Report from the Ad Hoc Coordinating Committee on General Education (CCGE)

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cc: Cherysa Cortez, Executive Director

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This memo serves as the final report of the Ad Hoc Coordinating Committee on General Education. The Committee was tasked with: 1) mapping out the current General Education program (GE) at UCR and identifying its goals, 2) developing a short series of learning outcomes (3-5 suggested) that match and clearly articulate that program, and 3) suggesting next steps to prepare to assess the outcomes.

Learning outcomes (LOs) are essential to explain the purpose of GE at UCR and to assist in campus accreditation. The committee's mandate did not include making any changes to the GE program, and the committee recommends no such changes. The following narrative provides more details on the committee's approach, the outcome of the mapping and analysis of GE currently at UCR, the proposed LOs, and suggestions for possible next steps to develop a procedure to assess these LOs. The committee met 14 times, for an average of 1 hour each meeting, between July 2024 and late February 2025, with considerable independent work between meetings.

The committee voted unanimously to support and endorse the five learning outcomes and preamble for Senate approval at this time. The committee also voted unanimously to endorse this narrative of the committee's work and recommendations for possible future steps. One member of the committee was on leave near the end of the committee's term and was not present to vote.

After consultation with various senate committees and the Executive Council, the committee modified the language in LO5 to better match the other learning outcomes. The committee voted unanimously to approve this change to LO5.

The Committee's Approach:

The committee met with both the outgoing and incoming Senate Chairs to discuss and confirm the committee's mandate. The committee then reached out to the CNAS and CHASS executive committees, and asked the Senate staff to conduct a search of Senate records for any documents concerning the creation of the breadth requirements / GE "framework" (UCR Catalog, 65 - See Appendix A). Unfortunately, these inquiries produced little information.

The committee next held a discussion on designing LOs and the basic theory and practice of LOs. One of the committee members with considerable experience designing learning outcomes led the discussion. The committee members thereby gained an understanding of the theory, purpose, and best practices of LOs. The shared understanding of LOs that the committee worked with is described below:

> *Learning Outcomes (LOs) are descriptions of what content and/or skills students will learn and the mechanisms by which their learning will be assessed (i.e., how will students demonstrate those skills?). Learning outcomes ought to be SMART—specific, measurable, attainable, related, and time-bound.*
>
> - *e.g., for a statistics course:*
>   - *Less effective LO: Students will understand when to use t-tests.*
>   - *More effective LO: By the end of this course, students will be able to identify whether or not a t-test (paired- or independent-samples) is an appropriate analysis for a given study design.*
> - *e.g., for a biology course:*
>   - *Less effective LO: Students will develop an appreciation for the nature of living organisms.*
>   - *More effective LO: By the end of this course, students will be able to articulate why living organisms are complex systems by pairing the rules of complex systems with appropriate features of living organisms.*

As can be seen from the examples above, effective learning outcomes require a high degree of specificity to the course. Thus, developing a set of LOs for the entire GE curriculum at UCR would be impossible. Given that the committee does not have knowledge of every discipline's courses, content, and assessment strategies, any SMART LOs the committee generated would be too prescriptive for instructors, and would have the potential to infringe upon academic freedom. Thus, the committee decided to generate a preamble and a set of broad LOs (in line with the committee's charge of developing 3-5 LOs for the GE program) that may aid instructors of GE courses in constructing their own specific and measurable LOs. The committee agreed that each of the 3-5 LOs would be broad enough to encompass multiple disciplines and assessment strategies.

Given the lack of documentation for the design behind the GE program at UCR, the committee determined a plan to reverse engineer the existing GE program from the UCR catalog. The committee found campus-wide descriptions of GE or breadth requirements on pages 65 and 67 of the catalog, as well as lengthy descriptions of breadth requirements for each college. The committee paid special attention to the paragraphs in the catalog that described "A general education" on page 65 (page 67 offered little information), and the descriptions of the breadth requirements for each college.

