

# General Education Oversight Committee

## Report of Activities AY 2013–2014

### Introduction

General Education (Gen Ed) is alive and well at UConn. It is clear that as an institution we value General Education and most departments/majors within the University, including STEM majors, value and support our goals and approach to Gen Ed.

The General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC) is tasked with oversight of Gen Ed at UConn. GEOC consists of chairs and co-chairs of ten GEOC Subcommittees, drawn from content areas across the University—Content Areas 1 (Arts & Humanities), 2 (Social Sciences), 3 (Science & Technology), 4 (Diversity and Multiculturalism/Intl); Competencies: W, Q, Second Language, Information Literacy, Computer Technology); and Assessment; and two ex-officio members (the Associate Director of the W Center and a representative of the Senate C&CC). Details are given on our website (revised 2014) at <http://geoc.uconn.edu/>. This report summarizes both operations of the program and activities of the GEOC during the current academic year.

2014 GEOC activities included our first full implementation of a course “Realignment” plan that was initially piloted in Spring 2013 to review Gen Ed courses that were 5 years or older. In addition, GEOC conducted the “Provost’s Competition” supporting the development and renewal of Gen Ed courses, and reviewed and recommended (to Faculty Senate C&C committee) approval of all new Gen Ed courses.

The current configuration of Gen Ed courses dates back to the Taskforce on General Education Report of 2000. In 2004, UConn completed a transformative, faculty-led general education initiative aimed at creating a strong undergraduate curriculum across all majors. Over the last decade with guidance from faculty from across the University, UConn has implemented robust curricular changes and maintained two faculty-led centers (W and Q) to support student and faculty development in areas identified as particularly crucial to the success of general education monitored by GEOC. A substantial number of Gen Ed courses are in place and the total number of courses remains relatively consistent across the last few years. Since revisions were implemented, the Gen Ed program has seen substantial success and widespread acceptance, but now faces several challenges associated with the continued growth and change within and outside the University.

Perhaps the most critical example of the challenges facing Gen Ed concern the skill/competency areas of Information Literacy and Computer technology. The changes in these areas, from the year 2000 to 2014 are quite remarkable. The penetration of mobile technologies into society in general and Higher Education specifically is considerable. The year 2000 conceptions of what it means to locate information (in the Library), analyze, use and properly cite ideas have changed dramatically. Much original scholarship now begins and exists solely on the Internet. Information Literacy and Computer skills have combined and the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for living and learning are perhaps more aptly called Digital Literacy skills, rather than separately information or computer use skills. GEOC has undertaken discussion of these issues in the context of potentially combining the current Information Literacy requirement with the Computer Technology requirement into a single Digital Literacy competency. GEOC has not yet finalized a recommendation on this issue.

Another challenge to Gen Ed concerns the teaching of writing within the University. The 2000 Taskforce Report on Gen Ed intended writing to be taught at 2 levels. Writing instruction was to be introduced to all UConn students through Freshman English writing (ENGL 1010/1011). This course was also intended to teach the entry level Information Literacy competencies. Quoting from the current Gen Ed Guidelines,

“Basic information literacy will be taught to **all freshmen** as an integral part of ENGL 1010/1011, in collaboration with the staff of the University Libraries.”

College level skills in writing were intended to be taught through an extended writing seminar taken in the first year, continuing in discipline-specific “W” courses distributed throughout a student’s major. The challenge GEOC has identified stems from the fact that First Year Writing (FYW, Freshman English) requires many limited-enrollment seminar format sections. Of all the general education components this one course has been most vulnerable to financial pressures. In 2009, CLAS allowed Advanced Placement scores to be used as a way of exempting students from FYW, an allowance that was meant to be a temporary measure in response to the funding exigencies of that moment. But the AP score exemption has not been removed. Currently, about a quarter of first-year students are exempted from the first-year writing requirement. Many other students transfer the FYW course from either ECE or partner schools. GEOC is concerned that eliminating FYW for a substantially larger cohort of students means the guidelines of reaching all Freshman with college level writing and information literacy skills can no longer be met through this mechanism, and thus, removes a crucial component of the writing curriculum, as well as the only course that fulfills the basic information literacy requirement from the work of many students at UConn. Moreover, many of the exempted students might not take a writing course until their junior or even senior year, which delays the development of an important skill and dampens the spirit of the general education curriculum. For this growing cohort of exempted students, UConn cannot certify its general education claims. GEOC has undertaken discussion of this issue as well.

The 2013-2014 General Education Oversight Committee herein reports on the following projects:

- Gen Ed Course approvals
- General Education Implementation 2013-14
- Gen Ed Course substitutions
- General Education Course Enhancement Grant (Provost’s) Competition
- Course Realignment Project
- W Course Assessment

## **General Education Course Approvals**

The general education curriculum continues to mature and now contains 359 content area courses (8 more than last year) and 521 skill code courses (13 more than last year). Growth in the total number of courses has increased slightly; additionally, a number of courses are revised every year. As of March in the AY 2013-2014, 73 proposals were received (35 more than last year), resulting in the addition of 20 new courses to the curriculum; 17 existing courses being revised; 5 courses approved for intersession offering; and 4 courses dropped from the curriculum. Twenty-five of the 73 proposals are still in the review process, many of them GEOC-approved courses that have not yet completed review by the Senate.

