisors have a hard time justifying/explaining why certain classes don't count.
Limitation of courses goes against the goals of gen ed – we want students to get a broad education but then we stop them from being able to select a broad range of classes to fulfill gen ed.
Some faculty are creating courses but want to avoid the difficulty of approval process so are not designing them and submitting them as gen ed.

4. If we were to change gen ed:
     a. How would you redesign it?
     b. What would you add or remove?
Redesign proposal process for certifying Gen Ed courses, allow more courses to count. Allow greater flexibility with transfer courses. Take courses that aren't being taught regularly off the Gen Ed list. Update the Information Literacy requirement.

APPENDIX 3: Online surveys of faculty and students.

During the spring 2016 semester, the task force developed two sets of survey items (both limited-response and open-ended) for faculty and for students. The survey items and options were motivated by responses to the questions in the focus groups. The surveys were entered into Qualtrics using UConn's site license and reviewed by members of the task force as well as Senate C&C. The review led to minor changes in wording, item order and administration. The task force decided to cast as a broad a net as possible in distribution of the survey. In March 2016, the Registrar sent an email to all undergraduate students (all campuses, all levels, N=21,804) on behalf of the task force directing them to the Qualtrics survey. The student respondents (n=756) were reasonably distributed across campuses, levels, schools/colleges and majors. Emails were sent by the UConn Foundation on behalf of the task force to all individuals who had graduated from UConn with undergraduate degrees between 2009 and 2015 (N not known). Alumni respondents (n = 683) formed a fair cross section of schools/colleges and majors. The Provost's Office sent an email on behalf of the task force to all department heads asking them to forward the survey link to all faculty, including in residence faculty, adjuncts and lecturers (N unkown). Faculty (n=303) responded roughly proportionately from all ranks and schools/colleges. Members of the taskforce collated and analyzed responses to comparable survey items.

A. The Faculty Survey

Faculty General Education Survey

Q1 Faculty General Education Survey Informed Consent Form
Introduction: You are invited to participate in a review that the General Education Assessment Task Force is conducting. The purpose of this review is to review the broad goals and requirements of general education courses at the University of Connecticut. We are conducting a systematic study of UConn's general education goals and requirements by gathering university data and surveying people with first-hand experience of the general education courses and associated procedures.
Procedures:You will be asked questions regarding your experiences with general education courses: content, selection, and procedures at UConn. Your identifiable information will be kept confidential per the guidelines established below. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes or less. The questions were inspired by feedback we received from current UConn students in a series of focus groups. Risks/Discomforts   We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, a possible inconvenience may be the time it takes for the interview. Benefits   You may not directly benefit from this research; however, we hope that your participation in the study may provide guidance for students, educators, and administrators who are interested in providing high quality general education.
Confidentiality: The following procedure will be used to protect the confidentiality of your data. All electronic files (e.g., database, spreadsheet) containing identifiable information will be password protected. Any computer hosting such files will also have password protection to prevent access by unauthorized users. Only the members of the review staff will have access to the passwords. Data that will be shared with others will be coded to protect your identity. Information will be presented in summary format and you will not be identified in any

publications or presentations. You should also know that the UConn Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Office of Research Compliance may inspect study records as part of its auditing program, but these reviews will only focus on the researchers and not on your responses or involvement. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants. Compensation   There are no costs and you will not be paid to be in this study. Participation You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate. When participating in an interview, you do not have to answer any question that you do not want to answer. Questions about the Research   Take as long as you like before you make a decision. We will be happy to answer any question you have about this study. If you have further questions about this study or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the coordinator, Jon Gajewski at: jon.gajewski@uconn.edu.If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Connecticut Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 860-486-8802. Consent

Q2 I confirm that I am a UConn faculty member and that I have read and understood the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this survey.
○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)

Q3 What is your employment status?
○ Full Professor (1)
○ Associate Professor (6)
○ Assistant Professor (5)
○ APIR (2)
○ Adjunct faculty (3)
○ Other (please enter) (10) _____

Q13 On which campus(es) do you teach courses?Check all that apply.
❑ Avery Point (1)
❑ Hartford (2)
❑ Stamford (3)
❑ Storrs (4)
❑ Torrington (5)
❑ Waterbury (6)

Q5 In which school or college is your (primary) appointment?