The committee then consulted with current UCR undergraduate advisors to understand how students were currently advised on the breadth requirements and on course selection to meet the requirements. The committee also consulted with college staff about how courses were approved for the breadth requirements (in many cases, all courses from a major are approved when specific courses are not called out in the requirements).

The Committee's Understanding of General Education at UCR:

General Education in the catalog refers to two separate concepts: the breadth requirement program "framework" and "a university education." The committee mandate was to specifically articulate the GE breadth program – in other words to articulate the purpose of the breadth requirements (primarily the third paragraph on page 65), rather than a university education overall (the fourth paragraph on page 65, although this paragraph also speaks to breadth). Indeed, this distinction is blurry in the catalog and in practice. For example, a university education might provide opportunities for students to learn how to cooperate in teams, produce university-level written work, or develop self-discipline. These outcomes might be achieved through the breadth requirements but can also be achieved through a major.

The committee thus created a chart, Appendix B, that documents and cross-references the breadth requirements across campus. The committee found that the breadth requirements largely mapped onto the catalog description of the GE "framework" at UCR (p. 65).

The catalog explains that:

> *"A general education provides a framework that enables one to appreciate and critically examine the significant aspects of civilization. This framework is derived from the study of world history; political and economic systems; the ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity of the people of the Earth; the arts and letters of all cultures; the social and natural sciences; and technology."*

UCR colleges also include non-English language development in the breadth requirements and this is specifically called out in the following paragraph on learning skills, "including in a language other than one's own" (p. 65).

The catalog further describes the goal of the GE framework: "Such a broad education is the foundation for concentrated studies that enable students to prepare for careers and to strive for an understanding of the world in which they live and about which they must make decisions."

As a result of this process, the committee determined that:

1. The college breadth requirements are the current GE Program at UCR, described in the catalog as the GE "framework."
2. There is general consistency across colleges for their breadth requirements.
3. All of the college breadth requirements map onto the GE framework on catalog page 65, except for technology which is in the framework but not in the breadth requirements. Note: The reason for the omission of technology classes from the breadth requirements is unclear, but the committee surmised that technology is explored in manifold ways in many departments and programs.
4. The overall purpose of the GE program based on the catalog framework, description of goals, and breadth requirements is to provide a "broad" diversity of academic approaches and perspectives necessary to "appreciate and critically examine the significant aspects of civilization," to support more "concentrated studies," and to empower students to better their world as described in UCR's mission statement.

The committee then discussed various permutations of LOs that best matched the breadth requirements and GE program goals as outlined above. The committee spent considerable effort on balancing direct connections to individual breadth requirements on the one hand, with keeping the LOs capacious and flexible enough to reflect the diversity of options in the GE program on the other hand. The committee considered creating specific LOs targeting each breadth requirement, but opted against this approach because it would:

- create too many LOs to be manageable and easily digestible by students and other stakeholders;
- encourage a view of the breadth requirements as discrete tick boxes, rather than as a means to well-rounded and complex inter- and cross-disciplinary learning and thinking; and
- require a high level of disciplinary expertise and department input on the LOs tied to specific departments (e.g., history) and create confusion over which departments got to define which outcomes – the committee's mandate and resources simply did not include the support for such an approach.

Thus, the committee designed five broad LOs that match learning opportunities that are common across the breadth requirements, across various disciplines. The committee agreed that this flexibility is essential to capture the purpose of the requirements to ensure that students graduate with a well-rounded and multi-disciplinary education. The LOs must also be read in conjunction with the included preamble that further ties the LOs to UCR's specific breadth requirements and clarifies that the LOs are all inter- and/or multi-disciplinary. This preamble also avoids the need to repeat phrases, such as "in multiple disciplines" in each LO. The LOs are designed to be readily understood by students, parents, and community members, to make clear the vital purpose of the breadth requirements on our campus, the reasons for the design of our breadth requirements, and to articulate the connection between the breadth requirements and the UCR mission and what makes a UCR education distinctive. They are also intended to

be read with and not to replace the existing catalog description of GE, the framework, and its goals at UCR.