The breakdown of courses approved by the Senate by content area and competency is given in Table 1. Since some courses are included in more than one category, the totals are less than the sum of the individual categories.

Table 1. *Numbers of courses now approved for the general education curriculum (as of February 3, 2014 Senate meeting). The first three columns count each course listing, while the last three columns count cross-listed courses as one course.*

Content Area/Competency	1000-level courses	2000+level courses	Total # of courses	1000-level courses (noncross)	2000+level courses (noncross)	Total # courses (noncross)
CA1 Arts and Humanities	85	91	176	77	82	160
CA2 Social Sciences	50	16	66	49	15	64
CA3 Science and Technology	61	4	65	55	4	59
CA4 Diversity & Multiculturalism	78	133	211	69	101	170
<b>*Total content area courses</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>359</b>
Quantitative	45	34	81	45	34	81
Writing	26	427	463	26	407	442
<b>Total skill courses **</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>521</b>

\* totals are less than the sum of content area courses as some CA4 courses are also CA1, CA2 or CA3.

\*\* totals are less than the sum of skill courses as some courses are both Q and W.

NOTE: Overall total of courses in the Gen Ed curriculum are less than the sum of the CA/skill categories as many Content Area courses are also skill courses.

The GEOC reviews proposals to offer existing General Education courses in intensive sessions (4 weeks or less). The breakdown of these reviews since 2005, including 5 submitted this year, is given in Table 2. Courses are approved either fully or provisionally, depending on the measure of assurance GEOC has that the Gen Ed objectives of a given course can be maintained in the shortened course format. GEOC has collected faculty reports on provisionally approved intersession courses offered more than 2 times in a condensed format and uses this information to determine whether a course should be re-categorized to “fully approved.”

Table 2. *General Education Courses Reviewed for Intensive Session Teaching 2005–2013 and 2013*

Course disposition	2005-2013	2013
Approved	67	5
Provisionally approved	6*	0
Rejected	8	0

\*Note: 1 course has since been granted full approval. 5 courses remain on the Provisional list.

## General Education Program Implementation

The number of General Education course offerings on all UConn campuses declined at a very slow rate from 2008 to 2011, but this trend has reversed since then: 2,109 (1,042+1,067) in AY 2011-12 and 2,264 (1,105+1,159) during AY 2012-13. In AY 2013-14, this upward trend continued to a very slight degree with a 4-course increase to 2,268 (1,125+1,143). However, while the General Education courses taught were increasing in size until last year, they appear to be decreasing in size this year. While there was an increase of four courses from last year to this year, the total enrollment has fallen by 417 (93,130 in AY 2013-14 [48,579 in Fall 2013 and 44,551 in Spring 2014] as compared to (93,547 in AY 2012-2013 [48,794 in Fall 2012 and 44,753 in Spring 2013]. Tables 3 (F 2013) and 4 (S 2014) show the breakdown of course sections and enrollments by General Education category and campus, and Table 5 shows the average class sizes across content areas and competencies.

Since some Gen Ed courses are included in more than one Content Area, the “Actual totals” of Content Area offerings is a bit lower than the “Total GenEd” numbers shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Fall 2013 General Education courses (Seminar/Lecture sections) offered [“Course”], subsections (Discussion/Lab sections) offered [“SubSec”] and enrollment (“EnrTot”) by campus and category. Total enrollment was calculated for Lecture/Seminar sections only and does not double-count enrollment for subsections. Courses with zero enrollment have not been counted.

**Note:** Actual physical seats are 48,579. The higher 62,410 figure is due to courses that have multiple gen ed attributes and cross-listed courses.

Campus	AVPT			HTFD			STMFD			STORR			TORR			WTBY			All Campuses		
GenEd category	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot
Arts and Hum	19	1	446	41	0	965	20	1	621	138	173	8,361	10	0	136	24	1	561	252	176	11,090
Social Sciences	23	0	562	33	0	1002	22	0	788	102	161	8,799	6	0	107	18	0	556	204	161	11,814
Sci and Tech	4	0	106	7	0	280	7	0	257	26	91	2922	1	1	38	4	2	206	49	94	3,809
Sci and Tech Lab	10	19	275	15	28	542	9	13	289	50	421	5496	4	5	79	7	13	264	95	499	6,945
Div and Multi	9	1	132	18	0	303	9	0	178	58	53	2527	4	0	48	11	0	221	109	54	3,409
Div and Multi Int	13	0	316	18	0	471	8	0	288	73	69	4682	4	0	57	7	0	211	123	69	6,025
<b>Total CA</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1837</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>3563</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2421</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>968</b>	<b>32787</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>832</b>	<b>1053</b>	<b>43092</b>
Quantitative	20	12	394	35	22	1058	25	8	694	182	514	11,242	7	4	127	18	9	485	287	569	14,000
Writing 1000 level	4	0	70	7	0	119	3	0	57	31	0	747	0	0	0	2	0	38	47	0	1,031
Writing 2000 level	3	0	55	6	1	89	5	0	95	40	64	1267	2	1	28	3	1	50	59	67	1,584
Total Writing	10	0	151	21	1	298	20	0	343	247	93	4315	3	1	33	11	1	178	312	96	5,318
<b>Total GenEd</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>2382</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>4919</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3458</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>1575</b>	<b>48344</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2682</b>	<b>1431</b>	<b>1718</b>	<b>62410</b>
Actual Totals	80	22	1744	140	33	3750	99	17	2872	697	1131	37,601	31	8	489	78	20	2123	1,125	1,231	48,579

Table 4. Spring 2014 General Education courses (Seminar/Lecture sections) offered [“Course”], subsections (Discussion/Lab sections) offered [“SubSec”] and enrollment (“EnrTot”) by campus and category. Total enrollment was calculated for Lecture/Seminar sections only and does not double-count enrollment for subsections. Courses with zero enrollment have not been counted.