❍ College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources (1)
❍ School of Business (2)
❍ School of Engineering (3)
❍ School of Fine Arts (4)
❍ School of Nursing (5)
❍ School of Pharmacy (6)
❍ College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (7)
❍ Neag School of Education (8)
❍ Other (please enter) (10) _____

Q34 Do you now or have you previously taught general education courses?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Q17 Find below a statement of the Broad Goals of General Education at UConn. I understand the next questions are based on these Broad Goals of General Education at UConn. (1)

Q21 How familiar are you with the Broad Goals of General Education at UConn that are listed above?
❍ Very Familiar (1)
❍ Somewhat Familiar (2)
❍ Not at All Familiar (3)

Q23 Before taking this survey, how did you become familiar with UConn's Broad Goals of General Education? Check all that apply.
❑ Staff development/training (8)
❑ UConn syllabus guidelines (9)
❑ Peer coaching (10)
❑ UConn website (11)
❑ UConn manuals (12)
❑ Newsletter or email (13)
❑ Other (Please enter) (7) _____

Q24 In your opinion, how important is it that a UConn student achieve each of these goals?

	Extremely important (1)	Very important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Slightly important (4)	Not at all important (5)
Being articulate (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Intellectual breadth and versatility (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Critical judgment (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Moral sensitivity (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Awareness of their era and society (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
A working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q36 When you teach general education courses, to what extent do you orient your teaching towards these goals?

	To a great extent (1)	To a certain extent (2)	Not at all (3)
Being articulate (1)	○	○	○
Intellectual breadth and versatility (2)	○	○	○
Critical judgment (3)	○	○	○
Moral sensitivity (4)	○	○	○
Awareness of their era and society (5)	○	○	○
Consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience (6)	○	○	○
A working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge (7)	○	○	○

Q37 In your opinion, how successful are students in achieving each of these by the time they graduate? (You may leave any item blank.)

	Completely successful (1)	Very successful (2)	Somewhat successful (3)	Slightly successful (4)	Not at all successful (5)
Being articulate (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Intellectual breadth and versatility (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Critical judgment (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Moral sensitivity (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Awareness of their era and society (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience (6)	○	○	○	○	○
A working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge (7)	○	○	○	○	○

Q25 If UConn changed its broad goals for general education, would you be in favor of including any of the following as goals?

	Completely in favor (1)	Somewhat in favor (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat opposed (4)	Totally opposed (5)
Creativity/Innovation (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Problem solving (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding methods of science (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to reason with numbers (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Knowledge of history (6)	○	○	○	○	○

Q27 A Summary of General Education I understand the next questions are based on these UConn General Education Requirements (content areas, competencies). (4)

Q28 Do you agree that fulfilling these Gen Ed requirements helps students to achieve each of the following goals?

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree Somewhat (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree Somehwat (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
Being articulate (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Intellectual breadth and versatility (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Critical judgment (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Moral sensitivity (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Awareness of their era and society (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience (6)	○	○	○	○	○
A working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge (7)	○	○	○	○	○

Q33 In your opinion, how important is it for every UConn student to acquire each of the following competencies?

	Extremely Important (1)	Very Important (2)	Somewhat Important (3)	Slightly Important (4)	Not at all important (5)
Writing well (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Thinking quantitatively (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Working competently with computers (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Knowing a second language (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Knowing how to obtain and evaluate information (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q38 In your opinion, how successful are students in achieving each of these by the time they graduate? (You may leave any item blank.)

