



“Referendum on General Education Improvements”

Proposed Motion: Approve the Referendum on General Education Improvements for AS 2016 Ballot

Sponsor: ASVP for Academic Affairs, Zach Dove

Persons of Contact: ASVP for Academic Affairs, Zach Dove

Guest Speaker: None

Date: 4/1/2016

Attached Document

General Education at Western: Collectively Imagining Outstanding General Ed at Western

Background & Context

From Historical Context in Attached Document:

The Committee on Undergraduate Education (CUE) concluded in 2012 that (1) the revisions to Western’s general education curriculum implemented in fall 2005 “had limited impact on clarifying the connection between the GURs and a liberal arts and sciences education or on creating more coherence across the GURs,” and (2) it was unclear if the curriculum was either fulfilling the articulated vision for liberal education or meeting the goals that faculty had previously established for the GUR program.

- These conclusions led to the creation of the WSGE Task Force. The Task Force was charged with exploring and gauging the desire of various Western constituents to engage in structural reform of the GUR program. A significant plurality of faculty members expressed their reluctance to decide whether structural reform was desirable, absent specific proposals to consider.
- The Faculty Senate recommended the creation of a new task force (General Education Task Force) and charged this task force with developing proposals to improve Western’s General Education program. In addition, the Senate Executive Council suggested that bringing these ideas forward in a way that leads to engaged dialogue and broad input from the campus community that has the potential to strengthen our shared vision around the purpose of general education at Western.
- In September 2015, the General Education Task Force was charged as follows: “The Task Force will provide for the university community’s consideration three options for improving the GUR program. One of the options will involve minimal adjustments to the structure and goals of the current GUR program.” This task force was intentionally asked to imagine possibilities for the future of general education at Western without focusing on the barriers and obstacles to these ideas.

Summary of Proposal

The Campus Engagement Process largely leaves it up to the AS to decide how to gather student feedback (outside of joint departmental and collaborative sessions). In order to gather the most feedback possible, and as one of multiple feedback opportunities, the AS Board should approve a referenda question(s) for the AS ballot that would allow students to provide meaningful feedback to the Academic Coordinating Commission and Faculty Senate. The language as it currently stands would allow students to rank their preference for the 3 options (see attached Report), as well as to select the aspects of the program they think are most crucial to address. Proposed language is as follows:

1. How high of a priority do you believe revising general education at Western should be?
Critical
Important
Moderate
Somewhat

Low

2. Which aspects of the proposed models do you think are most crucial to address in order to improve your satisfaction of the program?
 - a. Improved component presenting knowledge of social stratification and diversity for a 21st century world
 - b. Fewer total required credits
 - c. Better writing and communication instruction
 - d. Coherent (understandable and consistent) structure of program
 - e. Relevance to major
 - f. Ways to apply learning to real life situations
 - g. Continuous general education instruction across college career
 - h. Other: _____

Fiscal Impacts

None

Rationale

While advisory referendum are not as traditional as a yes/no vote, because of the effort and resources the AS puts into its elections, to not use the ballot as a mechanism for gathering student feedback would be to waste a critical opportunity to do so. The referendum language clearly explains that the vote is non-binding and advisory in nature.