The Proposed General Education Preamble and Learning Outcomes:

The General Education (GE) program breadth requirements are designed to ensure that students graduate with a well-rounded education and the ability to engage with multiple disciplines in the arts, humanities, social sciences and sciences. GE courses will expose students to diverse historical, linguistic, racial, cultural, and scientific perspectives to achieve goals including but not limited to advancing equity and justice, and fostering a more inclusive and sustainable society. These efforts are supported by the development of skills in a non-English language. Through completion of the General Education program, students will achieve the following multi- and interdisciplinary learning outcomes by being able to:

1. **Methodology**: formulate and apply reasoning and relevant methodologies to investigate social and natural phenomena.

2. **Information Literacy & Application**: obtain and analyze historical and current information (e.g., empirical data, sources, artistic representations, cultural contexts), assess its quality, and draw evidence-based conclusions about complex issues.

3. **Theories**: assess and apply relevant theoretical models to diverse types of information (e.g., evidence, data, and artistic and literary works).

4. **Systems**: evaluate the theories, principles, and functioning of various systems (e.g., world historical, current political, economic, scientific) and analyze how these systems influence societal structures and individual lives within diverse contexts.

5. **Innovation**: create original solutions, arguments, and/or artistic expressions that draw from diverse knowledge and skills.

Recommendations for Possible Next Steps Following Adoption of the Proposed LOs:

1. **Add the New Preamble and GE LOs to the Catalog:** The committee does not intend these LOs to replace any of the text on catalog page 65, nor does the committee intend the LOs to suggest any changes to UCR's current breadth requirements. The committee proposes that the preamble and LOs be added to the current catalog description on page 65 to further clarify the purpose of the breadth requirements (as illustrated for example in Appendix C).

2. **Revise the Catalog Lists of Breadth Requirements to be Consistent:** The committee notes that the "Requirements for the Bachelor's Degree" listed on page 65 may cause confusion. List #2, "College breadth requirements," does not currently match the actual college breadth requirements or the framework. For instance, the college requirements and framework all include the Arts and World History, but those are not included on page

65. <u>The committee recommends that the list on page 65 be revised to match the existing college requirements (as illustrated for example in Appendix C).</u>

3. **Clarify the Catalog's Distinction Between GE and "A University Education":** The committee also notes that the catalog describing the GE framework, breadth requirements, and "a university education" is confusing. <u>The committee recommends review of and potential edits to the catalog text to ensure clarity between these concepts</u>.

4. **Create an Accessible GE Web page:** The committee notes that there is not a simple overview of the GE program online. Such a web page would help to make this material readily accessible to students, faculty, TAs, and the public. It could ideally include links to existing college breadth web pages. <u>The committee recommends the creation of a webpage that includes the description of the GE Breadth Program and the learning outcomes.</u>

5. **Assessment Procedure Design and Implementation:** The committee was also tasked with recommending guidelines to assess the GE LOs, and to suggest the format and charge of a permanent Senate body to carry out this work.

   Currently at UCR, there is no established body or procedure to assess whether the GE program is meeting its desired outcomes. The committee notes that LOs in classroom settings are typically designed in conjunction with outcome assessment. This proves challenging at a GE program level since the expertise and knowledge of each discipline resides within individual departments or specific GE classes. As noted above, the committee has chosen to keep the proposed LOs broad and applicable to the many disciplines involved in the GE curriculum. The committee has assumed that the breadth requirements or their equivalent will continue to be required of all students. <u>Therefore, the committee recommends that course-specific LOs consistent with the proposed broad LOs above be formulated for all courses that fulfill GE requirements (currently, breadth courses)</u>. While this may require some effort from departments and individual instructors, the committee assumes that all current breadth courses already contain components that fulfill one or more of these LOs. When assessing the success of the overall GE program, the fulfillment of each college's breadth requirements—along with the specific LOs of each class that align with the breadth requirements given here—might serve as the assessment of the entire GE program.