	Completely successful (1)	Very successful (2)	Somewhat successful (3)	Slightly successful (4)	Not at all successful (5)
Writing well (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Thinking quantitatively (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Working competently with computers (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Speaking a second language (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Knowing how to obtain and evaluate information (5)	○	○	○	○	○

Q29 If UConn changed its requirements for general education, would you be in favor of including any of the following as content areas or competencies?

	Completely in favor (1)	Somewhat in favor (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat opposed (4)	Totally opposed (5)
Environment and Sustainability (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Fine Arts (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to communicate clearly and respectfully about divisive issues (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Financial Literacy (3)	○	○	○	○	○

Q31 What other knowledge or skills do you think should be included in UConn's general education requirements for all students?

Q39 How easy is it to find information on each of the following? (You may leave any item blank)

	Very easy (1)	Mostly easy (2)	Neither easy nor difficult (3)	Somewhat difficult (4)	Very difficult (5)
Goals of general education (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Learning goals for Content Areas (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Learning goals for competencies (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
How to advise students about general education requirements (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
How to write a syllabus for a Gen Ed course (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
How to teach a Gen Ed course (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
How to teach a large lecture (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
How to propose a new Gen Ed course (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q30 In your opinion, how big of a problem is each of the following for general education at UConn?

	A very big problem (1)	A significant problem (2)	A moderate problem (3)	A slight problem (4)	Not a problem at all (5)
Gen Ed classes are too large. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Large Gen Ed classes do not receive adequate TA support. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
The reason for Gen Eds is not communicated effectively. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
The process of getting a new Gen Ed course approved is too long and difficult. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
The Gen Ed system is too inflexible. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
The current goals of Gen Ed do not address student needs. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Students are required to take too many Gen Ed courses. (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Other (please enter): (9)	○	○	○	○	○

Q34 Please feel free to elaborate below on any of your answers to the previous questions or to comment on any issues that were not addressed by these questions.

STUDENT ONLINE SURVEY

Student General Education Survey

Q1 Undergraduate General Education Survey Informed Consent

Q2 I confirm that I am a UConn student and that I have read and understood the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this survey.
- ⭕ Yes
- ⭕ No

Q3 What is your standing as a student at UConn?
- ⭕ First year student
- ⭕ Second year student
- ⭕ Third year student
- ⭕ Fourth year student
- ⭕ Beyond fourth year
- ⭕ Not sure.

Q4 Are you a transfer student?
- ⭕ Yes
- ⭕ No

Q13 What campus do you currently attend?
- ⭕ Avery Point
- ⭕ Hartford
- ⭕ Stamford
- ⭕ Storrs
- ⭕ Torrington
- ⭕ Waterbury

Q5 What school or college are you in enrolled in?
○ College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources
○ School of Business
○ School of Engineering
○ School of Fine Arts
○ School of Nursing
○ School of Pharmacy
○ College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
○ Neag School of Education
○ I am in ACES
○ Other _____

Q6 What is your (primary) major in the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources?

Q8 What is your (primary) major in the School of Business?

Q9 What is your (primary) major in the School of Engineering?

Q10 What is your (primary) major in the School of Fine Arts?

Q11 What is your (primary) major in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences?

Q12 What is your (primary) major in the Neag School of Education?

Q7 Have you completed your university general education requirements?
○ Yes
○ No
○ Not Sure

Q14 In which semester did you complete your general education requirements?
○ My 3rd semester
○ My 4th semester
○ My 5th semester
○ My 6th semester
○ My 7th semester
○ My 8th semester
○ After my 8th semester
○ Not sure

Q15 In which semester do you plan to complete your general education requirements?
- ○ My 3rd semester
- ○ My 4th semester
- ○ My 5th semester
- ○ My 6th semester
- ○ My 7th semester
- ○ My 8th semester
- ○ After my 8th semester
- ○ Not sure

Q17 Find below a statement of the Broad Goals of General Education at UConn.
 I understand the next questions are based on these Broad Goals of General Education at UConn.