**Note:** Actual Physical Seats are 44,551. The higher 57,951 figure is due to courses that have multiple gen ed attributes and cross-listed courses.

Campus	AVPT			HTFD			STMFD			STORR			TORR			WTBY			All Campuses		
GenEd category	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot	Course	SubSec	EnrTot
Arts and Hum	17	1	401	33	0	761	25	1	689	133	158	8,171	7	0	131	22	0	540	237	160	10,693
Social Sciences	18	0	522	29	0	953	21	1	666	94	165	7,960	5	0	97	18	0	519	185	166	10,717
Sci and Tech	4	0	103	7	0	234	6	0	197	27	46	2309	1	1	24	4	0	134	49	47	3,001
Sci and Tech Lab	9	14	243	11	24	481	10	13	244	36	352	4750	3	3	54	7	13	262	76	419	6,034
Div and Multi	4	1	62	14	0	285	11	0	253	58	39	2419	4	0	64	6	0	146	97	40	3,229
Div and Multi Int	9	0	221	13	0	368	11	0	302	70	1365	4895	2	0	25	13	0	344	118	1,365	6,155
<b>Total CA</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1552</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>3082</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2351</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>2125</b>	<b>30504</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1945</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>2197</b>	<b>39829</b>
Quantitative	17	10	371	31	19	808	25	8	598	149	479	9,730	5	2	73	17	9	444	244	527	12,024
Writing 1000 level	5	0	95	8	0	147	4	0	74	33	1	617	1	0	17	4	0	72	55	1	1,022
Writing 2000 level	3	1	38	5	1	91	4	1	69	40	69	1328	1	0	16	7	1	103	60	73	1,645
Total Writing	17	1	180	22	1	373	24	1	377	365	95	4847	6	0	67	17	1	254	451	99	6,098
<b>Total GenEd</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>2103</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>4263</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>3326</b>	<b>932</b>	<b>2699</b>	<b>45081</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2643</b>	<b>1457</b>	<b>2823</b>	<b>57951</b>
Actual Totals	73	18	1612	119	28	3235	104	18	2641	746	1034	34,666	26	5	442	75	19	1955	1,143	1,122	44,551

The enrollment data also allow the calculation of average enrollment in General Education courses in each category. In Table 5, only non-subsection portions of classes are counted as classes. Courses that were listed in the Schedule of Classes but then had zero enrollment are not counted. The average of 2000+ level W courses is distorted by the fact that independent study and senior thesis W courses (often having an enrollment of only 1–3 students as opposed to the usual enrollment of 19 per W section) are included in the course count. By contrast, the average class size of W courses at Storrs (and by extension all campus) is shown to exceed the 19 student

limit because some W courses have enrollments of up to 344 students in their lecture/seminar sections; the students are then broken into discussion sections of 19 where they received their writing instruction. The exclusion of subsections (e.g. labs) also accounts for the large class size average in the CA3 courses. Traditionally, larger lectures are more likely to be found in Storrs than at the regional campuses. Enrollment statistics for each semester further indicate that W-sections tend to fill up to but rarely exceed the cap of 19 students. With very few exceptions, departments and instructors have respected this cap.

Since last year, the average enrollment has gone down in almost every content area and competency with two notable exceptions. Quantitative (Q) courses and CA3-Lab courses at Storrs have seen an increase in average enrollment, which has also caused a slight increase in the totals for all campuses combined (highlighted below in red). This increase is not surprising given the increased emphasis on STEM learning at UConn; however, the creation and offering of CA3 and Q courses does not seem to be keeping pace with this increased demand, thus the number of offerings in CA3 and Q may eventually be a cause for concern.

Table 5. Average class size for General Education classes, 2013-2014

**Note:** Individual subsections of courses (discussion sections, labs, etc.) are NOT counted as separate classes. Numbers reflect only credit-bearing portions of courses. Courses with zero enrollment have not been counted. The average of 2000+ level W courses is distorted by the fact that independent study and senior theses W courses are included in the course count.