   Therefore, <u>the committee recommends that the Senate ask the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and the Committee on Courses OR a new Ad Hoc committee to develop an assessment procedure for the GE learning outcomes.</u> The Senate's existing Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) may be a suitable body to assess general education, particularly through the constitution of a GE subcommittee facilitated by the UCR Office of Evaluation and Assessment. Such a subcommittee would likely present the least strain on UCR's limited Senate resources, and would also keep discussion of GE within the committee already charged with overseeing undergraduate

education campus wide. CEP may request that additional non-CEP members be added to the subcommittee to provide expertise.

As an illustration of one possibility, we present the following scenario:

- Currently, departments regularly undergo external department reviews of their undergraduate programs; this review process is overseen by CEP. Departments undergoing external review in a given year could be asked to include, in their self-study, documentation showing how their current courses meet GE requirements, including a chart mapping specific course-level LOs and corresponding assessments to the GE LOs.
- A procedure could be developed for new courses seeking GE requirement status. These courses would submit similar documentation as described above to be reviewed by both the Committee on Courses and CEP before approval.
- During GE assessment periods, each GE course would submit their course-specific assessment results to the Office of Evaluation and Assessment for review. These individual assessments would then be compiled and presented to relevant Senate committees to evaluate the overall effectiveness of UCR's GE program.

It should be emphasized that the scenario described above serves only as an illustration, demonstrating one possible approach to program evaluation and assessment. While this represents one viable approach, other methods may be equally or more effective in achieving these goals. It is the charge of a future committee to clearly establish an effective assessment and oversight process.

Appendix A: Existing UCR GE Catalog Text (pg 65)

UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Goals of an Undergraduate Education

The faculty of UCR hereby declare the following set of general educational goals to be pursued through our individual and collective efforts in teaching and guiding the undergraduates of this campus.

A university education must help students realize their potential as individuals and contributing participants in society. This involves the acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as preparation for future responsibilities.

A general education provides a framework that enables one to appreciate and critically examine the significant aspects of civilization. This framework is derived from the study of world history; political and economic systems; the ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity of the peoples of the Earth; the arts and letters of all cultures; the social and natural sciences; and technology. Such a broad education is the foundation for concentrated studies that enable students to prepare for careers and to strive for an understanding of the world in which they live and about which they must make decisions.

A university education nurtures the critical skills of oral and written communication, including the exercise of these skills in a language other than one's own. It must teach students to become verbally and quantitatively literate, to analyze and synthesize, and to regard the acquisition of knowledge as a lifetime activity. A university education must promote tolerance of the opinions of others and an understanding of the mutual dependence of human beings on each other and on their natural environment. The student's university years also provide an opportunity to develop integrity, self-esteem, self-discipline, style, humanness, commitment to the general welfare, sensitivity to the interplay of environment and technology, and confidence that the human drama is worthy of a lengthy future.

UCR has three undergraduate colleges and three undergraduate schools that offer bachelor's degrees: Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences; Natural and Agricultural Sciences; and Engineering. UCR also has the School of Business, School of Education, and the School of Public Policy that offer bachelor's degrees.

Requirements for the Bachelor's Degree

Requirements for the bachelor's degree vary according to the college and major selected. There are three kinds of requirements: general university, college, and major.

1. General University requirements

    Entry-Level Writing
    American History and Institutions
    Unit
    Scholarship
    Residence

2. College breadth requirements

    English Composition
    Humanities
    Social Sciences
    Ethnicity
    Foreign Language
    Natural Sciences and Mathematics
    Additional Courses

3. Major requirements

    Lower-Division or Core Courses
    Upper-Division Courses

Students should plan a program of study carefully and consult an academic advisor. Students are responsible for meeting all requirements for graduation.