Q21 How familiar are you with the Broad Goals of General Education at UConn that are listed above?
- ○ Very Familiar
- ○ Somewhat Familiar
- ○ Not at All Familiar

Q23 How did you become familiar with UConn's Broad Goals of General Education? Check all that apply.
- ❑ Orientation
- ❑ Class syllabus
- ❑ Academic advisor
- ❑ UConn website
- ❑ Student workbook/manual
- ❑ Newsletter or email
- ❑ Other (Please enter) _____

Q24 In your opinion, how important is it that a UConn student achieve each of these goals?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Being articulate	○	○	○	○	○
Intellectual breadth and versatility	○	○	○	○	○
Critical judgment	○	○	○	○	○
Moral sensitivity	○	○	○	○	○
Awareness of their era and society	○	○	○	○	○
Consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience	○	○	○	○	○
A working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge	○	○	○	○	○

Q25 If UConn changed its broad goals for general education, would you be in favor of including any of the following as goals?

	Completely in favor	Somewhat in favor	Neutral	Somewhat opposed	Totally opposed
Creativity/Innovation	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership	○	○	○	○	○
Problem solving	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding of methods of science	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to reason with numbers	○	○	○	○	○
Knowledge of history	○	○	○	○	○

Q27 A Summary of General Education requirements   Find below a brief summary of the university general education requirements. I understand the next questions are based on these UConn General Education Requirements (content areas, competencies).

Q28 Do you agree that fulfilling the Gen Ed requirements helps students to achieve each of these goals?

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neutral	Disagree Somehwat	Strongly Disagree
Being articulate	O	O	O	O	O
Intellectual breadth and versatility	O	O	O	O	O
Critical judgment	O	O	O	O	O
Moral sensitivity	O	O	O	O	O
Awareness of their era and society	O	O	O	O	O
Consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience	O	O	O	O	O
A working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge	O	O	O	O	O

Q33 In your opinion, how important is it for every UConn student to acquire each of the following competencies?

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Slightly Important	Not at all important
Writing well	○	○	○	○	○
Thinking quantitatively	○	○	○	○	○
Working with computers	○	○	○	○	○
Learning a second language	○	○	○	○	○
Knowing how to obtain and evaluate information	○	○	○	○	○

Q35 How helpful has your UConn education been in acquiring each of the following competencies?

	Extremely Helpful	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Slightly Helpful	Not at all Helpful
Writing well	○	○	○	○	○
Thinking quantitatively	○	○	○	○	○
Working with computers	○	○	○	○	○
Learning a second language	○	○	○	○	○
Knowing how to obtain and evaluate information	○	○	○	○	○

Q29 If UConn changed its requirements for general education, would you be in favor of including any of the following as content areas or competencies?

	Completely in favor	Somewhat in favor	Neutral	Somewhat opposed	Totally opposed
Environment and Sustainability	○	○	○	○	○
Fine Arts	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to communicate clearly and respectfully about divisive issues.	○	○	○	○	○
Financial Literacy	○	○	○	○	○

Q31 What other knowledge or skills do you think should be included in UConn's general education requirements for all students?

Q30 What best describes your attitude toward the relationship of Gen Eds to your major?
○ I would prefer not to have to take Gen Ed classes outside my major.
○ I wish it were easier to find and take Gen Eds outside of, but related to my major.
○ I value the opportunity Gen Ed give me to take courses outside of my major.
○ I have no opinion.