Gen Ed category	Storrs		Regionals		All Campuses	
	2013-14	2012-13	2013-14	2012-13	2013-14	2012-13
Arts and Hum	61	67	24	25	45	48
Social Sciences	86	94	30	32	58	61
Sci and Tech	99	111	35	37	69	74
Sci and Tech Lab	119	104	32	35	76	70
Div and Multi	43	43	19	19	32	32
Div and Multi Intl	67	74	27	29	51	54
<b>Total Cont Area</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>25</b>	28	<b>49</b>	<b>48</b>
Writing 1000-lev	21	22	18	18	20	20
Writing 2000+ lev	32	32	16	16	27	27
<b>Total Writing</b>	<b>15</b>	16	<b>15</b>	15	<b>15</b>	16
<b>Total GenEd</b>	<b>52</b>	52	<b>25</b>	27	<b>42</b>	42

The Senate-approved General Education Guidelines recommend that most general education courses be taught by full-time faculty. In AY 2013–2014, this was true for approximately 51-56% of Gen Ed classes across all campuses (see Tables 6a and 6b). This seems to represent a significant increase over last year, in which full-time faculty taught 49-52% (depending on the semester) of all Gen Ed courses. Numbers for the previous two years were as follows: 49–53% in AY 2011-12 and 49-51% in AY 2010-11. The figures for AY 2013-14 actually appear close to those from AY 2009-10 in which 54-57% of all Gen Ed courses were taught by full-time faculty. This year, full-time faculty taught just over one-third (34%) of general education courses at the regional campuses and 65% of courses at the Storrs campus, up from 62% in Storrs last year. However, the category of full-time faculty includes non-tenured and non-tenure-track lecturers and Assistant Professors in Residence (APiRs). The latter are hired on contracts for up to three years and often report feeling overwhelmed by their teaching loads of seven courses per year. While adjunct instructors and GAs may be extremely competent teachers, they are likely to be less integrated into the teaching mission of the institution and require and deserve support and supervision to ensure maintenance of teaching standards and fulfillment of courses goals.

Since class sizes and credit loads vary, it is also of interest to compare these teaching contributions on the basis of student credit hour production (Tables 7a and 7b). While this does not influence the data much at the regional campuses, the number of students taught by faculty at the Storrs campus usually rises because faculty tend to teach the larger classes. When all faculty ranks are considered, faculty teach almost three quarters of students' general education programs at Storrs (over 73% in the Fall 2013 – See Table 7a).

Table 6a. *General Education classes by instructor rank at each campus Fall 2013 (% of total)*

**Note:** Only the credit bearing portion of courses is counted for the figures below.

Campus	Asst Prof	Assoc Prof	Prof	Instructor /Lecturer	Total Full-t. Faculty	Adjunct	GA	Other	Total Part-t. Faculty	Total Courses
Avery Point	11.3%	8.8%	5.0%	2.5%	27.5%	58.8%	10.0%	3.8%	72.5%	80
Hartford	10.0%	10.0%	2.9%	3.6%	26.4%	56.4%	15.0%	2.1%	73.6%	140
Stamford	9.1%	26.3%	6.1%	3.0%	44.4%	47.5%	7.1%	1.0%	55.6%	99
Torrington	3.2%	3.2%	6.5%	9.7%	22.6%	74.2%	3.2%	0.0%	77.4%	31
Waterbury	15.4%	9.0%	2.6%	9.0%	35.9%	48.7%	14.1%	1.3%	64.1%	78
<b>All Regionals (avg)</b>	10.5%	12.9%	4.2%	4.7%	32.2%	54.7%	11.2%	1.9%	67.8%	428
<b>Storrs</b>	26.1%	14.8%	17.1%	4.0%	62.0%	10.0%	26.1%	1.9%	38.0%	697
<b>All campuses</b>	20.2%	14.0%	12.2%	4.3%	50.7%	27.0%	20.4%	1.9%	49.3%	1125

Table 6b. *General Education classes by instructor rank at each campus Spring 2014 (% of total)*

**Note:** only the credit bearing portion of courses is counted for the figures below.

Campus	Asst Prof	Assoc Prof	Prof	Instructor /Lecturer	Total Full-t. Faculty	Adjunct	GA	Other	Total Part-t. Faculty	Total Courses
Avery Point	9.6%	12.3%	12.3%	2.7%	37.0%	57.5%	4.1%	1.4%	63.0%	73
Hartford	6.7%	7.6%	2.5%	4.2%	21.0%	61.3%	16.0%	1.7%	79.0%	119
Stamford	15.4%	24.0%	9.6%	1.9%	51.0%	45.2%	3.8%	1.0%	50.0%	104
Torrington	7.7%	3.8%	0.0%	11.5%	23.1%	76.9%	0.0%	0.0%	76.9%	26
Waterbury	20.0%	6.7%	2.7%	12.0%	41.3%	45.3%	13.3%	0.0%	58.7%	75
<b>All Regionals (avg)</b>	12.1%	12.3%	6.0%	5.3%	35.8%	54.4%	9.1%	1.0%	64.5%	397
<b>Storrs</b>	21.8%	17.8%	23.1%	4.2%	66.9%	11.5%	19.4%	2.1%	33.1%	746
<b>All campuses</b>	18.5%	15.9%	17.1%	4.5%	56.1%	26.4%	15.8%	1.7%	44.0%	1143

Table 7a. *General Education credit hour production by instructor rank at each campus Fall 2013 (% of total)*

