Resolution #02
1997-98

TO: President Paul Yu
FROM: The Faculty Senate Meeting on: September 29, 1997
RE: I. Formal Resolution (Act of Determination)
   II. Recommendation (Urging the fitness of)
   X. III. Other (Notice, Request, Report, etc.)
   For your information

SUBJ: General Education Committee Review of the Report of the SUNY Senate Task Force on General Education.

Signed: Anne H. Parsons Date Sent: 10/8/97
(Anne H. Parsons, Faculty Senate President)

TO: The Faculty Senate
FROM: President Paul Yu
RE: I. Decision and Action Taken on Formal Resolution
   a. Accepted. Effective Date: __/__/__
   b. Deferred for discussion with the Faculty Senate on __/__/__
   c. Unacceptable for the reasons contained in the attached explanation

II, III.
   a. Received and acknowledged
   b. Comment: ________________________________

DISTRIBUTION: ________________________________

Distribution Date: 10/13/97 Signed: ________________________________
(President of the College)
September 29, 1997

The General Education Committee of the Faculty Senate at SUNY College at Brockport has carefully reviewed the report of the SUNY Senate Task Force on General Education. We have also shared copies with our entire faculty and received their response through an open meeting and in writing. We believe that the recommendations that follow represent a consensus of the thinking on our campus.

We believe that your Task Force has taken on a difficult and demanding task and we commend it for its efforts. We believe that much good may come from its work.

Furthermore, we thank the Task Force for reiterating the principle that the faculty of each college must devise a curriculum, an admissions policy, and a program appropriate to its own unique configuration of students, faculty, programs, resources, and community need. Consistent with this principle of local autonomy, we believe that a direct role for the Chancellor’s Office in the system-wide assessment of General Education would represent an unnecessary expansion of bureaucracy. In this we are adhering to the historic role played by the various campuses in the SUNY system as well as with the Trustees’ stated desire to protect and nurture regional specialization by campus.

We recognize that, in theory, such variability could frustrate the goal of "seamless transferability," especially between the two and the four year units. In practice, however, we believe at Brockport have solved that problem by implementing a transfer policy, consistent with the recommendation of the Task Force, that permits an Associate’s Degree to meet lower division General Education requirements. We strongly recommend that you urge this practice become the standard for SUNY.

We find ourselves in agreement with a substantial portion of the stated Goals and Competencies. However, given the unique context within which each college operates, we conclude, after considerable committee and faculty-wide deliberation and discussion, that unanimity across the system is neither necessary nor desirable.

On the other hand, we believe that each of us can learn from what the others are doing, and we commend you for initiating this system-wide conversation. We hope that your efforts represent the first step toward the creating of a system-wide forum in which representatives of the faculty at all two and four year colleges can regularly come together to learn from each other. We strongly urge you to recommend that the Chancellor move decisively in this direction at the earliest possible time.
TO: Faculty and Professional Staff of State University of New York
FROM: Vincent J. Aceto, President
RE: Draft of General Education Report
DATE: August 18, 1997

One of our most important responsibilities as faculty and professional staff in SUNY is to develop and deliver quality educational programs for our students. Basic to all academic programs on our campuses is a required general education experience. We need your help in developing a set of system policies on general education.

Last fall the University Faculty Senate and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges sponsored a system-wide conference on general education. One of the important outcomes of that conference was the creation of a joint task force on general education. Meeting regularly during the past academic year, the task force prepared the attached draft report on general education for your thoughtful consideration. We have asked your campus governance leader and faculty senator to work together to plan a special meeting in September to discuss this draft report and to make recommendations to the task force. The recommendations will be used to prepare a final report for discussion and, hopefully, endorsement by our two governance bodies in October. The report will then be presented to the Chancellor for action and also be used as one of the position papers for an invitational conference on SUNY undergraduate education later this fall.