Q31 Where do you get information about a general education course before you decide to take it? Check all that apply.
❑ Academic advisor
❑ Peoplesoft
❑ The Course Catalog
❑ Student handbook/workbook
❑ Word of mouth from peers.
❑ Reviews on websites such as RateMyProfessors.com
❑ Department or professors' websites
❑ Other _____

Q32 How important is each of the following factors in your decision to take a Gen Ed class?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Interest in subject matter.	○	○	○	○	○
Teaching quality.	○	○	○	○	○
Class is offered at a convenient time.	○	○	○	○	○
Small class size.	○	○	○	○	○
Class is related to my major.	○	○	○	○	○

Q30 In your opinion, how big a problem is each of the following with the current Gen Ed requirements?

	A very big problem	A significant problem	Somewhat of a problem	A slight problem	Not a problem at all
The courses I wanted to take were always full.	○	○	○	○	○
The courses I wanted to take were not offered.	○	○	○	○	○
I didn't have room in my schedule for Gen Eds.	○	○	○	○	○
I took courses that fulfilled the goals of Gen Ed, but they didn't count towards the requirement.	○	○	○	○	○
The quality of teaching in Gen Ed courses was not always good.	○	○	○	○	○
I didn't know where to get good information about Gen Eds.	○	○	○	○	○
Gen Ed classes were too large.	○	○	○	○	○
Students are required to take too many Gen Ed courses.	○	○	○	○	○

Gen Ed courses were too easy and not worth my time.	○	○	○	○	○
Other:	○	○	○	○	○

Q34 Please feel free to elaborate below on any of your answers to the previous questions or to comment on any issues that were not addressed by these questions.

ALUMNI GENERAL EDUCATION SURVEY

Q1 UConn Alumni General Education Survey Informed Consent
Q2 I confirm that I am a UConn graduate and that I have read and understood the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this survey.
- Yes
- No

Q35 Did you graduate from UConn with an undergraduate degree?
- Yes
- No

Q3 When did you graduate from UConn?
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015

Q4 Were you a transfer student?
- Yes
- No

Q13 What campuses did you attend?Check all that apply.
- .   Avery Point
- .   Hartford
- .   Stamford
- .   Storrs
- .   Torrington
- .   Waterbury

Q5 What school or college did you obtain your degree from?
- College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources
- School of Business
- School of Engineering
- School of Fine Arts
- School of Nursing
- School of Pharmacy
- College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Neag School of Education
- I am in ACES
- Other _____

Q6 What was your (primary) major in the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources?

Q8 What was your (primary) major in the School of Business?

Q9 What was your (primary) major in the School of Engineering?

Q10 What was your (primary) major in the School of Fine Arts?

Q11 What was your (primary) major in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences?

Q12 What was your (primary) major in the Neag School of Education?

Q17 Find below a statement of the current Broad Goals of General Education at UConn. I understand the next questions are based on these Broad Goals of General Education at UConn.

Q21 As a student, how familiar were you with the Broad Goals of General Education at UConn that are listed above?
- Very Familiar
- Somewhat Familiar
- Not at All Familiar

Q23 How did you become familiar with UConn's Broad Goals of General Education? Check all that apply.

- . Orientation
- . Class syllabus
- . Academic Advisor
- . UConn website
- . Student workbook/manual
- . Newsletter or email
- . I can't recall
- . Other (Please enter) _____

Q24 In your opinion, how important is it that students achieve each of these goals by the time they graduate from UConn?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Being articulate	•	•	•	•	•
Intellectual breadth and versatility	•	•	•	•	•
Critical judgment	•	•	•	•	•
Moral sensitivity	•	•	•	•	•
Awareness of their era and society	•	•	•	•	•
Consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience	•	•	•	•	•
A working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge	•	•	•	•	•

Q29 How important has each of these been to your life or work since you graduated?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Being articulate	•	•	•	•	•
Intellectual breadth and versatility	•	•	•	•	•
Critical judgment	•	•	•	•	•
Moral sensitivity	•	•	•	•	•
Awareness of era and society	•	•	•	•	•
Consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience	•	•	•	•	•
A working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge	•	•	•	•	•

Q25 If UConn changed the statement of its general education goals, would you be in favor of including any of the following as broad goals?