Campus	Asst Prof	Assoc Prof	Prof	Instructor /Lecturer	Total Full-t. Faculty	Adjunct	GA	Other	Total Part-t. faculty	Total Credit Hours
Avery Point	10.3%	5.8%	10.4%	7.2%	33.6%	59.6%	5.7%	1.1%	66.4%	5200
Hartford	9.6%	9.7%	2.2%	6.5%	27.9%	52.8%	16.7%	2.6%	72.1%	10,438
Stamford	13.1%	22.0%	8.7%	2.9%	46.7%	47.4%	5.1%	0.8%	53.3%	8339
Torrington	4.9%	5.5%	0.0%	6.0%	16.4%	83.6%	0.0%	0.0%	83.6%	1411
Waterbury	19.2%	6.7%	5.2%	11.4%	42.5%	45.0%	12.4%	0.0%	57.5%	6302
<b>All Regionals (avg)</b>	12.3%	11.5%	5.7%	6.6%	36.2%	52.3%	10.2%	1.3%	63.8%	31690
<b>Storrs</b>	31.3%	13.4%	18.2%	6.8%	69.7%	14.6%	12.3%	3.4%	30.3%	111,863
<b>All campuses</b>	27.1%	13.0%	15.5%	6.7%	62.3%	22.9%	11.8%	2.9%	37.7%	143553

Table 7b. *General Education credit hour production by instructor rank at each campus Spring 2014 (% of total)*

Campus	Asst Prof	Assoc Prof	Prof	Instructor /Lecturer	Total Full-t. Faculty	Adjunct	GA	Other	Total Part-t. Faculty	Total Credit Hours
Avery Point	9.7%	2.6%	6.7%	4.9%	24.0%	61.0%	11.7%	3.3%	76.0%	5614
Hartford	16.0%	10.6%	2.1%	5.2%	33.9%	49.4%	14.2%	2.6%	66.1%	12,139
Stamford	10.5%	23.4%	7.4%	3.8%	45.0%	47.3%	6.8%	0.9%	55.0%	9,072
Torrington	2.5%	4.0%	3.2%	6.6%	16.3%	79.5%	4.2%	0.0%	83.7%	1588
Waterbury	18.1%	11.0%	6.1%	7.1%	42.3%	44.6%	11.9%	1.2%	57.7%	6829
<b>All Regionals (avg)</b>	13.4%	12.4%	5.0%	5.2%	36.0%	51.1%	11.0%	1.9%	64.0%	35242
<b>Storrs</b>	34.8%	11.5%	18.8%	8.2%	73.3%	11.3%	12.9%	2.5%	26.7%	122,013
<b>All campuses</b>	30.0%	11.7%	15.7%	7.5%	64.9%	20.2%	12.5%	2.4%	35.1%	157255

## General Education Course Substitutions

According to the General Education Guidelines, schools and colleges have the explicit authority to make substitutions to the requirements for individual students admitted to the respective school or college. The Registrar's office kindly supplies GEOC with a list of all substitutions made for enrolled students during the academic year. These numbers are relatively small compared to the total general education courses taken and have been steeply declining since 2010: (219 in AY 2012-13; 267 in AY 2011-11 and 317 in AY 2010-11). AY 2013-14, some colleges did see slight increases, but many again saw continued declines (e.g. AGNR and CLAS).

Table 8. *Substitutions to the General Education Requirements by School or College*

	# subs AY 2013-14*	# subs AY 2012-13
ACES	0	0
AGNR	27	48
CANR	0	0

BUSN	20	23
CLAS	47	80
CTED	16	10
EDUC	12	9
EGBU	1	0
ENGR	13	17
FNAR	8	9
NURS	7	20
PHAR	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>219</b>

\* Note: Data was gathered a little early this cycle; therefore, the AY 2013-14 numbers represent approximately 11 months of data versus 12 months of data from AY 2012-13. It is unlikely that this incongruity significantly affects the totals.

Table 9. **Substitutions to the General Education Requirements by Category**

Category	Substitutions 2013-14	Substitutions 2012-13
CA1	19	26
CA2	10	15
CA3	8	6
CA3-LAB	27	26
CA4	32	47
CA4-INT	25	39
Q	8	5
W	13	24
Second Language	11	28
Sub for ENGL 1010	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>219</b>

Substitutions for transfer students at the time of admission for courses transferred in that are not a match of existing University of Connecticut courses are potentially a much larger number than the number processed for already enrolled students.

Another source of general education credits is through the Early College Experience (ECE) program (Table 10). These are University of Connecticut courses taught by high school teachers throughout the State under the supervision of University departments. Over eight thousand students are enrolled in ECE courses, and a substantial fraction of those students will enroll at the University of Connecticut. A few students take as many as three semesters of University of Connecticut course credits while still in high school.

Because many ECE courses also are general education courses, the GEOC chair accepted a position on the ECE Program advisory board. The numbers provided below by ECE are the cohort of students who were part of UConn ECE Fall 2012-Spring 2013 and matriculated to UConn Fall 2013. For that reason it is almost certain that these numbers are below the actual numbers of GEOC seats successfully taken.