Appendix B: College Breadth Requirements Mapped onto Catalog GE Framework

Framework Area	CNAS	CHASS & Education	Engineering	Business
World History	One World History course (HIST 10, 15, 20), pg 87	One World History course (HIST 010, 015, 020), pg 80	One World History course (HIST 10, 15, 20)	One World History course (HIST 10, 15, 20)
Political & Economic Systems	One course from Economics or Poli Sci, pg 89 + covered in Social Sciences credits below	One course from Economic or Poli Sci, pg 80 (covered in Social Sciences credits)	One course from Economics or Political Science (Part of 12 Social Sciences units), pg 101	One course from: Economics or Political Science Econ/Posc
Ethnic, Cultural, and Religious Diversity	Ethnic studies course, pg 89 + foreign language requirement, pg 89, plus others	One possible course from Religious Studies, 1 possible course from Ethnic Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies, Latin American Studies, or Gender and Sexuality Studies, pg. 89 + foreign language requirement + 1 course focusing on race and ethnicity in California and US (offered by or crosslisted with Ethnic Studies Dept)	4"Ethnicity" units (NB: "The 4-unit ethnicity requirement can be applied to the Humanities or Social Science requirement, depending on content."), pg 100 One course dealing with general concepts and issues in the study of race and ethnicity in California and the United States. Courses that satisfy this requirement must concentrate on one or more of four principal minority groups (African American, Asian American, Chicano/Latino, and Native American). These courses must be comparative in nature, analyzing the minority group experience within the present and historical context of other racial and ethnic groups, such as European-American minorities. The courses are to be offered by or cross-listed with the Department of Ethnic Studies, pg 101	One course (May also be used to satisfy a course requirement in the Humanities or Social Sciences; *Humanities=ETST 1/3/4/5/7/8/12/14/61) From the Humanities requirements: Two additional courses from Economics, Politicial Science, Anthropology, Psychology, or Sociology (includes Bio Anth and Physical Anth) **OR** Cultural Geography, Ethnic Stuides, Environmental Sciences, HASS Interdisciplinary, or Women's Studies (not WS 10)

Arts and Letters of all Cultures	English composition, 1 fine arts course pg 87, and 2 from English/Media/Hispanic studies courses, pg 89	One course in Fine Arts; 2 courses on Literature and/or Philosophy; 1 additional course in Fine Arts, Literature, Philosophy, level 3 or higher language, or Humanities. pg 80	1) One course in one of the areas of Fine Arts, Literature, Philosophy, or Religious Studies 2) One additional course chosen from History, the Fine Arts, Literature, Philosophy, Religious Studies [part of 12 Humanities units], pg 101	One course in one of the following: Fine Arts (Art, Art Hist, Dance, FVC, Music, Theatre or Creative Wrtng), Literature (in any language), Philosophy or Religious Studies; Three additional courses from areas listed above (including World History 10, 15, or 20) **or**; History, HASS Interdisciplinary, Ethnic Studies; Foreign Languages (above level 3), Latin American Studies; Linguistics, Women's Studies (not WS 1)
Social Sciences	12-16 credits in social sciences	16 units; 1 course in Econ/PoliSci, 1 course in Anthro, Psych, Sociology, 2 additional social-science related courses. pg 80	12 units Social Sciences, pg 100 1. One course from Economics or Political Science 2. One course from Anthropology, Psychology, or Sociology 3. One additional social science course offered by Ethnic Studies, Geography (cultural geography courses), Human Development, or Women's Studies, or one of the disciplines in 1. or 2. above. [pg 101]	One course from: Anthropology, Psychology or Sociology (includes Bio Anth and Physical Anth); (May also be used to satisfy a course requirement in the Humanities or Social Sciences; *Humanities=ETST 1/3/4/5/7/8/12/14/61)
Natural Sciences	20 credits in natural sciences and math	20 units; 1 course in Math, Stat or Comp Sci, 1 course in Biological Siences, 1 course in Physical Sciences, 2 additional courses from above or Dept of Environmental Studies, pg 81	20 units Natural Sciences and Mathematics, pg 100 1. One course in Biological Sciences 2. One course in Physical Sciences. No course in cultural geography counts 3. One course in Mathematics or Computer Science or Statistics 4. Two additional courses in the Biological or Physical Sciences [In some cases satisfied by the Major requirements], pg 101	One course from: Math/Stat/Computer Science; One course from: Biological Science (Biology, Biochem, Entomology, Plant Sciences); One course from: Physical Science (Chemistry, Geoscience/Astronomy/ Oceanography-not GEO 6, Physics); 2 additional courses from areas listed above or in physical and/or biological science courses offered in the Department of Soil