We welcome your comments and suggestions in this important academic project.
TASK FORCE ON GENERAL EDUCATION MEMBERS

University Faculty Senate
Professor Anne Donnelly (Cobleskill), Co-Chair
Professor Norman Goodman (Stony Brook), Co-Chair
Professor Vincent J. Aceto (Albany)
Professor James C. Dawson (Plattsburgh)
Professor MaryNell Morgan (Empire State)
Dr. Joan Savitt (Albany)
Dr. Charles M. Spuches (ESF, Syracuse)

Faculty Council of Community Colleges
Professor Thomas Cooper (Monroe)
Professor John Halack (Finger Lakes)
Professor George Higginbottom (Broome)
Professor Robert B. Jubenville (Mohawk Valley)
Professor Michael Kinney (Broome)
Professor Jane Pierson (Dutchess)

System Administration
Kathryn Van Arnam (System Administration), Liaison
FOR DISCUSSION
Draft Report by the

Task Force on General Education
(July, 1997)

The Undergraduate Academic Programs and Policies Committee was asked by Senate President Vincent Aceto to take the lead in following up the October 4-6, 1996 Conference on General Education that it had originally proposed and was jointly sponsored by the University Faculty Senate and The Faculty Council of Community Colleges. A Steering Committee established by both governance bodies specifically asked the UAPPC to explore the question, “What is the responsibility of SUNY, as a system, for general education?” The composition of the committee has expanded to incorporate members of the Faculty Council of Community Colleges and is the Task Force on General Education.

Section I: Define the Problem:
Preface
“Aspects of General Education’s Evolution”

Although interest in general education arguably has its origins in the 1920’s and 1930’s, the current wave of general education reform is traceable to the Carnegie Commission’s characterization of general education in 1978 as a “disaster area” and to Harvard’s “Report on The Core” in 1979. Influenced by these and other studies critical of higher education, as well as by the free-elective excesses of the 1970’s, faculty in a host of two- and four-year colleges set out to redefine the purposes of undergraduate education, as they had previously done in each of the post-World War eras.

Typically, general education curricula have sought to prepare graduates to live wisely and well, however those achievements and the requisite learning have been stipulated. Uncomfortable both with the intellectual ideal of the classical curriculum—perennialist, elitist, universally predicated—and the rarified cultural humanism of the English university—general education in twentieth century America has been attuned to pragmatist, scientific, and instrumentalist philosophies and to democratic social theory.

General Education reform initiatives have been responsive to the defining issues of the times. Whether contending with rapid change, with domestic and international crises, with the explosion of knowledge, with expanded access to higher education, with growing institutional and student diversity, or with tensions among epistemic or ideological frameworks, general education’s historical role has been to rethink and refocus the intellectual aims and curricular means of collegiate study.

Increasingly specified as an ensemble of skills, cognitive abilities, generative knowledge, and dispositions of intellect and outlook, contemporary general education is expected to engender in students the intellectual resources to support independent, life-long learning, to invest their experience with richer insight and deeper meaning, and to prepare them to be competent citizens and productive workers.
General Education's evolution, together with the multitude of intellectual, social, and pedagogical factors which continue to influence it, militate against creation of a systemwide, core curriculum for reasons which we find compelling. First, a uniform, comprehensive general education model applied across the range of higher education institutions is unrealistic because we lack complete agreement upon goals and, especially, upon the means of their attainment. Second, even were there to be agreement upon goals, perennial disputes over the relative value of particular types of knowledge thought to subserve such goals pose insuperable obstacles. Third, sharp disagreements over the status of, and warrantable claims for, knowledge undermine--for some, completely vitiate--an essential single curriculum model. Last, and most important, faculty simply will not buy into a curriculum which ignores individual campus needs and interests, and whose uniformity frustrates local initiative.

Lacking agreement upon a universally authoritative core curriculum, but fully accountable for the clarity and quality of collegiate general education, our tasks, modest in conception but difficult to achieve, are clear: 1) identify and adopt systemwide some common goals (there are many substantial ones); 2) provide for their systematic assessment; and 3) justify, relative to the advancement of student competence, the present state of knowledge in the disciplines, the faculty’s intellectual autonomy, our civic obligations, and our social aspirations, the variety of campus approaches to general education.

Compilation of Current General Education Policies and/or Practices

The Task Force found that an accurate compilation of general education requirements by campus does not exist, contrary to the assertions of the Empire report: SUNY’s Core Curricula: The Failure to Set Consistent and High Academic Standards.

We wish to provide such a document. Each campus' representative to University Faculty Senate and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges was asked to have the Academic Vice President forward the official statement of the goals/objectives/areas of knowledge (but not specific courses) of each campus' general education requirements.

The compilation of these responses may be found in Appendix I.