Table 10. **ECE transfers into General Education Requirements by Category – Fall 2013**

Category	Substitutions granted
CA1	205
CA2	128
CA3	89



CA3–Lab	594
CA4	4
CA4–Intl	8
<b>Content Area Total</b>	<b>1028</b>
Q	760
W	0
<b>Competency Total</b>	<b>760</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1788</b>

## General Education Course Enhancement Grant (Provost’s) Competition

The annual General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition is designed to promote the ongoing enhancement, innovation, renewal, and academic rigor of the content and teaching of UConn’s General Education curriculum. Since 2004, this grant program has tremendously enriched UConn’s General Education program by positively encouraging the development of courses that support GEOC goals for continuous improvement and renewal of Gen Ed.

After a year delay through GEOC transition, Spring 2014, the Provost’s General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition was held for the tenth time. A total of twelve proposals were received and three of those were funded (one fewer than in 2012 year).

The number of successful proposals for the Provost’s General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition has declined in recent years, and this is due to several factors. In the first place, proposers tend to seek the full award amount per year, so this limits the total number of proposals that can be funded. Moreover, the review committee identified three main areas in which proposals were found to be lacking:

- Thoroughness of the course objectives, specifically the student learning outcomes and how well they aligned with indicated assessments.
- How well the proposed budget aligned with the direct development of course, not necessarily professional development for the instructor.
- How well the courses aligned with the GEOC guideline content areas proposed. Overall it was felt that some proposals took a shotgun approach and tried to shoot broadly here. On the contrary, the committee felt that this showed a lack of understanding of General Education guidelines. The courses the committee chose to fund most clearly demonstrated a clear and focused approach to one, or at most two content areas or competencies.

The primary objective of the Provost’s Competition is improvement in the quality of general education. While the competition will continue to encourage innovative new course proposals in every area, the GEOC identifies priority foci each year for which to solicit proposals. This year’s competition made special requests for the following:

- Courses from any discipline that focused on creative or innovative ways to incorporate 21<sup>st</sup> Century work skills and learning skills and Digital Information Literacy (DIL) objectives,
- Courses that improved or added to the available options for students trying to fulfill their CA3 or Q requirements,
- Innovative W courses in any discipline,
- New or revised Sophomore-level General Education courses in all areas.

The three proposals selected for funding this year included an existing 2000-level W course, a new 1000-level CA3 course, and a new 1000-level CA1/CA4 course.

GEOC is working to move the competition to the Fall to align with budget year consideration.

Table 11. *Courses developed through the support of the Provost's Competition by Gen Ed category*

Category	Grants Funded 2004-2011	Spring 2014 Winners
CA1	31	(1)
CA2	17	
CA3	12	1
CA4	37	(1)
Q	9	
W	20	1
Sec Lang	1	
Totals	79	3

**Note:** the "Totals" row figures represent individual grant projects funded. These totals are less than the sum of each category as many courses have multiple gen ed attributes.

## Oversight

Part of GEOC's mandate from the Senate is "monitoring periodically courses that satisfy General Education requirements to ensure that they continue to meet the criteria adopted by the Senate" (*General Education Guidelines*). GEOC has developed a small-scale recertification plan and opted for a staggered and sample approach that would still allow monitoring the quality of the Gen Ed program and help stimulate departmental conversations about the purpose and quality of their Gen Ed offerings. Thus, a sampling of courses - rather than all Gen Ed courses - will need to be recertified in an overall recertification process that is spread over a five-year cycle. The plan is to obtain information about the delivery of content area and competency course categories rather than to reapprove (or not) the general education offering status of individual courses. Hence, the term "recertification" is not an accurate description of what is proposed. Therefore, this monitoring program has been renamed the alignment survey.

In parallel with the plan to gather data on how courses are being taught, the GEOC continues the ongoing effort to develop assessment tools designed to reveal whether what students learn from the courses they select achieves goals that are the purpose of general education.

## Gen Ed Course Realignment

The GEOC contracted in 2011 with University Information Technology Services to develop a flexible online survey to gather information about sampled courses. The survey asks open-ended questions about the relationship between the course content and delivery and both the overall general education guidelines and also the specific guidelines for the content areas and competencies that a course is approved for. The survey also includes the current draft of learning outcomes (that continue to be refined) for the content areas and asks whether the course contains any exam questions, projects, or written assignments intended to measure whether students have achieved these outcomes. The current survey does not ask for the results of general education measures; it only asks whether some form of measurement is attempted. In 2011, GEOC conducted a pilot survey with three departments. After the pilot, the survey was revised and is ready for a regular program of surveys.

Ten departments that offer general education courses are selected each year to participate in the general education alignment survey. A sample of courses offered by each participating department is selected to include:

- The general education course with the largest enrollment
- At least one example of each content area and competency offered
- At least one example of a course offered at a regional campus

Random sampling is used for content areas and competencies that are represented in multiple courses offered by the department (two courses are sampled and the department is asked to choose one of the two). Once the GEOC subcommittees have finished their revision of the Information and Computer Literacy competencies, departments will also be asked to review their information literacy offerings. Information literacy is an important component of general education, but it generally is not associated with a single departmental course and often is incorporated into courses that are not otherwise identified with general education.

The cumulative data gathered from departmental samples permits the GEOC to report on the extent to which general education courses collectively continue to be consistent with the guidelines that were the basis for their approval as general education offerings. Courses approved for content area one, Arts and Humanities, and content area four, Multiculturalism and Diversity both require satisfying one of five possible guidelines. Once enough departments have been surveyed, it will be possible to report what fractions of courses in these content areas focus on each of the possible guidelines.