	Completely in favor	Somewhat in favor	Neutral	Somewhat opposed	Totally opposed
Creativity/Innovation	•	•	•	•	•
Leadership	•	•	•	•	•
Problem solving	•	•	•	•	•
Understanding of methods of science	•	•	•	•	•
Ability to reason with numbers	•	•	•	•	•
Knowledge of history	•	•	•	•	•

Q27 A Summary of General Education. I understand the next questions are based on these UConn General Education Requirements (content areas, competencies).

Q14 In which semester did you complete your general education requirements?
- My 3rd semester
- My 4th semester
- My 5th semester
- My 6th semester
- My 7th semester
- My 8th semester
- After my 8th semester
- I can't recall.

Q28 Do you agree that fulfilling these Gen Ed requirements helps students to achieve each of these goals?

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neutral	Disagree Somehwat	Strongly Disagree
Being articulate	•	•	•	•	•
Intellectual breadth and versatility	•	•	•	•	•
Critical judgment	•	•	•	•	•
Moral sensitivity	•	•	•	•	•
Awareness of their era and society	•	•	•	•	•
Consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience	•	•	•	•	•
A working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge	•	•	•	•	•

Q31 How important has each of the following competencies been to your life and work since graduating?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all important
Writing well	•	•	•
Thinking quantitatively	•	•	•
Working with computers	•	•	•
Learning a second language	•	•	•
Knowing how to obtain and evaluate information	•	•	•

Q32 How helpful was your UConn education in acquiring each of the following competencies?

	Extremely Helpful	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Slightly Helpful	Not at all Helpful
Writing well	•	•	•	•	•
Thinking quantitatively	•	•	•	•	•
Working with computers	•	•	•	•	•
Learning a second language	•	•	•	•	•
Evaluating the quality and sources of information	•	•	•	•	•

Q29 If UConn changed its requirements for general education, would you be in favor of including any of the following as content areas or competencies?

	Completely in favor	Somewhat in favor	Neutral	Somewhat opposed	Totally opposed
Environment and Sustainability	•	•	•	•	•
Fine Arts	•	•	•	•	•
Ability to communicate clearly and respectfully about divisive issues	•	•	•	•	•
Financial Literacy	•	•	•	•	•

Q30 Looking back, what best describes your attitude toward the relationship of Gen Eds to your major?
- I would have preferred not to have to take Gen Ed classes outside my major.
- I wish it had been easier to find and take Gen Eds related to my major.
- I valued the opportunity Gen Ed courses gave me to explore outside my major.
- I have no opinion.

Q31 Looking back, where did you get information about a general education course before you decide to take it? Check all that apply.

- . Academic advisor
- . Peoplesoft
- . The Course Catalog
- . Student handbook/workbook
- . Word of mouth from peers.
- . Reviews on websites such as RateMyProfessors.com
- . Department or professors' websites
- . Other _____
- . I can't recall

Q32 How important was each of the following factors in your decision to take a Gen Ed class?

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Interest in subject matter	.	.	.	.	.
Teaching quality	.	.	.	.	.
Class is offered at a convenient time	.	.	.	.	.
Small class size	.	.	.	.	.
Class is related to my major	.	.	.	.	.

Q35 In your opinion, how big a problem was each of the following with the Gen Ed requirements?

	A very big problem	A significant problem	Somewhat of a problem	A slight problem	Not a problem at all
The courses I wanted to take were always full.	•	•	•	•	•
The courses I wanted to take were not offered.	•	•	•	•	•
I didn't have room in my schedule for Gen Eds.	•	•	•	•	•
I took courses that fulfilled the goals of Gen Ed, but they didn't count towards the requirement.	•	•	•	•	•
The quality of teaching in Gen Ed courses was not always good.	•	•	•	•	•
I didn't know where to get good information about Gen Eds.	•	•	•	•	•
Gen Ed classes were too large.	•	•	•	•	•
Students are required to take too many Gen Ed courses.	•	•	•	•	•

Gen Ed courses were too easy and not worth my time.	•	•	•	•	•
Other:	•	•	•	•	•

Q30 What knowledge or skills are required in your current life or work that you wish had been required in your UConn education?