Section II

Summary of Findings from General Education Conference:

The Undergraduate Programs and Policies Committee, in collaboration with the Faculty Council of Community Colleges presented a symposium on October 4-5, 1996 at the University at Albany. The symposium explored the different philosophical approaches to general education, the place of general education in a system of higher education, the external forces that impact on general education programs, assessment of general education and outcomes, and some representative models of general education programs across SUNY. The program included a number of panels and presentations by national specialists in general education programs and provided opportunities to interact with all presenters.
Conference participants were asked to list the five most important general education questions and issues from a list of twenty-eight gathered at the general session.

Predictably, the issues that emerged as most critical were: 1) Common Core Curriculum issues, 2) resource allocation, 3) transferability, 4) standardization vs. diversity, innovation and uniqueness and 5) responsiveness of General Education. In brief, these refer to the general opposition to a single common core curriculum for General Education throughout SUNY, the importance of providing adequate resources to mount successful General Education programs on the campuses, concern about insuring that General Education requirements do not hinder easy transferability of students within SUNY, the importance of diversity, innovation and uniqueness as opposed to standardization of General Education requirements, and the responsiveness of General Education programs to campus goals and missions. There were, of course, some variation among sectors in what is perceived to be the most and least important issues in General Education. The full list of General Education questions and issues, and the distribution of the five most important and the five least important across sector types, may be found in Appendix II.

Section III
RECOMMENDATIONS:

RECOMMENDATION 1
Definition
The Task Force recommends the adoption of the following definition of general education:

General Education is a set of unspcialized, coherent and focused educational experience throughout the college years aimed at providing students with knowledge and skills that are useful and important for all educated persons regardless of their jobs or professions.

This is an amended version of a statement to Presidents from a former SUNY Vice Chancellor for Academic Policy.

Historically, it has been the responsibility of SUNY’s Academic Leadership to define broad goals for this portion of the curriculum. However, it is the responsibility of the faculty of the individual campuses to determine the instructional programs that will provide students with this type of education.

RECOMMENDATION 2
Framework
Since the design and implementation of the general education requirements are the responsibility of the faculty of the individual campuses, the Task Force recommends that the faculty adopt as a framework the General Goals and Student Competencies presented in Appendix III.
The Task Force strongly supports the current practice in SUNY (and most universities) that views general education as a four-year program whose specific content and academic standards are the responsibility of the faculty. It does not assume that graduates of two-year college programs will have completed all of the general education requirements discussed in this report. Nor does it assume that students in all programs will satisfy these requirements solely through a General Education program; some will assuredly be acquired through study in a student’s major. In the context of providing some more clarity to the above definition of general education, the Task Force recommends that the following specific skills and areas of knowledge be established as those constituting the goals and objectives of general education within SUNY for which the faculty at the individual campuses will determine the particular courses and programs that will meet these aims:

**SKILLS**

- Written and oral communication
- Critical thinking
- Information acquisition and management
- Quantitative processes

**KNOWLEDGE AND INQUIRY DOMAINS**

- Arts and humanities
- Natural sciences
- Social and behavioral sciences
- Human diversity
- Global perspectives
- People and the environment
- Ethical and civic responsibility

These skills and areas of knowledge are adapted primarily from *College Expectations: The Report of the SUNY Task Force on College Entry-Level Knowledge and Skills* (1992) and *The Minnesota Transfer Curriculum* (1993). The intellectual skills will be acquired not only in designated courses, such as English Composition and Mathematics, but also in courses throughout the curriculum. The first three knowledge and inquiry domains reflect the Liberal Arts and Sciences tradition; the latter four—human diversity, global perspectives, people and the environment and ethical and civic responsibility—are contemporary themes of great importance that lend themselves to serious interdisciplinary study and analysis. The involvement of co-curricular professional staff is useful in achieving these interdisciplinary goals. Examples of the specific competencies linked to these skills and knowledge domains will be found in Appendix III.

**RECOMMENDATION 3**

**Accountability**

The Task Force recommends that the Chancellor, in consultation with the University Faculty Senate and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, establish appropriate procedures and provide necessary support to ensure that campuses fulfill Recommendation 2.
The State University of New York Board of Trustees’ report, *Rethinking SUNY*, dated December 1, 1995, supports campus autonomy. Similarly, the Task Force recognizes the long-standing responsibility of the faculty of the individual campuses to determine precisely which courses and experiences will provide students with a general education. Though these goals are likely to be met through diverse individual campus means, it is the Chancellor’s role to ensure that SUNY-wide goals for general education are being met.