The survey is oriented toward evaluating content areas and competencies, and a question of interest is this: “To what extent does the teaching of general education courses, especially those approved several years ago, continue to conform to the description and justification in the approved course action request?” Should the survey reveal that a surveyed course is diverging from the general education guidelines, the GEOC will work with the department and faculty to restore the course to the proper alignment. Nevertheless, the implications of this question are large. If it appears that a large fraction of general education courses have diverged from the guidelines, then the process of reviewing general education courses, the resources devoted to oversight, and possibly the structure of the general education program itself would have to be reconsidered.

This year, the following departments were selected for review: AIRF, ENGL, HIST, LING, NUSC, PHARM, PHYS, PP, PVS, and WGSS. Between them, the departments submitted a total of 21 courses for review. Some departments did opt to remove a limited number of selected courses from consideration based on reasons that included, 1) the course was approved as a Gen Ed but was never offered, or 2) the course had already recently undergone GEOC review for revisions made to the original proposal.

## **Assessment**

This Spring, under the direction of Tom Deans from the Writing Center, the GEOC is undertaking an assessment of one-credit W courses. The W assessment for 2014 will build on earlier partnerships with Art History, Political Science, HDFS, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Nursing and English to directly assess student performance in writing-intensive courses. The new angle this year is that we are focusing on one-credit W courses, and we will work with Allied Health, Animal Science, Economics, and Nutrition to evaluate the student writing emerging from their one-credit Ws. What we learn should inform not only pedagogy in those departments but whether the one-credit W approach works well in meeting General Education and W expectations. For details on methodology, please see the W assessment reports posted to the GEOC website: <http://geoc.uconn.edu/w-assessment-and-learning-outcomes/>.

The results of this current assessment will be available by June 2014.

## **Grade Survey of Gen Ed Courses**

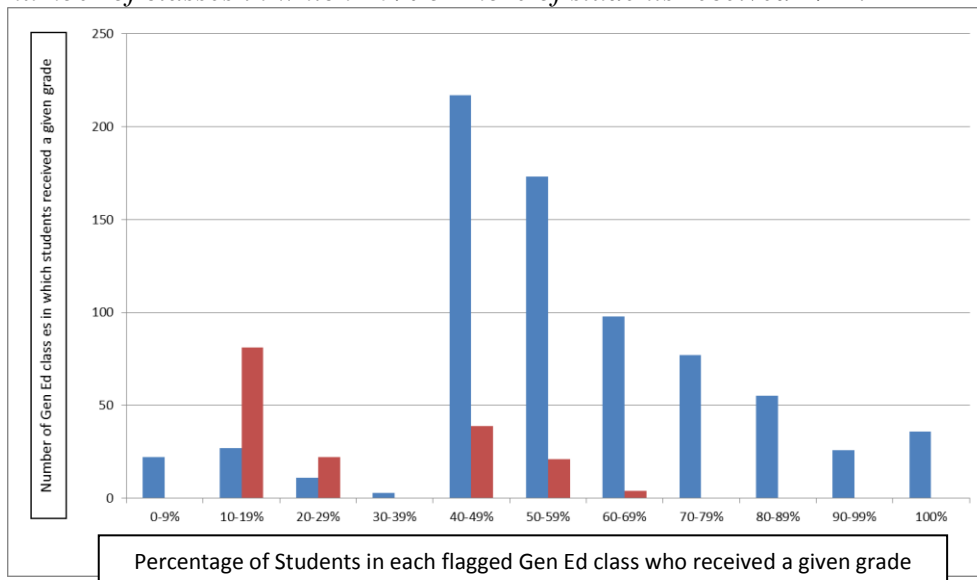
In response to concerns from the Provost’s Office over “DFW courses,” (courses in which a high percentage of students receive either a D, an F or a W in the class) the GEOC Chair requested grade information for all Gen Ed courses from the Spring 2013 semester in which the number of Ds, Fs, or Ws in any one class accounted for

40% or more of the total grades. As a counterbalance to the inquiry, a list of Gen Ed courses in which 40% or more of the total grades were A- or above was also requested. The data yielded some interesting results.

A total of 2120 Gen Ed courses were offered in the Spring 2013 semester. Of that 2120, 745 were flagged as having a high percentage of either DFW or A/A- students (35%). Of the 745 courses, only 63 were flagged for being DFW courses. The remaining 682 courses (92% of the selected courses, 32% of the total Gen Ed courses) were flagged for having a high percentage of A/A- students. This included 36 courses across 23 disciplines in which 100% of students in the class received an A or A-. The number of students in each of these classes varied from 5 to 52, with an average of 16 students. By contrast, the one class with the highest percentage of DFWs had only 68% of DFW grades.

Below is a bar graph that shows these results. Please note that the numbers in the graph represent ONLY the 745 originally flagged classes, not the 2120 total Gen Ed classes. It should also be noted that the “courses” represented include not only general lectures, but lab or discussion sections that may be graded as well.

Graph 1. Comparison of the number of classes in which 40% or more of students received DFWs versus the number of classes in which 40% or more of students received A/A-.