Technology	No specific classes	No specific classes	No specific classes	No specific classes
Foreign Language	Foreign language requirement, pg 89	Foreign language requirement, pg 81	One of three options (specifically, "foreign language at level 3 or above") as part of "one additional course" for the 12 Humanities units. pg 101	Level 3 or 12 quarter units
English Composition			Varies [pg 100], Students must demonstrate adequate proficiency in English Composition by completing a one-year sequence of college-level instruction in English Composition with no grade lower than "C." pg 101	English Composition (with no grade lower than a C)
Notes			*To provide depth in the humanities and social sciences, at least two of the humanities and/or social science courses must be upper division*	

Appendix C: Draft Suggestion for Incorporating LOs into Catalog Text

Existing Text	Proposed Changes
Goals of an Undergraduate Education The faculty of UCR hereby declare the following set of general educational goals to be pursued through our individual and collective efforts in teaching and guiding the undergraduates of this campus. A university education must help students realize their potential as individuals and contributing participants in society. This involves the acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as preparation for future responsibilities. A general education provides a framework that enables one to appreciate and critically examine the significant aspects of civilization. This framework is derived from the study of world history; political and economic systems; the ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity of the people of the Earth; the arts and letters of all cultures; the social and natural sciences; and technology. Such a broad education is the foundation for concentrated studies that enable students to prepare for careers and to strive for an understanding of the world in which they live and about which they must make decisions.	**Goals of an Undergraduate Education** The faculty of UCR hereby declare the following set of general educational goals to be pursued through our individual and collective efforts in teaching and guiding the undergraduates of this campus. A university education must help students realize their potential as individuals and contributing participants in society. This involves the acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as preparation for future responsibilities. "The general education program is an essential part of a university education and is completed through the college breadth requirements. These requirements provide a framework that enables one to appreciate and critically examine the significant aspects of civilization. This framework is derived from the study of world history; political and economic systems; the ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity of the people of the Earth; the arts and letters of all cultures; the social and natural sciences; and technology. Such a broad education is the foundation for concentrated studies that enable students to prepare for careers and to strive for an understanding of the world in which they live and about which they must make decisions. The General Education (GE) program breadth requirements are designed to ensure that students graduate with a well-rounded education and the ability to engage with multiple disciplines in the arts, humanities,

| | social sciences and sciences. GE courses will expose students to diverse historical, linguistic, racial, cultural, and scientific perspectives to achieve goals including but not limited to advancing equity and justice, and fostering a more inclusive and sustainable society. These efforts are supported by the development of skills in a non-English language. Through completion of the General Education program, students will achieve the following multi- and interdisciplinary learning outcomes by being able to:

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3. **Theories**: assess and apply relevant theoretical models to diverse types of information (e.g., evidence, data, and artistic and literary works).

4. **Systems**: evaluate the theories, principles, and functioning of various systems (e.g., world historical, current political, economic, scientific) and analyze how these systems influence societal structures and individual lives within diverse contexts.

5. **Innovation**: create original solutions, arguments, and/or artistic expressions that draw from diverse knowledge and skills. |
|---|---|

A university education nurtures…[no changes]	A university education nurtures…[no changes]