**RECOMMENDATION 4**

**Admissions Standards**

The Task Force recommends that access to all SUNY institutions be based on clear standards of academic achievement. It also recognizes and affirms the open admission responsibilities of the Community Colleges. The Task Force further recommends a Regents Diploma from high school, or documented evidence that a student has performed at a functionally equivalent academic level, or an appropriate associate’s degree be required for matriculation at a SUNY state-operated campus. For transfer students, graduation from a SUNY institution with an AA or AS degree will satisfy all general education requirements for the first two years of a baccalaureate degree. (A.A.S. and A.O.S graduates seeking transfer to baccalaureate programs will likely need additional general education coursework to attain junior standing.) Criteria for meeting upper division general education requirements shall be the same for transfer and native students.

The Task Force recognizes the responsibility of K-12 education to provide a strong foundation in general education knowledge and skills. In order to obtain the maximum benefits from general education, or any other portion of the college curriculum in higher education, high school graduates should have the requisite knowledge to do college level work. The Task Force supports the efforts of the Regents of the State of New York to improve the quality of K-12 education and concurs with the views expressed in *College Expectations: The Report of the SUNY Task Force on College Entry Level Knowledge and Skills*, October 1992.

In recognition of the New York State Education Department’s timetable, outlined in "The Strategy for Raising Standards", the Task Force suggests that Recommendation 4 become effective in the year 2003 to coordinate with the new standards for graduation from high school in New York State. This would provide ample time for prospective SUNY applicants to prepare to meet the requirement in this recommendation. It would also allow for any necessary adjustment required in SUNY enrollments. Students exempted from this requirement (e.g. EOP students and students accepted on the basis of artistic, creative, leadership or other special abilities) may require additional resources.
Appendix I

This will be added to the draft report. It is now under review for accuracy and completeness by Academic Vice Presidents.

Appendix II

These tables will be added to the draft report. The results have been reported earlier in previous issue of Faculty Senate Bulletin.
APPENDIX III

GENERAL GOALS AND STUDENT COMPETENCIES

SKILLS

Written and oral communication
1. Goal: To develop in students the ability to write and speak English effectively as well as to read and listen critically.
2. Examples of relevant competencies: Students should be able to
   a. understand/demonstrate the writing and speaking processes through invention, drafting, revision, editing and presentation.
   b. participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.
   c. demonstrate selection of appropriate communication choices for specific audiences.
   d. construct logical and coherent arguments adapted to a particular audience.
   e. acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to demonstrate authority, point-of-view, and individual voice and style in their writing and speaking.

Critical thinking
1. Goal: To develop in students the ability to unify factual, creative, rational, and value-sensitive modes of thought.
2. Examples of relevant competencies: Students should be able to
   a. gather factual information and apply it to a given problem in a manner that is relevant, clear, comprehensive, and conscious of any bias in the information selected.
   b. imagine and/or seek out a variety of possible goals, assumptions, or perspectives which can give meaning to a given problem.
   c. analyze the logical connections between the facts, goals, and assumptions relevant to a problem, and evaluate claims which may be said to follow from them.
   d. recognize and articulate the often complex set of values which underlies and affects the decisions, observations, analyses, and evaluation made by themselves and others.
   e. identify and evaluate the assumptions that are the basis for both their own and others' thoughts and actions.
   f. describe and improve their own critical thinking and problem-solving procedures.

Information acquisition and management
1. Goal: To develop in students knowledge of the basic sources of information, their location, as well as how to access and manipulate them.
2. Examples of relevant competencies: The students should be able to
   a. know where to locate specific sources of information necessary to accomplish a specific task.
   b. be familiar with the libraries, including the services they provide and where these services are located.
c. develop appropriate information search strategies, which requires knowledge of the categories into which information falls and how to organize such a search.

be computer literate so as to use the computer to access and manage necessary information for a task at hand.

e. identify and use common and useful databases.

Quantitative processes

1. Goal: To develop in students basic knowledge about and the ability to use quantitative processes to help them make decisions in their lives and careers.

2. Examples of relevant competencies: The students should be able to
   a. illustrate the uses of mathematics in history and in addressing contemporary issues.
   b. clearly express mathematical ideas in written form.
   c. explain what constitutes a valid mathematical argument (proof).
   d. understand and apply higher-order problem solving and/or modeling strategy.

KNOWLEDGE AND INQUIRY DOMAINS

DISCIPLINARY FOCUS

Arts and Humanities

1. Goal: To develop in students knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behavior, ideas, and values expressed in works of art, literature, music and philosophy that develops an appreciation of the arts and humanities as fundamental to the health and survival of any society.