**Blue:** Represents students receiving A or A-

**Red:** Represents students receiving DFW\*

\*NOTE: There were 578 classes/labs of the 745 listed in which only 0-9% of students received DFWs. This information has been left off of the chart because the significantly larger number in proportion to the other numbers dilutes the scale of the chart.

## Concluding Comments

Gen Ed at UConn is functioning well but faces a number of challenges in the areas of writing instructional for all students, and the changing nature of Digital Literacies competencies.

What remains consistent is dedication to the guiding principles of General Education as stated in the 2013 General Education Guidelines as follows:

**Universality.** All students at the University of Connecticut should have the same University General Education Requirements irrespective of their major, School or College. Schools and Colleges may not restrict the courses that students are allowed to use in fulfilling the University General Education requirements.

**Accessibility.** All students at the University of Connecticut should have timely access to General Education courses and support services.

**Transferability.** Students must be able to transfer from one School or College to another without having to repeat General Education Requirements. A procedure should be established for the smooth transition of students who transfer into the University from other institutions.

**Faculty Participation.** General Education courses should be taught by faculty; resources should be allocated to promote this practice.

(downloaded from <http://geoc.uconn.edu/geoc-guidelines/> 3-27-14)

As part of the University's strategic initiatives and Academic Plan, the Gen Ed program must remain rigorous and innovative, while incorporating contemporary pedagogy and uses of technology, and also continuing to adjust to the changing needs of students and society. General Education is mentioned in UConn's 2014 Academic Plan as a means for achieve excellence in Undergraduate Education. GEOC would hope to continue to work with University Administration to sustain and continuously adapt Gen Ed to the changing needs of the University, the State, and the Nation. This may be most critical in the area of STEM preparation which is central to the University's Academic Plan.

The Value of General Education in an era of University STEM priorities. The general truth about General Education is that, as a priority, it often operates in direct opposition to efficient career preparation, most notably in the content rich domains of STEM disciplines. Metrics for success in STEM preparation may include more students completing their study within 4 years, and reducing the cost (thus the accessibility) of STEM majors (see for example NRC's 14 indicators of success in K-12 STEM education at [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=13509&page=1](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=13509&page=1)). In contrast, fulfilling General Education requirements often increases the time needed to complete STEM majors by directing students to take an initially broad array of courses with perspectives other than that of STEM. Likewise, requiring General Education courses increases student costs beyond the coursework that is centrally connected to STEM career preparation, adding costs associated with the Arts, Languages, multi-cultural perspectives and others.

Yet at UConn and elsewhere, the value of Gen Ed is recognized as critical to the preparation of scientists and engineers. For example, a preeminent STEM institution, MIT, requires "Communication Intensive" coursework and every MIT candidate for a bachelor's degree must have completed a minimum of eight term subjects in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, including distribution and concentration components (see <http://web.mit.edu/catalog/overv.chap3-gir.html>). Undergraduate advising at UConn clearly recognizes the value of General Education coursework. For example in Engineering, only 1 Arts course is prescribed (PHIL

1104) and 2 Science courses (CHEM 1127 and PHYS 1501Q) – see

<http://www.engr.uconn.edu/me/cms/undergraduate/currentstudents/generalrequirements>

Similarly, Mathematics prescribes even fewer courses and encourages students to take a wide variety of Gen Ed offerings – see <http://www.math.uconn.edu/degree-programs/undergraduate/plans-of-study/>. Updating the Gen Ed requirements that are central to STEM preparation may become a University challenge.

Also related to the University's priorities as set in the Academic Plan, service learning may be an area that could be supported and integrated with Gen Ed requirements. Learning in the area of Service learning may be a priority for the Freshman and Sophomore curriculum and thus may find a nexus with the principles of Gen Ed.

In conclusion, Gen Ed at UConn remains strong. It faces several challenges and may need to face others as the University moves to implement its Academic Plan. GEOC looks forward to continuing to work closely with University Administration to maintain and strengthen its work to ensure every UConn graduate is prepared individually in their domain as well as able fulfill the responsibilities as a citizen, behave ethically, respect and appreciate the value of diversity, assume a leadership role, collaborate on a team, and effectively communicate their ideas to others.

#### **GEOC Committee Members 2013–2014 Academic Year**

Michael F. Young, Chair ('16)

EPSY

Thomas Abbott ('14)

ECE/BIO

Scott Campbell ('15)

ENGL

Ana Maria Diaz-Marcos ('14)

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Richard Jones ('14)

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Mary Ellen Junda ('15)

MUSI

Peter Kaminsky ('14)

MUSC

Thomas Long ('14)

NURS

Wally Madych ('14)

MATH

Charles Mahoney ('15)

ENGL

Thomas Meyer ('14)

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Eduardo Urios-Aparisi ('15)

SPAN/LCL

Karen Piantek (Administrator)

## **GEOC Subcommittee Members 2013-2014 Academic Year**

### ***CA1 Arts and Humanities***

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Francoise Dussart, Co-Chair (Fall '13)  
Charles Mahoney, Co-Chair (Spring '14)  
Gustavo Nanclares

### ***CA2 Social Sciences***

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Linda Lee  
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### ***CA3 Science and Technology***

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### ***CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism***

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