Q34 Please feel free to elaborate below on any of your answers to the previous questions or to comment on any issues that were not addressed by these questions.

Appendix 4: Review of Peer and Aspirant General Education Requirements

Aspirant Peers

Institution	Arts & Humanities	Social Sciences	Science Technology	Sci.Tech Lab	Diversity Multicult	Int'l Course	Computer Technology	Information Literacy	Quant.	Second Language	Writing Part 1	Writing Intensive
	6 cr	6 cr	6-7 cr	One	6 cr	1 course			Two	2 sem	Fresh	two
Brown University	X	X			X		X		X		X	X
Clemson University (*)	6	6	4	X	3	X			3		6	X
Dartmouth College (#)	2	3	3	1	4	1			1			
Duke University (#)	2	2	2		2				2	2	1	2
Johns Hopkins University (*)	9	9	9	X					X			
Northwestern University (^)	4	4	4	X						6	1	1
Penn State University (#)	X	X	X		1	1			X		X	3CR
Purdue University (#)	1	1	2		1			1	1		1	
University of Florida (*)	6-12	6-12	6-12		3	3			6		3	
University of Georgia (@)	3	9	7-8		9	X			6-7		3	3
University of Illinois (@)	6	6	6		1	1			2	X	X	X
University of Pittsburgh (#)	5	1	3		2	3			1	2	1	2
Washington University (^)	16-18	8-9	8-9		2				1		1	1

- Credits *
- Courses #
- Hours @
- Units ^

Accountability Peers

Institution	Arts & Humanities	Social Sciences	Science Technology	Sci.Tech Lab	Diversity Multicult	Int'l Course	Computer Technology	Information Literacy	Quant.	Second Language	Writing Part 1	Writing Intensive
	6 cr	6 cr	6-7 cr	One	6 cr	1 course			Two	2 sem	Fresh	two
Iowa State University (*)	12	9	8						3			
Ohio State University (@)	6	6	13		6	0-6			3-7	0-12	3	3
Purdue University (#)	1	1	2		1			1	1		1	
Rutgers University (*)	6	6	6		6			3	6			9
University of Georgia (@)	3	9	7-8		9	X			6-7		3	3
University of Iowa (@)	9	3	7		3	3			3	X		
University of Minnesota (*)	9	6	8	X	6	3			3		3	3
University of Missouri (*)	12	9	9	X					6		3	6

- Credits *
- Courses #
- Hours @
- Units ^

Competitors

Institution	Arts & Humanities	Social Sciences	Science Technology	Sci.Tech Lab	Diversity Multicult	Int'l Course	Computer Technology	Information Literacy	Quant.	Second Language	Writing Part 1	Writing Intensive
	6 cr	6 cr	6-7 cr	One	6 cr	1 course			Two	2 sem	Fresh	two
Boston College (#)	6	2	2		1				1		1	
Boston University (#)	2	2	3									
Delaware University (*)	X	X	X	X	3				3	0-12	3	3
Drexel University	X	X	X				X	X	X		X	X
Fordham University	X	X	X						X	X	X	
Northeastern University	X	X	X		X	X			X		X	X
Penn State University (#)	X	X	X		1	1			X		X	3CR
Quinnipiac University (*)	9	6	7	X					3		6	
University of Maryland (*)	6	6	7		X	X			6		3	3
University of Massachusetts (*)	3	16	8		2				6		3	3
University of Rhode Island (*)	12	6	6		X				3	X	3	3
University of Vermont (*)	3	6	4	X	6	X		X	3		6	

- Credits *
- Courses #
- Hours @
- Units ^