2. Examples of relevant competencies: The students should be able to
   a. demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of works of literature, philosophy, and the fine and performing arts.
   b. understand those works as expressions of individual and human values within an historical and social context.
   c. respond critically to works of literature, philosophy, and the fine and performing arts.
   d. engage in the creative or interpretive process.
   e. articulate an informed personal response to works of literature, philosophy, and the fine and performing arts.

Natural Sciences

1. Goal: To develop in students an understanding of physical and biological principles, and methods of scientific inquiry.

2. Examples of relevant competencies: The students should be able to
   a. demonstrate an understanding of scientific theories and the ways scientists develop, express and question theories in the natural sciences.
   b. formulate and test hypotheses, typically by performing laboratory or field experiments in natural science disciplines.
c. communicate their findings, analyses, and interpretations both orally and in writing.

d. evaluate social issues from a natural science perspective.

Social and Behavioral Sciences

1. Goal: To develop in students knowledge of how social and behavioral scientists discover, describe, and explain the behaviors and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, events, and ideas.

2. Examples of relevant competencies: The students should be able to
   a. understand and employ the methods that social and behavioral scientists use to investigate the human condition.
   b. examine social institutions and processes across a range of historical periods and cultures.
   c. select and use appropriate methods for gathering and analyzing data or evidence about the problems they identify.
   d. use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories.
   e. develop and communicate alternatives for addressing contemporary issues.

INTERDISCIPLINARY THEMES

Human Diversity

1. Goal: To develop in students knowledge of the ways in which individuals and groups are identified in society and how societies and institutions use characteristics such as class, culture, ethnicity, gender, race, and other differences to define and separate people.

2. Examples of relevant competencies: The students should be able to
   a. understand the development of and the changing meanings of group identities in the United States’ history and culture.
   b. describe and discuss the experiences and contributions (political, social, economic, etc.) of the many groups that have shaped American society and culture.
   c. demonstrate an awareness of the individual and institutional dynamics of unequal power relations between groups in contemporary societies.
   d. analyze their own attitudes, behaviors, concepts and beliefs regarding diversity, racism, and bigotry.
   e. demonstrate inclusive communication skills necessary for living and working in a diverse society.

Global Perspectives

1. Goal: To develop in students an understanding of the growing interdependence of nations and peoples, and the need to apply a comparative perspective to cross-cultural social, economic and political experiences.

2. Examples of relevant competencies: The student should be able to
a. demonstrate knowledge of how geography, physical environment, and natural resources shape societies and how societies impact their natural environment.
b. describe political, economic, and cultural elements which influence relations of states and societies in their historical and contemporary dimensions.
c. demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to cultural, linguistic, religious, and social differences.
d. use another language to study the literature, history, culture or arts of its native speakers.
e. analyze specific international problems, illustrating the cultural, economic, and political differences that affect their solution.
f. understand the role of a world citizen and the responsibility world citizens share for their common global future.

**People and the Environment**

1. **Goal:** To develop in students an understanding of today’s complex environmental challenges, and of the bio-physical principles and socio-cultural systems that are the foundation for integrative and critical thinking about environmental issues.

2. **Examples of relevant competencies:** The students should be able to
   a. explain the basic structure and function of various natural ecosystems and of human adaptive strategies within those systems.
   b. discern patterns and interrelationships of bio-physical and socio-cultural systems.
   c. describe the basic institutional arrangements (social, legal, political, economic, religious) that are evolving to deal with environmental and natural resource challenges.
   d. evaluate critically environmental and natural resource issues in light of understandings about interrelationships, ecosystems, and institutions.
   e. propose and assess alternative solutions to environmental problems.
   f. articulate and defend the actions they would take on various environmental issues.

**Ethical and Civic Responsibility**

1. **Goal:** To develop in students the ability to identify, discuss, and reflect upon the ethical dimensions of political, social, and personal life so as to exercise responsible and productive citizenship.

2. **Examples of relevant competencies:** The students should be able to
   a. examine and articulate their own moral views as these relate to others.
   b. understand and apply core concepts (e.g., politics, rights and obligations, justice, liberty) to specific issues.
   c. analyze and reflect on the relationships between ethical issues and legal, social, and scientific issues.
   d. recognize the diversity of political motivations and interests of others in public settings.
   e. identify ways to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.